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Media Literacy and the Common Good: A Link to Catholic Social Teaching

by

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A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

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ABSTRACT

Media Literacy and the Common Good: A Link to Catholic Social Teaching

by

Maria Rosalia Tenorio De Azevedo

In order to effectively teach students how to critically consume media it is paramount for teachers to be media literate (Ian & Temur, 2012; Keller-Raber, 1995; Schmidt, 2012). Using Freirean critical literacy as a theoretical framework, this case study investigated how a 60-hour teacher training program in media literacy promoted Catholic Social Teaching and how undergoing this training influenced teachers' perceptions of media literacy, Catholic Social Teaching, and the link between the two. As the researcher, I performed participant-observation as a trainee in the program. Five teachers, alumni of the program, participated in this study: one middle school teacher, three high-school teachers, and one college professor, all of them taught at Christian private schools. I recorded how participants applied Media Mindfulness—a faith based media literacy strategy—in their practice as a response to the Church's call for Catholic teachers to engage in media education (Benedict XVI, 2008; John Paul II, 1987, 1990, 1992, 2005). Findings show how the Media Mindfulness Method helped teachers integrate media literacy in their practice, promoting student empowerment and character education. A follow up

action research at a Catholic high school where teachers are trained in Media Mindfulness is recommended to find out: a) how the training influenced teachers' confidence in integrating media education into their practice? b) to what extent students' assimilation of Catholic Social Teaching concepts resulted from the teacher training program? c) and how training teachers in the media mindfulness model influenced the school's culture in addressing social justice issues?

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this case study is to investigate the influence of media literacy training on teachers seeking to advance Catholic Social Teaching in their practice. This chapter highlights children's skyrocketing, unguided, media consumption and the concerns it raises for their wellbeing. It discusses the social justice implications of media literacy. The case study goes on to introduce faith based media literacy as a possible tool to address some of the concerns, also providing its development as an academic discipline in the United States and abroad, and finally exploring the link between media literacy education and Catholic Social Teaching (CST), which drive the main research questions for this study: 1) How does a faith based media literacy training program promote Catholic Social Teaching? 2) How does a faith based media literacy training program influence participants' understanding of media literacy and its link to Catholic Social Teaching? This is a case study investigation conducted through the theoretical framework of Freirean critical literacy.

Problem

Different research on media consumption amongst school-aged children show colossal amount of media consumed, prompting educators to investigate its implications (Nielsen Online, 2008; Rideout, Foehr, & Robers, 2010; Rideout, Vandewater, & Wartella, 2003; Vandewater, Bickham, & Lee, 2006). Children and adolescents' media consumption without critical guidance enables misinformation about advertising and health issues (Buckingham, 2000; Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994; Dysart, 2008; Hobbs, 2011a; Radford, 2003). Salomon (1983) indicates that children who have contact to mass media messages through adult or parental guidance tend

to be more mature and more critical of their social circuits than peers who lack such assistance. Scholars have advocated for a teacher training in media literacy which is now lacking in American universities (Al-Humaidan et al., 2011; Damico, 2004; DeAbreu, 2008; Gainer, 2010; Hobbs, 2011a; Ian & Temur, 2012; Keller-Raber, 1995; Kellner & Share, 2005; Kubey, 1998; Schmidt, 2012; Silverblatt, 2001). In addition, during the past 78 years, the Church has issued several documents urging Catholic educators to engage students in the understanding of media messages from a Christian perspective: *Vigilanti Cura* (1936); *Miranda Prorsus* (1957); *Inter Mirifica* (1963); *Humanae Vitae*, (1968); *Communio et Progressio* (1971); *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975); *Aetatis Novae* (1992); and *The Rapid Development* (2005) have directly addressed pastoral concerns regarding media. Therefore, it is important to investigate alternative solutions for training teachers in faith based media literacy. Gale and Densmore (2000) point out that for many poor students and students from non-dominant groups, the school and the media are their main channels to acquire a grasp of public culture. The idea that the poor mainly learn the world through the media and the school makes media literacy a social justice issue, therefore it is crucial to learn how faith based media literacy training may influence teachers' understanding of media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching.

Social Justice Implications

Since Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Communio et Progressio* (1971), the Church made one of her most pressing tasks to train media recipients in Christian principles, and deemed it a service to social communications, concluding that well-trained media recipients would be able to meaningfully engage the media and demand high quality content in mass communications. The pastoral instruction document urged Catholic schools and Catholic organizations everywhere not

to ignore their duty in this regard, “schools and institutions will take care to teach young people not only to be good Christians when they are recipients but also to be active in using all the aids to communication that lie within the media” (Paul VI, 1971, para. 107). The document goes on to state that only then young students will be true citizens of the age of social communication. The Catholic view that implies that the inclusion of media instruction is needed to avoid social exclusion was likewise defended by media scholars over 20 years later, in the digital technology age. Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall, and Jackson (1993) said “Acquiring digital media literacy and being able to benefit from using digital media competently is one of the ways to achieve social inclusion” (Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall, & Jackson, 1993, p. 97). Concomitantly, 15 years later in 2008, scholars argue that “by teaching children media literacy skills, educators provide students with life-long learning skills that will be needed in the 21st century” (Gut & Wan, 2008, p. 180). It is debatable whether the Church was pivotal in setting the tone for the research on the social justice implications of social exclusion through inadequate media awareness, but it is undeniable that the concerns raised by the Vatican almost 80 years ago, in 1936, are now more relevant than ever due to the proliferation of media consumption, especially among children, as this study shows in more detail in Chapter 2.

Concerned with abuse of the power of media to control the masses—especially children—for the profit of those who own media outlets and their political allies, Torres and Mercado (2006) warned that media is “trapped within the capitalist rationality that has also facilitated sophisticated strategies of domination and control” (Torres & Mercado, 2006, p. 262). Media literate educators can play a vital role in solving the social justice problem of youths’ unguided mass media consumption. Eifler and Gordon (2011) found that “Educators in Catholic

institutions have an imperative beyond merely fostering media literacy. In fact, it might more aptly be termed an opportunity" (Eifler & Gordon, 2011, p. 49). Hence, Catholic schools can take advantage of faith based media literacy to help students build a bridge between their Catholic values and the counter-narrative portrayed in the mainstream media. In fact, ecclesiastic authorities have persistently advocated for Catholic educators' engagement on media literacy not only from Rome but in the diocesan level too. In 1992, Los Angeles Cardinal Roger Mahony—head of the largest archdiocese in the United States—issued the pastoral letter *Film Makers, Film Viewers: Their Challenges and Opportunities*, asking Catholic educational institutions, from kindergarten through graduate school, to make media literacy—including film appreciation, media criticism, and TV discernment—a priority for their students. Mahony's request came in support of the pastoral instruction on social communication, *Aetatis Novae* (1992), issued in the same year by Pope John Paul.

In the letter that commemorates the twentieth anniversary of *Communio et Progressio* (1971), Pope John Paul II emphasizes the Church's call for catechists, religious leaders, teachers, and youth ministers to address the way media affect the faithful: "Much that men and women know and think about life is conditioned by the media; to a considerable extent, human experience itself is an experience of media" (John Paul II, 1992, para. 2). The National Catechetical Directory (2005) from the United States Conference of the Catholic Bishops reinforces the Church's calling to master media literacy. Stating that all who use the media in their work have a duty in conscience to make themselves competent in the art of social communication. It further states that this moral obligation is applicable in particular to people with educational responsibilities, including catechists. In fact, the Bishops argue that Catechists

should learn how to take media into account as a crucial part of the cultural background and experience of catechumens. Catechists are also called to learn how to use media in catechesis and how to help their students understand and evaluate media in light of Judeo-Christian values (John Paul II, 1992). Church documents commonly support the need for Catholic educators to integrate media education as pedagogical tool in their classrooms, this will be more evident in the literature review section, Chapter 2. Teachers themselves need to be educated on the subject. The review of the literature shows that even in the new media age, most teachers are not aware of the nuances permeating media education (Schmidt, 2012). To think that critically analyzing the media consists of either looking closer for the meaning of words in a determined media message or using multimedia devices as visual aid for instruction are a simplistic views, a media literate teacher is rather expected to “know how to interact using many different forms of communication” (Guzzetti, 2002, p. 581). Teachers who lack basic understanding of semiotics, mass media industry context, the inquiring method within the cycle of communication—producer, message, medium, receiver, and feedback—elements ordinarily adopted in media education, are themselves fearful to adopt media literacy (Schmidt, 2012).

In the letter on *Economic Justice for All* (1995), the American Bishops stated, “as followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a fundamental ‘option for the poor and vulnerable’—to speak for the voiceless” (*Economic Justice for All*, 1995, para. 16). Children consuming hours of media daily without guidance are vulnerable to media’s commercial agenda (Freire, 1996; Key, 1989; Torres & Mercado, 2006; Yates, 2000). Catholic educators can fulfill their catechetical calling by taking advantage of media literacy to equip their students on how to be critical of the media they consume. Fuxa (2012) found that “If young people have few

opportunities to think critically, they will not be prepared for the moral and intellectual decision-making that is required in our media pervasive culture” (Fuxa, 2012, p. 180). The Catholic school is fundamentally important in the evangelizing mission of the Church with the duty to carry out Christian education (Baum, 1986). The Church is sympathetic to mass media and seeks to engaged it with the intention of evangelizing effectively and advocates for “a critical evaluation of mass media and their impact upon culture" in order to do so (John Paul II, 1992, para. 12). The Church in fact provides a standard for Catholic educators to judge the value of media messages—be it news, culture, and entertainment—which “should be judged by the contribution it makes to the common good” (Paul VI, 1971, para. 16). Further, the Church determined that media education should “be given a regular place in school curricula” and made available at “every stage of education” (Paul VI, 1971, para. 69). The pastoral instruction pointed to systematically media education as a way to help young students gradually develop a new perception in their interpretation of media messages, including the news coverage.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate how a faith based media literacy training program promotes Catholic Social Teaching, and how faith based media literacy training influence participants' understanding of media literacy and its link to Catholic Social Teaching. The participants of this research are teachers who are Catholic, teach in K-12 and college level, and have successfully completed the teacher certification training program in media literacy with an organization accredited by several Catholic educational organizations in the United States, and two archdioceses which combined encompass 14 suffragan dioceses, hereby called, Saint

Gabriel Media Literacy Institute, a pseudonym. A suffragan diocese is overseen by its own bishop under the guidance of a metropolitan archbishop (Code of Canon Law, 1999, c. 436).

Significance

In the broader scope of media literacy education, this study contributes to the scholarship by providing a qualitative report on how an alternative media literacy training program works, a response to the scholarship that has decried the lack of formal media literacy training for teachers in the U.S. (Al-Humaidan et al., 2011; Damico, 2004; DeAbreu, 2008; Gainer, 2010; Hobbs, 2004b & 2011; Ian & Temur, 2012; Keller-Raber, 1995; Kellner & Share, 2005; Kubey, 1998; Schmidt, 2012; Silverblatt, 2001). In addition, the literature presented little input from teachers about the implications of teacher training in media literacy. Scholars have instead largely focused on examining students' performance and students' feedback following media literacy instruction (Cheung, 2005; Fuxa, 2012; Gut & Wan, 2008; Park et al., 1993; Radford, 2003; Salomon, 1983; Torres & Mercado, 2006). This study adds to the research on teacher training on media literacy examining teachers' perspectives. Regarding Catholic education this study explores how a teacher training program in media literacy can promote Catholic Social Teaching, and to what extent teachers' perceptions about the media, Catholic Social Teaching, and the link between the two is influenced by structured media literacy training adding to the few studies on faith based media literacy currently available.

Theoretical Framework

As the researcher, I draw from the work of Paulo Freire in the area of critical literacy to shape a theoretical framework that will help answer the research questions. Concerned with advancing fundamental democracy, Freire (1967) realized that educators had to pay special

attention to qualitative deficits in education. Freire desired a literacy that was directly connected with democratization of the culture in which the student was no longer the passive subjective of the schooling process but rather an active agent of her own education, “a literacy that was in itself an act of creation, capable of releasing other creative acts” (Freire, 1967, p. 66).

Contradicting the purely mechanical methods of literacy, Freire sought to connect literacy directly to the social context of the student. In the creative pedagogy of Freire not only the student assumes the role of an active agent, but methodology itself is an instrument of the student, not just of the teacher (Freire, 1979).

Democratic education. In the democratic model Freire envisioned “there is no absolute ignorance nor absolute wisdom” (Freire, 1967, p. 66), instead a collaboration effort between teacher and student. The content to be studied should be heavily shaped by social context of students and have direct applicability in their daily lives (Freire, 1967). In addition, to accomplish the Freirean participatory method, educators are expected to engage students in dialog with the goal of provoking critical thinking, while being mindful to keep horizontal relationships with students. Freire voided teachers from their traditional authority role in the classroom to favor students’ input as a way to empower them (Freire, 1967).

Freire proposed a dialog that requires humility from the educator to find value in the culture of students and to love them enough and have enough faith to engage them in order to generate meaningful thought process as opposed to feeding students with "borrowed" culture, which has no applicability in their social context. In the Freirean view the educators' mission is not to conquer but to liberate students from the “banking” education practice. Freire (1970) noted, "Not to offer ‘salvation’ in the form of content to be ‘deposited,’ but to, in dialogue with

them, learn ... their consciousness about their own situation, their various levels of awareness of themselves, the world and where they are" (Freire, 1970, p. 49). According to Freire, the educators' role is not to pontificate to students their own worldview, but to talk to them about theirs and be convinced that their worldview, which is manifested through their actions, reflect their situation in the world.

For Freire (1970), students and teachers sharing their experiences learn together. Freire also denounced those educators who "fear change and try to trap life reducing it to rigid schemes to make people passive" (Freire, 1970, p. 58). Alternatively, while forced to practice "banking" education, anti-dialogic in essence, the teacher has to submit students to the educational content program, which an educator has prepared, but the teacher may want to adopt the problem-solving dialogue practice, therefore the content, which is never "banked" is reshaped into the students' worldview, "for such reason is that this content is to be always renewing itself, and expanding" (Freire, 1970, p. 58). Freire defended reading and discussing articles from magazines and newspapers as problem-solving didactic strategy to shun "banking" education, proposing that in-class discussions would take place around readings of the news media content. In line with the use of media resources "it seems essential to examine the content of the editorials of the press, concerning the same event. Why newspapers are manifested differently on the same fact?" (Freire, 1970, p. 58). For Freire (1970), the concept of anthropological culture was a central and indispensable one: "Let people develop their critical thinking so that when they read newspapers or listen to the news on the radio, they do not do so as a mere passive subject" (Freire, 1970, p. 58). As students discuss the world, their level of consciousness rises and they discover their realities in an increasingly critical view.

Freire suggested educators foster their horizontal relationships with students by asking them directly what other themes or topics they could discuss, further, “to the extent that they are responding, right after noting the answer, propose to the group a problem too” (Freire, 1970, p. 58). In sequence, Freire held that by questioning the group, suggestions of new issues will arise from the group itself. What is important from the point of view of a liberating education—as opposed to “banking” education—is that students discuss their thinking, and implicitly or explicitly express their own worldview by their suggestions and those of their peers (Freire, 1970). Faundez and Freire (1985) insisted on the need to constantly stimulate the curiosity of students through the act of questioning, instructing teachers to never repress it: “Schools sometimes object to questions, sometimes bureaucratize the act of asking” (Faundez & Freire, 1985, p. 27). Faundez and Freire (1985) defended that the act of asking is at the root of all human transformation and that teachers should not be tied to a schedule to deliver what the curriculum dictates but rather should be willing to engage students on the critical thinking exercise of questioning. Faundez in particular stated that the value of a theory is the discovery and formulation of essential questions that arouse the curiosity of other researchers. Its value lies not in the answers, because the answers are certainly temporary.

Education as the practice of freedom. In the Freirean view, “education as the practice of freedom,” is a critical approach to reality (Freire, 1979, p. 15). Awareness is, in the Freirean sense, a reality check. The more aware students are the more they “reveal” their own realities. Therefore, awareness is not equal to falsely assuming an intellectual position because awareness cannot exist outside of “praxis,” action and reflection go hand-in-hand. Therefore, awareness is a historical consciousness: “It is critical insertion in history, implies that men assume the role of

individuals who make and remake the world. Requires men to create their existence" (Freire, 1979, p. 15). Freire did not refer to awareness as preliminary learning, rather it is a "liberation awareness" a departure from reality away enough to produce demythologizing: "The humanizing work cannot be other than the work of demystification" (Freire, 1979, p. 16). Hence, Freire understood awareness as the most critical look possible to reality, one that "reveals" the myths that deceive and help maintain the reality of the dominant structure (Freire, 1979).

In order to engage students in critical thinking, Freire suggested the coding and decoding method. On the first instance, students are encouraged to think abstractly of a "reality" that is perceived as "dense" or "impenetrable." Only then, students would be able to engage in the "dialectical" movement applying the abstract to their social context. During the stages of decoding students reveal their worldview and "[the] end of decoding is to reach a critical level of knowledge, starting with the experience that the student has to his situation in his real context" (Freire, 1979, p. 17). Students are able to replace their former perception of the concrete as dense and impenetrable with their palpable application on their daily lives, a transition brought about by their practice of critical thinking through the coding and decoding processes.

According to Freire (1996), the dominant class has an edge over the oppressed because to confront the ideological ruse that forms the dominant discourse propagates it through the media—be it on the news, on editorial comments, or even on the script of certain shows, besides of commercial propaganda—the minds of the receivers would have to necessarily work in an epistemological manner all the time. Freire recognized that it is next to impossible to expect media consumers to be on perpetual state of vigilance to guard against media deception, nonetheless, he states that it is feasible to expect media consumers to be aware that while the

television is not a “demon out to crush us, it certainly is not an instrument to save us” (Freire, 1996, p. 50). Freire advocated that a progressive educator should not only know television but use it, and above all discuss it.

It would be naive to expect a television station, from a dominant group, to announce a strike by steelworkers stating that its editorial line is based on their employer’s financial interests. Rather, their speech would struggle to convince that their analysis of the strike takes into account the best interests of the nation (Freire, 1996, p. 49). Therefore, Freire insisted that when consuming media, the receiver should always keep vigilant of media’s persuasive tactics. Stating that the more the target audience gives in to the attitude of consuming media as entertainment or occasion for relaxation the more it opens itself to “stumbling in the understanding of facts and events” (Freire, 1996, p. 50). Freire defended that the critical outlook is always necessary, and further that “only the oppressed can free their oppressors” (Freire, 1979, p. 32). Applying his theory to media consumption it would be up to the oppressed by their mass media consumption to free the media producers, in other words, it is up to the receiver to break the power cycle. Should those oppressed by the dominant ideology reinforced in the mainstream media expect that media producers will tailor their content to better suit their needs? In the Freirean view, this would be a fruitless expectation because “to the oppressor, the conscience, the humanization of others, does not appear as the quest for human fulfillment, but as subversion” (Freire, 1979, p. 32). Indeed, for Freire, no one is better prepared to understand the need for liberation than the oppressed: “The oppressed will not get freedom by chance, but looking for it in their practices and recognizing that it is necessary to fight to get it” (Freire, 1979, p. 31). Freire further sustained that the oppressed are not necessarily unaware that they are crushed, “but

being immersed in the oppressive reality prevents their clear awareness of themselves as oppressed In their alienation, the oppressed wants at all costs to look like the oppressor, imitate him and follow him” (Freire, 1979, p. 31-32). How heavily influenced by the latest trends preached by the mass media are students? Even teachers? As a media consumer, is the average person aware of the level of oppression the media—to the extent that they allow consciously or subconsciously—imposes on them? Freire affirmed that "the oppressed are emotionally dependent" (Freire, 1979, p. 32). Considering the high and increasing media consumption habits among children, could youngsters be emotionally dependent on mass media? Freire insists that “it is not possible to even think about television without having in mind the issue of critical consciousness” (Freire, 1996, p. 109). For Freire, the media in general brought up the problem of a communication process that is impossible to be neutral. Freire moreover explained that mass communication is usually in favor or against something and that the position is not always clearly stated, therefore Freire placed a pivotal importance on the role ideology plays in mass communication.

Research Questions

It is been well documented that media literacy education promotes student critical thinking (Anderson, 2002; Bergman & Radloff, 2009; Livingstone, Bober, & Helsper, 2005; Brickman, Francom, Gormally, Jardeleza, Jordan, Kanizay, & Schutte, 2012; Page, Huong, Chi, & Tien, 2009; Dunlop, 2007; Dysart, 2008; Flores-Koulis, Losinger, Deal, McCarthy, & Rosebrugh, 2011; Graveline, 1998; Inan & Temur, 2012; Kellner, 1995; MacDonald, 2008; Mihailidis, 2008; Morrell, 2002; Orr, 2008; Radford, 2003; Yates, 2000; Yildiz, 2002). Using Freirean critical literacy as theoretical framework, this study investigated how a faith based

media literacy training program advances Catholic Social Teaching, and how Christian school teachers who underwent training in media literacy perceive the link between media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching, this case study aimed to answer the following research questions: 1) How does a faith based media literacy training program promote Catholic Social Teaching? 2) How does a faith based media literacy training program influence participants' understanding of media literacy and its link to Catholic Social Teaching?

The qualitative research method was the most effective in answering research questions that propose an investigation of nuances, “influence,” and an investigation of cultural phenomenon “how,” therefore, this study adopted the case study research method using Freirean critical literacy as its theoretical framework to interpret the data (Yin, 1993). Further, conventional qualitative content analysis is ideal for areas of study in which little theoretical or research literature is available (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002), as it is the case with the current academic research of faith based media literacy.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

This research had a few noteworthy limitations. The small number of seven participants, represented a limitation for applicability of this study’s findings in a large, or significantly different social context. Readers may notice the absence of students’ input or feedback, because in order to focus the scope of investigation this research was centered in teachers’ accounts, capturing their perceptions is the main objective. This research assumed that forming media literate teachers was an effective way to positively influence students to critically analyze mass media messages in their daily lives and to proactively engage mass media production. Likewise, this study carried an underlining assumption that it was paramount that teachers, in all

humanities, have a solid formation on semiotics, media history, and up-to-date media industry context in order to more effectively help students to critically analyze the media messages they consume.

This study was tailored to Catholic education, although aspects of it could potentially be useful on another type of private school or even public. This study mainly intended to serve the Catholic education system. This study built upon findings from previous research within the scholarship on what constitutes effective pedagogical practices for academic achievement on media literacy; it did not attempt in any way to provide a canon for media literacy curricula. Rather it focused on presenting the views of Catholic school teachers after media literacy training. In the future, an action research study could be conducted by adopting this study's findings to develop a K-12 and college-level faith based media literacy program through the lenses of Catholic Social Teaching. In addition, an assessment through students' voice could follow.

Definition of Key Terms

Ideology. Ideology is generally understood as a system of beliefs. Popular use of this term often refers to ideology as something that opposes reality, or that is in some way contrary to truth. Here ideology is rather understood as a system of beliefs independent of its veracity (Althusser, 1971; Hall, 1997; Lewis & Jhally, 1998).

Media. During the last five decades or so, the word "media," plural of "medium," has been used as a singular collective term: the media (Williams, 1974). Social communications scholars largely use media as a singular collective term, hence it is fitting that this study, which is in the intersection of education and media research, does the same.

Character education. This study adopted Lickona's (1992) definition of character education, understood as instruction concerned with developing students' ethical and moral virtues in favor of human dignity and the common good through means of personal rights and responsibilities, all the while supporting students' personal well-being.

Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute. Pseudonym for an educational center dedicated to promoting faith based media literacy education. It offered—at the Center and on school sites—media literacy training to Catholic school teachers and administrators, catechists, religious and lay people interested in learning about the discipline. Catholic nuns ran the center, which was the main research site for this study.

Organization of Dissertation

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the research topic, faith based media literacy; it pointed out the social justice implications of this study. The critical literacy proposed by Paulo Freire (1967, 1970, 1979, 1993, 1996), and Faundez and Freire (1985) were presented as the theoretical framework to ground the study and focus the research needed to answer the research questions. A reflection on the issues of delimitations, limitations, and assumptions was provided; and definitions of key research terms were stated in the closing of the Chapter. Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant literature, starting by showing supporting data that substantiate the widespread media consumption by children and its implications; then, it introduces the discipline of media literacy; and finally, it presents implications of faith based media literacy in Catholic education. In Chapter 3, there is the rationale of why the case study approach is the most adequate to answer the research questions, discussions on the selection of participants, observational instruments, and protocol for data analysis are provided in addition to

considerations regarding validity and reliability, authenticity, and utility. In Chapter 4, the case study is presented encompassing a description of my journey attending the training program, along with interviews with two instructors and five teachers; in addition, the 17 themes that emerged from data analysis—organized into five categories—are provided. Finally, in Chapter 5 answers to research questions are offered along with a discussion of the findings and their implications.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of relevant literature is divided in three parts: first, it explores research on mass media consumption by children; secondly, it reviews relevant literature regarding the discipline of media literacy; and finally it discusses faith based media literacy. This chapter starts by sharing historical data from the Nielsen Online (2008), Pew Internet & American Life (Lenhart, 2005), and the Kaiser Family Foundation (Rideout, et al., 2003; Rideout, et al., 2010) regarding children's media consumption along with scholarly assertions on the topic. The section on media literacy offers an introduction to the discipline and it is organized in: social context; media production; rubric; media literacy effects; new literacy; scholarship development; school curriculum; and teacher training in media literacy. The closing section of this chapter discusses faith based media literacy taking in consideration the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute, subject of this study; the history of the scholarship showing how faith based media literacy in the U.S. informed the larger discipline of media literacy in the country; lastly, a brief overview of Catholic Social Teaching is provided.

Mass Media Consumption by Children

The following presents a succinct historical overview on mass media consumption by children. Research conducted by the University of Maryland in 1995 revealed that American teenagers watch at least 22,000 hours of television by the age of eighteen (Hiebert, 1995). A more recent market research by the Kaiser Family Foundation (2010) showed that American teens, ages 8 to 18, spend over 30 hours watching TV, close to nine hours online, and almost 8 hours playing video games per week (See Table 1). The popularization of the Internet and the

mobility brought by wireless technology only add to the ever increasing numbers of children's consumption of mass media messages. A study by the Pew Internet & American Life (2005) concluded that among teenagers ages 12 to 17, 87% use the Internet and 51% go online daily. The report showed that by the end of 2004, 18 million American teens had been online, and it forecasted 20 million by the end of 2008. (See Table 2). In regards to what they are looking for, researchers found out that 76%, or 16 million teenagers, consume news online, a growth of 38%, since 2000, and 31%, or six million children, use the Internet to access health information, representing a growth of 47%, since 2000 (See Table 3).

Even more impressive is that media consumption by American youth, ages eight through eighteen, has only increased overtime. A Kaiser Family Foundation study that compared media children's habits from 2004 to 2009, found that the average American child spent 7.38 hours a day, up from 6.21 in 2004, either watching television content or the movies, listening to music, on computers, playing video game, or reading print media. Multitasking—consuming more than one media message at once—has increased also from 8.33 hours in 2004 to 10.45 hours five years later (See Table 4).

Watkins (2009) maintained, “The Internet, in a relatively short period of time, has joined and in some cases surpassed as the preferred screen in the household” (Watkins, 2009, p. 17). A survey found that 56% of youngsters agreed with the statement “The Internet is a necessity in life,” as opposed to 42% who chose television instead. On almost every measure, young people regarded the Internet in more favorable terms than they did television (Watkins, 2009, p. 16). Television is no longer the outlet of choice for children as it was for earlier generations. Instead, software tailored to specific age groups is more appealing to the twenty-first century child who

are enticed by the real-time interaction that allows them “to build, create, and interact with each other rather than passively consume the kind of preprogrammed content that television provides. The digital migration continues unabated as children drive enormous pleasure and power from the online world” (Watkins, 2009, p. 15). Research on children’s use of mobile devices—cell phones, audio players, and laptops—encouraged even more media consumption among the same demographic in the same time period, the amount of time dedicated to music players went up from 18% in 2004 to a staggering 76% in 2009; cell phones went from 39% in 2004 to 66% in 2009; and laptop use saw a jump from 12% to 29% in the same time period (See Table 5; Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). It is also alarming if one considers that these children are shaping their worldview through the mass media channels made available by profit-driven conglomerates with very little or inexistent critical guidance. American mass media conglomerates such as Viacom, Turner, Tribune, Comcast, and IHeart Radio, just to name a few, are governed by profit alone, and—outside of the Federal Communications Commission mandates due to the Children’s Television Act (1990) —have no obligation towards children’s education, let alone within a Christian framework.

Table 1
Amount of Media Consumption by American Children 8-18

Medium	Hours per Week
Television	30:03 Hours
Internet	09:03 Hours
Video Games	07:91 Hours

Note. Adapted from *Generation m2: Media in the Lives of 8 to 18-Year-Olds*, p. 16-25, by Rideout et. al, Copyright 2010 by Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation.

Table 2
Internet Impact

Year	Online Teens
2004	18 Million
2008	22 Million

Note. Adapted from *Teens and Technology: Youth Are Leading the Transition to a Fully Wired and Mobile Nation*, p. 35-41, by Lenhart A., Copyright 2005 by Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Table 3
History of Content Consumed

American Adolescents			
Ages 12-17	Content	Year	
12 Million	Online News	2000	
16 Million	Online News	2004	
4 Million	Health Information	2000	
6 Million	Health Information	2004	

Note. Adapted from *Teens and Technology: Youth Are Leading the Transition to a Fully Wired and Mobile Nation*, p. 35-41, by Lenhart A., Copyright 2005 by Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Table 4
Media Consumption Overtime

Year	Hours per Day
2004	06:21 Hours
2009	07:38 Hours
2004 (with multitasking)	08:33 Hours
2009 (with multitasking)	10:45 Hours

Note. Adapted from *Generation m2: Media in the Lives of 8 to 18-Year-Olds*, p. 16-25, by Rideout et. al, Copyright 2010 by Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation.

Table 5
Daily Mobile Media Consumption

Mobile Device	2004	2009
Music Player	18%	76%
Cell Phone	39%	66%
Laptop	12%	29%

Note. Adapted from *Generation m2: Media in the Lives of 8 to 18-Year-Olds*, p. 16-25, by Rideout et. al, Copyright 2010 by Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation.

In addition to the shocking amount of media consumption among teens, researchers have been increasingly concerned with children who grow up in a media saturated environment. The average American home contains 3.5 television sets, with 82% of families having access to cable access or satellite TV; additionally, there are 1.9 DVD players per home, and 1.5 computers, from 74% of families have Internet access; 60% have instant messaging software (See Table 6). The time spent on these gadgets also worry scholars. Children, ages eight through eighteen, use electronic media from two to five hours daily, 44% of them use a computer every day, and 39% play video games daily (See Table 7); 75% of them have a television in their bedroom; the rate

among children aging from zero to six is lower but significantly high, 36% (Vandewater et al., 2006). In fact, children as early as six to 12 months old watch television for an average of one to two hours a day. About one fourth of two-year-olds and two thirds of four-year-olds spend two to four hours watching TV daily. As children grow, regular television viewing increases with a slight decrease when children start going to school, and then it rises up again at early adolescence (See Table 8; Singer & Singer, 2002).

Table 6
Media Apparatus in American Households

Type of media apparatus	Items per household
TV sets	3.5
VCRs/DVD players	1.9
Computers	1.5

Note. Adapted from "Time Well Spent? Relating Television Use to Children's Free Time Activities", p. 181-190, by Vandewater et al., 2006, *Pediatrics*, 117.

Table 7
Daily Media Consumption Habits by Children 8-18

Medium	Viewing Percentage
Computer usage	44%
Video game usage	39%

Note. Adapted from Time Well Spent? Relating Television Use to Children's Free Time Activities, p. 181-190, by Vandewater et al., 2006, *Pediatrics*, 117.

Table 8
Television Consumption by Toddlers

Age	Daily TV Consumption
6 to 12 months	1 to 2 hours
2 years old	Over 2 hours
4 years old	Up to 4 hours

Note. Adapted from *Handbook of Children and the Media*, p. 14-16, by D. Singer & J. Singer, 2002. Beverly Hills: Sage.

A 2003 research study from the Kaiser Family Foundation concluded that 36% of all children six and under have their own TV set in their bedroom (30% of zero- to three-year-olds and 43% of four to six-year-olds); one in four (25%) has their own DVD player; and one in ten (10%) has their own video game console in their room. The study also found that children who

do have such electronics in their bedroom spend more time using them: Children who have a TV in their room spend 14 minutes more in a typical day watching TV and videos/DVDs than children who do not, and those with a video game player spend an average of 15 minutes more playing video games (See Table 9). Within the same demographics, children six years-old and under, another study found that on a daily basis the children spent 1.14 hours playing video games; 44 minutes watching television; 17 minutes watching videos; and 10 minutes using a computer (Rideout et al., 2005). Nielsen Online (2008) concluded that children consume more streams than those over 18, and spend more time watching online video from home. Kids ages two through eleven viewed an average of 51 streams and 118 minutes of online video per person during a given month, while teens 12-17 viewed an average of 74 streams and 132 minutes of online video. Those over 18 viewed an average of 44 streams and 99 minutes of online video. The top 10 online video destinations for kids 2-11 and teens 12-17 demonstrate that kids pursue similar interests both online and off (See Table 10). Younger children gravitate towards sites associated with well-known children's toys and television programming, while teens go online to watch music videos, movie trailers and clips of other users. The unguided consumption of mass media messages put children at risk for health issues (Dysart, 2008; Radford, 2003). While neglecting the development of social skills that are obtained through live social interaction, children spend ever more time consuming the mainstream media's profit-guided depiction of the social world and are at large left by themselves to make meaning of them.

Table 9

Media Consumption by Children 6 Years-Old and Under

Type of Media Consumption	Daily Time Spent
Playing video game	74 minutes
Watching television	44 minutes
Using a computer	17 minutes

Note. Adapted from *Zero to Six: Electronic Media in the Lives of Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers*, p. 6-14, by Rideout et al., Copyright 2003 by Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation.

Table 10

Online Video Consumption

Age	Time spent per month
2 to 11	118 minutes
12 to 17	132 minutes
18 and older	99 minutes

Note. Adapted from *The Video Generation: Kids and Teens Consuming More Online Video Content than Adults at Home*, Copyright 2008 by Nielsen Online.

Hobbs (2011a) attested that children and adolescents’ media consumption without media literacy education or parent guidance cannot be ignored. Hobbes (2011d) detailed, “Educators can’t afford to ignore or trivialize the complex, social, intellectual, and emotional functions of media and popular culture in the lives of young people” (Hobbs, 2011d, p. 6). Young viewers, readers, and listeners not equipped to think critically about mass media messages are doomed to be misguided in their forming conceptions of self, virtue, religion, economy, politics, and justice, to name a few. Educators can help children to protect themselves while consuming media, “or more positively, to understand and to deal effectively with the broader media environment” (Buckingham, 2000, p. 205). Many scholars and public policy makers agreed that children can fall prey of mainstream media marketers, or become “dupes of popular media” (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994, p. 17), but some have preferred a more positive approach. Buckingham (2000) saw kids as critical, hard to please media consumers. Instead of viewing children as passive victims of the media, it has been argued that it might be more productive to recognize their level of media literacy and work with the media messages they already consume.

Viewing them as active users enables us to work with their entertainment—any entertainment—to help them grow. Shooter games, gangsta rap, Pokémon all become tools for parents and teachers to help young people feel stronger, calm their fears, and learn more about themselves. (Jones, 2002, p.18-19)

Therefore, media literacy education “does not aim to shield young people from the influence of the media, and thereby to lead them on to ‘better things,’ but to enable them to make informed decisions on their own behalf” (Buckingham, 2007, p. 146). Instead of protecting children from the media, educators are called to develop students’ understanding of media and participation in critical media production. Media education adopts a student-centered perspective which—alike to Freire’s participatory method (1979)—begins from students’ “existing knowledge and experience of media, rather than the instructional imperatives of the teacher” (Buckingham, 2003, p. 13). The practice of media education is a process of group enquiry, otherwise “it will become either the site of student resistance or, even worse, of student submission to the authority of the teacher” (Masterman, 1985, p. 29). By “letting students bring their own rich media experiences with the blurring of drama and life,” teachers make a connection that have relevance and meaning for pupils, helping them engage with classic literature all-the-while reflecting on their own media consumption habits (Hobbs, 2011d, p. 32). Freirean’s influence was widely noted among media literacy scholars who consistently proposed the challenge of “traditional interactions between teachers and students and between students and the world” (Morrell, Dueñas, Garcia, & López, 2013, p. 17; Freire, 1979).

While it is productive to engage media messages children are already using, guidance is crucial and cannot be dismissed. Scholars warned against giving children the autonomy to be in

control of their media consumption, because it may endanger “the safety of the children themselves” (Livingstone, 2008, p. 35). In fact, Salomon (1983) indicated that children who have contact to mass media messages through adult, or parental guidance, tend to be more mature, and more critical of their social circuits, than peers who lack such assistance. According to Hobbs (2011d), “Oral explaining—with both students and teachers participating—develops reasoning skills that support reading and writing practices across disciplines” (Hobbs, 2011d, p. 36). Hence, educators must be aware of this educational venue, and also incentivize parents to carry on students’ engagement on media awareness beyond the classroom. Media criticism is a pedagogic device that needs to be applied at home collaboratively, because students’ contact with media narratives happens mainly outside the classroom, and educators’—teachers’ or parents’—mediations while the message is being presented is the most effective way to help the child’s understanding, and critical evaluation of the content. In order for this collaboration to take place teachers are called to foster open communication with parents (Epstein, 2001). Guidance in the process of understanding media messages is needed to help children sort out mainstream ideology influences and develop the ability to make sound decisions on their own. According to Fuxa (2012), “We have to prepare children to be critical consumers and creators of media” (Fuxa, 2012, p. 180). When it comes to increasing children’s awareness of media ideology time strengths are limitations faced by working parents and teachers alike, this is why engagement on media consumption must be a task shared by both teachers and parents jointly.

Media Literacy: An Introduction

Worsnop (1994) said that media teachers used the terms "media education," "media study," and "media literacy" practically interchangeably. His personal preference was to use the

term "media education." Media education and media literacy are often used interchangeably, but Buckingham (2007) made a distinction defining media education as "the process of teaching and learning about media, and media *literacy* as the outcome—the knowledge and skills learners acquire," in other words, media literacy is the knowledge and skills learners acquire through media education (Buckingham, 2007, p. 145). More recently, media literacy has been viewed as a multi-disciplinary subject, with a still developing definition, multifaceted in nature (Potter, 2010). Sora (2012) defined media literacy as the ability to read and comprehend media messages, which requires "a basic knowledge of how messages are produced and distributed to media audiences" (Sora, 2012, p. 188). Tyner (1998) asserted that in the context of media literacy as pedagogical tool, the term literacy is amorphous and generic. In a broad sense, a commonly accepted definition of media literacy puts the discipline at the intersection of media education and critical pedagogy. Livingstone (2004) summarized it as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages in a variety of forms" (Aufderheide, 1993; Christ & Potter, 1998; Livingstone, 2004, p. 5).

Although definitions of media literacy are still emerging, most conceptions consider as essential the ability to read, analyze, and evaluate mediated communication (Thoman & Jolls, 2004). Silverblatt (2004) seemed to best synthesize the goal of this discipline: "media literacy should enhance viewers' ability to see connections across media and provide strategies that enable people to critically examine media messages and put media programming into meaningful perspective" (Silverblatt, 2004, p. 35), hence ideological analysis is essential in media literacy education. Critical media literacy is heavily ideologically informed and will most likely be restricted to three aspects: 1) media as constructions of reality; 2) the presence—and absence—

of particular values in media; and 3) the responses of audiences to media (Aufderheide, 1993).

In exploring the essence of media education, Buckingham (2000) was emphatic in pointing out what it is not supposed to be: “Media education is not confined to analyzing the media—much less to some rationalistic notion of ‘critical viewing skills’” (Buckingham, 2000, p. 206).

Buckingham argued that, on the contrary, media education aims to empower students by encouraging their critical participation as cultural producers. For Buckingham, media education aims to develop students’ critical understanding as informed consumers of media, and active participation through the creation of their own media messages. Critical media literacy involves three major dimensions: 1) understanding how media conglomerates operate within the context of economic, political, social, and cultural power; 2) developing consciousness for creating and supporting alternative media; and 3) the educators’ responsibility to form critical-media’s literate students who create their own media messages (Torres & Mercado, 2006).

Social context. Critical media literacy is a set of skills that equips media consumers to analyze media codes and conventions, “criticize stereotypes, dominant values, and ideologies,” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 372), and interpret the multiple meanings and messages within media texts. Exploring critical media literacy, Goodman (2013) pointed out that from the 1960s on there was a shift on media education that focused instruction about the media instead of simply through the media. Media was no longer a tool to learn about other subjects. It was the subject: “There was a sense that students should be encouraged to develop critical attitudes toward the media in general, and toward advertising and television in particular” (Goodman, 2013, p. 13). When discussing the importance of students’ awareness to the context in which media messages are produced, Lewis and Jhally (1998) stressed a need for a contextual rather than a text-centered

approach to media education, with emphasis on political economy; this method is proposed as a way of allowing students to consider how to rethink media systems to create a more democratic media, within the contextual approach to media education, and “the media text is a stage in a process of ideological production” (Lewis & Jhally, 1998, p. 110). Performing textual analysis without examining the cultural and economic conditions in which texts were produced is deemed inadequate. Although for Buckingham & Sefton-Green (1994) through the meaning making process individual and collective identities are defined and negotiated, they also preferred to examine how meaning is socially established and shared, rather than to only look at the dynamics between reader and text. In their view, being critical was understood as a “social practice which takes place within specific social contests and relationships” (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994, p. 208). So, beyond analysis of messages, media literacy is about awareness of why those messages exist and what purpose they serve, and “[media] literacy certainly includes the ability to use and interpret media; but it also involves a much broader analytical understanding” (Buckingham, 2003, p. 38). Besides knowing what media messages are and how they are technically produced, students are expected to know why media messages are produced, who is producing them, and under which socioeconomic context (Buckingham, 2003; Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994; Goodman, 2013; Lewis & Jhally, 1998). Messaris (1998), on the other hand, was concerned with media literacy as device for critical thinking development, and defined media literacy as “knowledge about how the mass media functions in society” (Messaris, 1998, p. 70), with focus on media's economic foundations, organizational structures, psychological effects, social consequences, and representational conventions. Messaris suggested a compound approach encompassing both semiotic-based format analysis and an ideological critic of media

messages. This view, however, implies overlapping and loose concepts that if applied in the classroom without a strict rubric may lead to incoherent readings (Lewis & Jhally, 1998). Potter (2003) described media literacy as a continual process that requires broad perspectives from the receivers. This means that readers must apply a range of skills when interpreting media messages, beyond, reading, viewing, or listening. Media literacy requires receivers to build well-developed knowledge structures acquired by themselves with media production, external information from the social world, and selective reading. Hence, Potter classified media literacy as multidimensional because it obliged receivers to apply their knowledge of emotional, cognitive, aesthetic, and moral domains. According to Potter, “The purpose of media literacy is to increase our control over the interpretative process, and thus increase our appreciation for the media” (Potter, 2003, p. 12), and media literate people are therefore not only able to understand media messages, but are more aware of the levels of meaning they carry. In other words, media literacy empowers receivers because their understanding is enhanced and they are able to more consciously dispute or abide by the ideology behind the media messages they consume.

In defending a more open idea of literacy, scholars hope to form literate students who can critically understand socially constructed meaning, as well as political and economic agendas behind different cultural texts propagated in all media types because although “critical media literacies are preoccupied with encouraging more politically-aware reading, they themselves are not apolitical constructs” (Waterhouse, 2012, p. 132). Rooted in critical literacy, media literacy instruction cannot likewise be separated from an exploration of students’ understanding of relations of power, historic context, and politics in their social world (Apple, 1990; Darder, 1991; Freire, 1970; McLaren, 2007). Critically literate students are equipped, for instance, to

understand that “the production of socially useful information is undermined by the production of profitable information” (Masterman, 1985, p. 16); in other words, profit dictates media representations. Mainstream media is “actively involved in the process of constructing and representing ‘reality’ rather than simply transmitting or reflecting it” (Masterman, 1985, p. 20). Therefore pupils are expected to possess an emancipated worldview and even transformational social action (Freire, 1970), a compelling argument to include media critical pedagogy into formal curricula.

Media production. Ultimately, media literacy aims to equip students to produce their own media messages. Willett (2005) mentioned, “An important step for teachers to take when allowing media into the classroom is to see children as active readers and producers of media texts, rather than passive consumers” (Willett, 2005, p. 143). Moreover, students who are given the opportunity to produce their own media messages are able to externalize their newly acquired media knowledge, which is a powerful strategy of learning by doing. Tatusko (2005) indicated that “[through] their production of media-based stories, the children are reflecting on their consumption of media” (Tatusko, 2005, p. 131). Ferry, Finan, and Silverblatt (1999) argued for the study of media production as part of the media literacy curriculum: “An understanding of media production can work toward the goal of improving the media industry by preparing practitioners who combine technical skills with an understanding of the responsibilities of the media communicator” (Ferry, Finan, & Silverblatt, 1999, p. 84). In Ferry et al.’s view, media production fulfilled a number of learning objectives such as: 1) seeing media production as a construction of reality; 2) developing aesthetic appreciation; 3) understanding the process of media production; developing social skills; 4) examining media literacy issues. Largely, Ferry

et al. (1999) supported a media arts program which promotes media literacy through a combination of production and critical analysis. Tester (1994) reaffirmed Freire (1979): "Media texts and media audiences participate in a dialogically relationship" (Tester, 1994, p. 100). Hence, the process of producing media messages in the classroom allows teachers to mediate more vivid discussions about media.

The creative engagement with media gives children and adolescents "a sense that they are controlling their own representation, that they are in control of their own cultural identity, and are creatively shaping and molding language, style, and self into something new" (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003, p. 21). Similarly, school communities can become more relevant spaces for young people, as they are allowed to voice their experiences and how they are impacted by media, for example. There are indeed "extraordinary symbolic creativity of the multitude of ways in which young people use, humanize, decorate, and invest meanings within their common and immediate life spaces and social practices" (Willis, 1990, p. 6). Within the framework of creative media use and students' perception of their everyday lives through mass media, teachers and students co-create meaningful practices that move beyond the simple recreation of dominant popular culture narratives, it becomes an exercise of self-reflection.

In order to equip students with the technical skills necessary to produce their own media messages, media literacy requires teaching about media language, along with its narrative, codes, and conventions. Explicit instruction in media is a necessary practice because students who are equipped to comprehend the meaning of printed texts may not be as skillful at comprehending images, sound, or multimedia messages. Considine, Horton, and Moorman (2009) said, "The use of both sounds and images enriches instruction, enabling us to reach beyond students whose

comfort zone is the printed page” (Considine, Horton, & Moorman, 2009, p. 474). Scholars recognized that students need to understand the media enough to discern and use visual and interactive languages along with the written text, in order to develop critical thinking skills “to communicate ideas in different formats, and to be responsible for what they do with technology as users and communicators themselves” (Capello, Felini, & Hobbs, 2011, p. 68). Livingstone (2004) proposed a skills-based approach to media literacy and defined four media literacy components: access, analysis, evaluation, and content creation. Each component supports the others as part of a nonlinear, dynamic learning process. Livingstone (2004) added, “Learning to create content helps one to analyze that produced professionally by others; skills in analysis and evaluation open the doors to new uses” (Livingstone, 2004, p. 7). Overall, Livingstone defended that the ultimate goal of media literacy is to form producers of media messages (Livingstone, 2004; Willett, 2005). This idea is echoed by later scholars who defended that “in addition to analyzing and evaluating media text, media literacy focuses attention on media audiences, viewing young people as both consumers and creators of media messages” (Considine et al., 2009, p. 475).

Rubric. A considerable challenge when implementing media literacy instruction is that “it is not a pedagogy in the traditional sense, with firmly established principles, a canon of texts, and tried-and-true teaching procedures” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 373). In accordance with the Freirean model, media literacy instruction would require a) a democratic pedagogy in which teachers share power with students (Freire, 1979; Kellner & Share, 2005); b) peer-based learning motivating students to share their creative efforts and opinions “providing feedback and critique to peers” (Parker, 2010, p. 8; Freire, 1979); and c) forming students’ critical autonomy to analyze

and respond to the media they consume so that “pupils are critical in their own use and understanding of the media when the teacher is not there” (Masterman, 1985, p. 25; Freire 1979). Aiming to provide a guideline for media literacy instruction the Center for Media Literacy (2007)—an educational organization dedicated to promoting and supporting media literacy education as a framework for consuming media content—provides five core concepts for teaching media literacy: 1) all media messages are constructed; 2) media messages are constructed using creative language with its own rules; 3) different people experience the same media message differently; 4) media has embedded value and points of view; and 5) most media are organized to gain profit and/or power. Five questions are recommended to facilitate students’ understanding of each concept: 1) Who created this message? 2) What creative techniques are used to attract my attention? 3) How might different people understand this message differently from me? 4) What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message? and finally, 5) Why is this message being sent? The CML’s five core concepts and questions were based on the work of Thoman (1997). The approach seems to lack the feedback part of the communication cycle. The ultimate goal of media literacy is that in response to mainstream media students are taught how to produce their own media messages.

Scholars have in general struggled to come up with a universal rubric that defined the phases through which the process of media literacy learning is to be developed (Christ & Potter, 1998; Silverblatt, 2004). The elements involved basically refer to 1) the message, considering its ideological content and format; 2) medium, in regards to its ownership and dynamics of social power; 3) receiver, focusing on development of critical reading of media messages, or meaning-making process; and finally, 4) feedback, which is receivers’ engagement on media production

by political action, or by producing their own media messages. Indeed, the element of critical thinking that involves the consideration of attitudes about a topic is facilitated through well structured rubric and curriculum (Ruminski & Hanks, 1995; Wright, 2002). However, among educators there are still many misconceptions of what media literacy is. There must be clear distinction between media literacy from other literacies: 1) media literacy involves providing an informed critical analyze of media messages, rather than simply bashing media agendas; 2) media literacy includes media production, but is not merely limited to its production; 3) media literacy demands the teaching about media rather than solely using multimedia tools in the classroom; 4) media literacy investigates the devices used by the media to normalize behavior or the absence thereof, it goes beyond simply identifying political agendas, stereotypes, or misrepresentations; 5) media literacy provides different perspectives on media messages, rather than analyzing them from a single point-of-view; 6) media literacy advocates for the critically informed media consumption not the ban on media (Hailer & Pacatte, 2007). Over the years, scholars have come up with different—and often overlapping—concepts of media literacy. Most recently, Hobbs (2011a) offered a heavily ideologically informed list of media literacy concepts articulated in three key ideas: 1) media messages are constructed; 2) messages are produced within economic, social, political, historical, and aesthetic context; and 3) the process of message interpretation consists of an interaction between the reader, the text, and the culture (Hobbs, 2011a).

Media literacy effects. Morrell (2002) related ethnographic research on classroom strategies adopted to teach students how to critically read media. Content used included hip-hop songs, films, and television newscasts. The positive experience reached its best when children

produced their own media messages. Morrell's successful tactics were rather simple, but far beyond simplistic. To learn about hip-hop, the class was introduced to an overview of poetry, and was posed the challenge to redefine poetry and the poet's role keeping in mind the importance of different historical periods, and placing their own cultural expression in history. The main goal was to encourage students to re-evaluate their popular culture. Students were then required to present, a poem and a rap song in groups with a consistent interpretation of both pieces, highlighting the specific historical and literary periods to which they belonged. Each group presentation took a class period and the arguments raised were discussed with the whole class in a back and forth format. Student voice was central to the whole process. This concluded two units of the course. On the final project students were asked to write a five to seven pages critical essay on one song of their choice. Morrell (2002) reported, "They were also inspired to create their own critical poems to serve as celebration and social commentary. Their critical investigations of popular texts brought about oral and written critiques similar to those required by college preparatory English classrooms" (Morrell, 2002, p. 74). The most valid of this experience is that students were equipped to, and in fact did, produced their own critical messages linked to social and political issues that matter to them. This example of media literacy applied in the classroom clearly shows an outcome of empowered students able to meaningfully make connections with personal experiences through the critical reading of cultural texts, for which Kellner (1995) argued.

Further, Morrell's (2002) research pointed out to adolescents improving their oral presentation and debate skills, and deepening their understanding of the connections between literature, popular culture, and their everyday lives through the analysis of mainstream media

messages. Besides, the classroom exercises described, alongside with essay, laid a solid foundation for the advancement of traditional academic work while encouraging expression of students' voice. This confirmed Kellner's (1995) argument that literacy, or media literacy, is not a question of *either-or* answer, but both. Similarly, Graveline (1998) argued that "insisting on people representing their own voices, their own stories" as a "central pedagogical tool" is imperative in the classroom (Graveline, 1998, p. 124). Through media literacy students are motivated to use media depictions and narratives to further develop their own concept of how popular media impact their values, and whether or not these should be reevaluated. Peer interaction is crucial in this evaluation process precisely because students learn from and with one another while engaging in authentic dialogue that is centered on their experiences (Graveline, 1998; Kellner, 1995).

Qualitative research—conducted in Hingham, Sharon, and Verona in Massachusetts—focused on the importance of learning new media literacy skills through simple production techniques on a video camera versus digital editing on computer investigated the educational experiences of three groups of forty-eight students who were completing their technology in education master programs. The study examined how participants were affected by different media production activities and concluded that educators need to integrate media production into their curriculum in order to prepare new generations for a media-rich culture (Yildiz, 2002). Thayer (2006) examined the effectiveness of a media literacy program, adapted from the Center for Media Literacy (CML), in a Television Production course relating media literacy to critical thinking skills in education. Statistical evidence revealed that when a media literacy intervention was introduced into a Television Production classroom, students were more capable of higher

order thinking and writing skills associated with critical thinking. Accordingly, the study supported the Florida State Standards in the development of a curriculum of critical thinking, and it added to a growing body of evidence that critical thinking and writing can be enhanced by a specific learning strategy such as media literacy. Yates (2000) examined the effectiveness of media literacy on children's responses to persuasive messages investigating whether media literacy training affects children's attitudes toward a product of high personal relevance. Children exposed to the training had more negative attitudes toward the product on television advertisement. The findings suggest that media literacy training makes students more skeptical of commercial messages because they are more aware of the techniques used by advertisers to persuade viewers. Yates (2000) defended that if children can become more aware of the persuasive techniques used by advertisers, then they will be better equipped to analyze commercials more critically and hopefully make better decisions about products. Moreover, Yates (2000) pontificated that building media literacy training into existing school curricula could be very effective at creating critical viewers.

A large multi-year research on how media literacy can make students more engaged citizens found that students enrolled in the Philip Merrill College of Journalism's J175: Media Literacy course increased their ability to comprehend, evaluate, and analyze media messages in print, video, and audio format. The study used a sample of 239 University of Maryland undergraduates in a pre-post/control quasi-experiment, the largest-ever study of this kind on the post-secondary level. Students from the media literacy course conveyed that media literacy education enables them to look deeper at media. They also expressed considerable negativity about the media's role in society. The study concluded that critical analysis is an essential first

step in teaching media literacy, but more is necessary, hence, recommending a new curricular framework that aims to connect media literacy skills that promote active citizenship. The study suggested that university faculty should adapt their courses to give students—beyond analytical and evaluative tools to critique media—a focused understanding of why a free and diverse media is essential to civil society (Mihailidis, 2008). Research also suggested that media literacy enhances democracy. Media literacy driven curriculum was deemed essential for preparing students to participate in social activism and to become participative and citizens of tomorrow (Anderson, 2002). Scholars have also defended media literacy instruction as early as possible, arguing that “media literacy can be successfully applied in the early childhood classroom within traditional topics of study” (Flores-Koulish et al., 2011, p. 141).

A qualitative study conducted in two multiracial elementary schools explored teaching and using media literacy constructs in daily classroom practice. Media literacy constructs appeared in whole class discussions, inquiry project work, journal writing, and lectures. Teacher-directed instructional practices, especially explaining and question posing, were most commonly associated with the introduction and use of media literacy constructs. Media literacy knowledge appeared most frequently in both learning contexts followed by media literacy skills. As a result, students in both classrooms demonstrated an understanding of and ability to apply the media literacy constructs that appeared in classroom instruction (MacDonald, 2008). Later, Inan and Temur (2012) advocated for media literacy education for children from as early as pre-school all the way to high-school, “not only as a separate course but also integrated into other related courses” (p. 283). In Germany, media literacy education is available in different vocational trainings of kindergarten teachers, in social pedagogy at technical colleges and

universities, often named “media studies” (Grafe, 2012, p. 54). An action research study of a middle school media literacy curriculum demonstrated that students learned media literacy concepts when attention was paid to vocabulary development and to consistent in-class use of popular media sources. In addition, students reported higher awareness on recognizing and analyzing media bias and stereotyping practices. Students also became critical of mass media production techniques and of the media proliferation of the status quo, or reinforcement of dominant media discourse (Orr, 2008).

In regards to health issues, Radford (2003) defended that teaching the habit of critically reading media messages helps students to recognize when they are being manipulated, either through technical construction, such as editing, or through the ideological arguments themselves. After media literacy classes students were prompt to question the authenticity of reality television shows, they were less likely to sympathize with alcohol and tobacco advertising messages, and with people they saw on television. Vietnamese researchers conducted a cross-sectional survey of 2000 high school students and found that media literacy is associated with reducing smoking habits and the likelihood of future smoking among adolescents (Page, et. al, 2009). A study on the effectiveness of media literacy and eating disorder prevention in schools evaluated an eight-week media literacy program with ninth grade female students. An additional six-month follow-up incorporated a non-randomized new student control group. The research found that internalization of the thin ideal, viewing the media as an important source of information, and seeing oneself and others parallel to media ideals reflected significant group differences progressively. Drive for thinness differences were significant initially, but not in follow-up data collection, suggesting that awareness of media stereotypes has helped girls to be

content with their own body image. The study recommended the inclusion of media literacy as a primary eating disorder prevention effort in high schools (Dysart, 2008). When investigating biological issues important to students, researchers asked pupils to evaluate their sources of information and concluded that students should learn content knowledge in order to accurately understand scientific information relevant in their social world (Brickman et al., 2012).

Due to their new found knowledge about media effects on their lives, such as perpetuating dominant discourse and stereotypes, media literacy students have demonstrated negativity towards the media (Dunlop, 2007; Mihailidis, 2008; Orr, 2008). Thirty-four—10th through 12th grade—students participated in ten hours of instruction on media in a suburban Midwestern high school during sociology and anthropology classes. Students were administered pre and post tests to determine effect of media literacy instruction. Findings revealed that students were more aware of racial representation after media literacy instruction. Students' responses to television clips with racial stereotypes were much more complex after media literacy instruction, which suggests a deeper level of critical analysis and an internalization of media literacy curriculum. Students as a group were also more emotionally vested in the analysis of racial stereotypes in the media. In addition, post instruction responses revealed a heightened awareness of the lack of minority representation on television (Dunlop, 2007).

A women's studies course in media literacy was piloted at the Minnesota State University in 2007. This three-credit course offered critical thinking exercises such as evaluating websites, films, and other media types. The instructor applied the media literacy core concepts as described by the Center for Media Literacy. The class's first exercise was to evaluate several advocacy websites based on their accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency, and a student

reported that she never before considered critically analyzing a website:

I just thought if a website had up-to-date information and was reliable that it was a good site to use. Even some of the sites that we looked up today were questionable. I suppose if you want a good website for research, you should probably research the site a little to figure out what it is actually all about! (Radeloff & Bergman, 2009, p. 169)

Concomitantly, another study found that being online does not mean being engaged. A national survey in the U.K. looked at how far and with what success teenagers participate in civic and political activities online. Researchers investigated how young people used the Internet. They specifically searched for peer communication and connection, information search, interactivity, content creation and visiting civic and political websites. Results suggested that the more teens used the Internet the more likely they were to participate in the ways aforementioned. Revealing that demographics play a role with older middle-class girls being more likely to engage in civic or political activity online, “this suggests that young people’s motivation to pursue civic interests online depends on their background and their socialization, and it is not affected by the amount of time spent or levels of expertise online” (Livingstone et. al, 2005, p. 306). This finding illustrated how socialization and information trumps access to the medium when one considers levels of political and civic engagement. Digital media poses new challenges to media literacy educators.

New literacy. Some theorists prefer to refer to media literacy as a new literacy, or critical literacy. This idea encompasses literacy that is learned outside the classroom and also beyond the skills of reading and writing (Street, 1995). In a sense, this type of literacy refers to

the social knowledge, or cultural baggage each person obtains through interactions in their social contexts. Students acquire much of this intellectual capital through the consumption of new media messages. Parker,(2010) wrote, “New media is an umbrella term used to describe technology of the late 20th century and that are new” (Parker, 2010, p. 4). Presently, the mediums considered part of the new media include “the internet, cellular phones, interactive television, computer games, and virtual worlds. Digital media is currently the predominant form of the new media” (Parker, 2010, p. 4). Media literacy educators soon realized that the so-called new media requires skills that the traditional media does not.

After investigating the intersection of in-school and out-of-school information literacy practices of a third grade student a researcher found that the participant’s out-of-school information literacy practices were not valued in the classroom. Outside of school, the eight-year-old immigrant from India, Rajan, used the Internet extensively on a daily basis to check the latest on sports, communicate with friends and family via instant messaging, play video games, and perform information search. Rajan often talked to his teacher about books he was supposedly reading for home school research projects, but confided to the researcher, “I get my facts from the internet.” McTavish (2009) elaborated, “Analysis revealed that the out-of-school and in-school information literacy practices of the focal participant ran parallel to each other and only intersected in ways in which school practices took precedence” (McTavish, 2009, p. 17). The struggle to put forth a new literacy is the begging to the realization that there is more to literacy than reading and writing, because since the late 20th century electronic types of texts—that are likewise embedded in ideology—propagate a normalized structure for power and dominance. Learning how to make sense of these are just as important as being able to discern

print media, or maybe even more due to the fact that students access to electronic media is generally much greater than their contact with books when they are not in school (Ciliberti, Venezky, & Wagner, 1990; Harris & Hodges, 1995; Hull, 1993; Morrell, 2002; Street, 1995).

Educators are then challenged to understand how digital media should be framed within discussion about literacy, instead of simply focusing on the technological integration in the classroom and access to technological tools. Although technology has historically, currently, and will likely in the future shape educational practices, “as teachers we must try to understand this phenomenon in order to grow professionally, to continue to have influence over our teaching environments, and to support student learning” (Parker, 2010, p. 2). Media literacy scholars have long alerted educators to the imbalance of power between mass media producers and consumers, and more recently have called them to further realize how this power dynamic takes place in digital environments, because although media literacy empowers students to respond to issues of media representation and to think critically about how these representations shape perceptions of the world, “these concepts need to be rethought for an era of participatory culture” (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, & Weigel, 2006, p. 58). Therefore, a greater emphasis must be given to integrating online interactivities and virtual realities in media literacy instruction by utilizing digital media. In essence, educators are called to employ what is referred to as digital media literacy (Jenkins et al., 2006; Hobbs, 2011a; Livingstone, 2004). Consuming new media also poses the challenge of how to handle the disclosure of personal information in digital environments and the consequences of doing so from a personal safety perspective to how online conglomerates dispose of such information to advance their ideological agenda and increase revenue. Masterman (1985) noted, “The turning of information into a commodity and

the growth of transnational corporative data systems threaten the very future of all public information” (Masterman, 1985, p. 15). In an era that online corporations collect user data linking user information across its array of platforms from internet browser, email, apps, games, video, and social-networking services so that the information can be pulled together to form consumer profiles which are used for highly targeted advertising, students ought to be educated about the consequences of all that they do online (Associated Press, 2012).

The concept of literacy suggests a set of basic and advanced individual skills applied through social practices, however “the literacy on the internet poses some unique challenges, partly emerged from walking fast changes and the consequent jump between generations regarding the ability of children and adults” (Livingstone, 2008, p. 34). Further, Internet use require numerous forms of literacy. Literacy allows students to make meanings of media messages they consume, generate meaning by the media messages they produce, and engage others in doing the same. (Knobel & Lankshear (2007) said, “Literacies are socially recognized ways of generating, communicating, and negotiating meaningful content through the medium of encoded texts” (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007, p. 6). New literacies on the other hand arise from “a historical period of social, cultural, institutional, economic, and intellectual change that is likely to span many decades” (Knobel & Lankshear, 2011, p. 51). Digital literacy includes adapting personal skills to a reminiscent new medium, “our experiences of the internet will be determined by how we master its core competences, which are not merely operational or technical competencies but, rather complex performances of knowledge assembly, evaluation of information content, searching the internet, and navigating hypertext” (Knobel & Lankshear, 2011, p. 23). Digital literacy has been widely debated in policy circles and has emerged as a

core educational goal, “often associated with fears about the emergence of a ‘digital divide’ between those who are digitally literate and those who are not” (Knobel & Lankshear, 2011, p. 22), leading to investigations about unequal access to information.

While investigating information inequality among young people researchers found that decisions to purchase and use a computer are informed by perceptions of the potential value of computer ownership to the whole family, such perceptions are determined by family cultures, parental occupations, and experience of technologies, hence, raising questions about the efficacy of enhancing technology access as the way to address the issue of information inequality. The idea that young people should be associating the benefits of home computer ownership with intrinsic academic ability is concerning for researchers who conclude that “indication that social and cultural inequalities in terms of access to material and cultural resources are mistakenly reproduced via the educational system as biological inevitabilities” (Facer & Furlong, 2001, p. 465). A European study found that although technology access rates in the old continent are considered high, basic skills alone do not guarantee usage. Researchers concluded that forming a sophisticated user requires “guidance beyond merely attending computer classes or the assistance of relatives, colleagues, or friends, but is also a societal issue, if the goal of universal participation and integration is to be achieved” (Brandtweiner, Donat, & Kerschbaum, 2010, p. 818). The study pointed to media literacy as a solution to the issue, laying out four major dimensions: 1) selecting appropriate contents; 2) evaluating media contents; 3) responding to media contents; and 4) identifying and assessing media production (Brandtweiner, Donat, & Kerschbaum, 2010). Other scholars agreed that “providing home access can alleviate but not overcome the relative disadvantage of coming from a low SES household in terms of the breadth

of internet use, thus warranting continued attention to socioeconomic disadvantage in relation to internet use” (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007, p. 689). When studying the nature, quantity and quality of Internet use, researchers asserted that the much discussed concept of digital exclusion is yet unclear in part because research “rarely considers the structured array of opportunities in people’s everyday lives so as to contextualize the online within the offline” (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007, p. 689). Researchers forecasted that whenever this changes online routes to inclusion will become more important, and the costs of digital exclusion will become more apparent (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). In regards to frequency of Internet use research findings suggested that “going online is a staged process in which the benefits of internet use depend not only on age, gender and SES but also on amount of use and online expertise” (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007, p. 690), in sum, simply ensuring that students have access to computers does not resolve information inequality. Socioeconomic status and literacy level are important factors that need to be taken into consideration as well.

Researchers called for a shift on the solutions proposed about the digital divide from technological access to the need to develop the skills needed for full participation, proposing afterschool programs and informal learning communities as ways to achieve this shift. Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, and Weigel (2006) indicated, “Schools and afterschool programs must devote more attention to fostering what we call the new media literacies: a set of cultural competencies and social skills that young people need in the new media landscape” (Jenkins et al., 2006, p. 4). Participatory culture evolves from social skills developed through collaboration. Jenkins et al. (2006) said, “These skills build on the foundation of traditional literacy, research skills, technical skills, and critical analysis skills taught in the classroom” (Jenkins et al., 2006, p.

4). Addressing the participation gap through digital literacy will also require of students the basic knowledge about media representations and the economic and cultural context in which mass media is produced. Jenkins et al. (2006) indicated that “[new] media literacies include the traditional literacy that evolved with print culture as well as the newer forms of literacy within mass and digital media” (Jenkins et al., 2006, p. 19). So, in sum, digital literacy is a development of media literacy: “[What] we are calling here the new media literacies should be taken as an expansion of, rather than a substitution for, the mass media literacies” (Jenkins et al., 2006, p. 20). Digital literacy hence assumes media literacy skills and raises expectations for teachers and students’ technology use abilities.

Analyzing the future of the media literacy research Hobbs (2011c) proposed three major areas of development: 1) focus on learning outcomes; 2) understanding how learning transfers from school to home and beyond; and 3) finally, increasing interdisciplinary collaboration. New media literacy is the most recent trend in media literacy research; it is interdisciplinary in nature. Chen & Wang (2011) classified new media literacy as a scholarship focused on the phenomenon of media convergence—traditional media being consumed through the Internet—it will be interesting for media literacy educators to note how the format of media messages develop in mobile devices in order promote both increased consumption and maximized revenue. Some of the goals of enhancing new media literacy or digital media literacy are to help students engage in democracy as citizens, and use creative skills to express themselves (Couvering, Livingstone, & Thumim, 2005). Scholars anticipate structural changes in schools to accommodate media education. Lee (2010) indicated, “In the new age, media education is going to have a paradigm shift. The connection between media education and the use of new communication technologies

becomes the central concern of media educators around the world” (Lee, 2010, p. 2). By 2021 schools will have to “more clearly distinguish and prioritize: 1) student acquisition of digital media operational skills, 2) critical thinking skills around the way new media communicate, and 3) the role of media in society, culture and identity” (Daunic, 2011, p. 210). Concerns about the digital divide represent the latest development in a “long-standing struggle between critical and enlightenment positions whose outcome will influence who will have the power to benefit from information and communication in a technologically-mediated twenty-first century” (Livingstone, 2004, p. 12). The skills necessary to perform meaningful technological engagement are key for 21st century citizens, and media literacy training is critical in acquiring such skills.

Scholarship development. I draw from Silverblatt (2001) to provide a brief overview of the media literacy scholarship development in the United States and abroad. Media literacy is currently seen as an established field of study within the international academic community. England and Australia have emerged as pioneers in the discipline of media education, establishing performance and content standards, norm-referenced tests, and pre-service university training. These countries’ preeminence in the field is largely attributed to the work of the Association for Media Literacy (AML), a membership organization for professional educators. Canada also has its place in the spotlight. Since 1987, the province of Ontario has had a media education requirement for grades 7 through 12. Other countries that have made significant progress into the scholarship are: New Zealand, Chile, India, Scotland, South Africa, Japan, France, Italy, Spain, and Jordan. The United States, a major producer and distributor of mainstream media messages worldwide, still lags behind on media literacy in comparison to

major English-speaking countries. It was not until 1992, that the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy, sponsored by the Aspen Institute in December 1992, noted the irony that while the United States is the leading producer of international mass media, media literacy was still in its infancy in the country, going on to name it a challenge in the U.S. Kubey (1998) examined the political, economic, historic, and cultural explanations for this disparity. The research relies on formal documents and newsletters, interviews with leading media education researchers and teachers from numerous nations, and site visits to five countries. The main factors pointed to as causing the American media education disadvantage are: The U.S. physical size, its highly heterogeneous population, resistance to the federal government's centralization of educational or broadcasting policies, the fact that Americans export far more media products than import, and unwillingness to invest on the popular arts at school settings. Kubey highlighted that the media literacy movement gained momentum in the United States with a number of professional associations promoting media literacy, including, the Center for Media Literacy in Los Angeles, the National Telemedia Council in Madison, Wisconsin, and the New Mexico Media Literacy Project.

In the late 1990s, the National Council of Teachers of English passed a resolution that media literacy courses should be counted as English credit for admission to universities and colleges, all fifty state curricular framework eventually added one or more elements calling for some form of media education, although teacher training programs on media literacy are very scarce. Kubey also noted that while the majority of the states have included media education on their educational standards, the gap remained because most teachers did not have formal training, and most curriculums did not integrate media literacy, with exception of New Mexico,

Philadelphia, and California, where institutions of higher education have become involved in the field of media literacy.

School curriculum. In search for a more socially just evaluation of students' literacy proficiency, scholars have questioned educational systems standards for students' mastery evaluation based on dominant groups' notions of literacy, which at-large disregards the knowledge students from minority groups obtain from nonschool literacy practices (Mahiri, 1998). Thus, scholars have called for a school literacy that takes into consideration relevant aspects of students' social mingling and this entails the media messages they consume as well. More recently, in the United States, different federal agencies—U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the U.S. Department of Education, and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)—led initiatives to encourage media literacy education.

In 2010, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers agreed to include media literacy in the Common State Core Standards (Hobbs, 2011a). Implementing the instructional practices of media literacy places new demands on faculty, hence “shifting expectations about the core practices of teaching and learning” (Hobbs, 2011b, p. 602). The Common Core State Standards for grades K-12 released by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) were developed in a collaborative effort among content experts, states, teachers, school administrators, and parents. Hobbs (2011d) said, “Digital and media literacy education is well aligned with Common Core State Standards” (Hobbs, 2011d, p. 50). The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) define digital and media literacy as research and media skills that are integrated throughout the Standards as benchmarks. Scholars were optimistic about the first

national mandate for media literacy education, even to the point of referring to the legislation as a “promising improvement” (Daunic, 2011, p. 209), and offering teachers ideas on how to incorporate media literacy instruction into classroom practice as a way of complying with the new requirements (Hobbs, 2011a).

Scholars have longed argued for revision of school curriculum in favor of a greater emphasis in media literacy, and particularly in critical media production, having advocated for the development of “critical media pedagogies that result in the production of critical media” (Morrell et al., 2013, p. 17). Beyond advocating for media studies as content area, scholars have pushed for media production as literacy, “as a set of fundamental skills with applications across all substantive areas of K-12 education” (Morrell et al., 2013, p.167). Additionally proposing separate standards for incorporating media education into each grade level and discipline. Media production is put here in the context of Freire’s “problem posing” (Freire, 1970), in which students are encouraged to produce their own media messages in order to expose and debate social inequities. This pedagogical strategy counteracts traditional education that “often encourages working class students to participate as uncritical consumers of state-sanctioned knowledge” (Morrell et al., 2013, p. 17). Structural changes to school curriculum to widen media literacy instruction is seen as necessary to liberate student and enhance democracy. A joint report from the United Nations, Alliance of Civilizations, UNESCO, European Commission, and Grupo Comunicar called policy-makers to “overcome the perceived risks that media education might threaten governmental power, national sovereignty and even the cultural identity of a country,” further stating that it can in fact empower society as a whole (Frau-Meigs & Torrent, 2009, p. 20).

Teacher training in media literacy. Several media literacy scholars pointed to the university as the critical setting for the dissemination of media literacy programs to equip teachers (Al-Humaidan et al., 2011; Damico, 2004; DeAbreu, 2008; Gainer, 2010; Ian & Temur, 2012; Keller-Raber, 1995; Kellner & Share, 2005; Kubey, 1998; Schmidt, 2012; Silverblatt, 2001). Silverblatt (2001) identified media literacy courses and programs available at a number of colleges, including Webster University, New York University, Babson College, Appalachian State University, Bishop's University, Seattle Pacific, McGill University, University of Oregon, and the University of Southampton, and defended that media literacy will ultimately cause a reform movement in higher education, as communication departments rethink their responsibilities to broadly educate citizens in the media age.

In 2008, 72 colleges or universities in the United States offered courses or programs in media literacy, mostly found in communication departments than in schools of education (DeAbreu, 2008). According to Kellner and Share (2005), “A big challenge for media literacy in the U.S. is thus to enter into teacher training programs and departments of education” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 15). In a 2012 poll all faculty considered media literacy education important, few actually taught about media, and most were not comfortable using media as an instructional tool or integrating media literacy lessons into their existing courses (Schmidt, 2012). Schmidt (2012) indicated that “[there] are several barriers to faculty involvement: lack of media qualifications, lack of time for planning and implementation, limiting course guidelines, and the perception that such learning would be better located in another class” (Schmidt, 2012, p. 16). Schmidt suggested that institutions of higher education should focus on continued professional development in order to promote media literacy. Similarly, Inan and Temur (2012) defended the

creation of media literacy non-thesis master's programs in which teachers could be certified in media literacy instruction as a way to promote the adoption of media literacy in the curricula.

Because media literacy is not recognized as a discipline, and there are no state license requirements for students, as consequence faculty lack training, “by and large, schools of education have yet to discover media literacy” (Hobbs, 2004a, p. 56). The lack of specific media literacy programs in schools of education demonstrate that educators are still to wake up to the new illiteracy that plagues the 21st century, and “interested teachers must pick up the skills on their own or through in-service courses” (Goodman, 2013, p. 100). Then, it is up to teachers to figure it out how to insert media literacy practices within the curriculum. Kellner & Share (2005) offered, “Teacher training programmes that specifically focus on media education in the USA are few and far between” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 379). Academic research has repeatedly shown the positive outcome of media literacy, several scholars indeed agree that media literacy education can enhance young students comprehension, analysis, and critical thinking skills (Banerjee & Greene, 2006; Hobbs, 2004b; Paradise, 2011; Pinkleton, Austin, Cohen, Chen, & Fitzgerald, 2008; Scharrer, 2005).

Nonetheless, there is little research on the dynamics involved on implementing media literacy curricula. A study attempted to determine whether urban schools are preparing pre-service teachers to teach media literacy in order to meet state media literacy education standards and to identify model media literacy education standards which can be used to develop media literacy education curriculum for schools and colleges of education. Findings revealed that professors are implementing media literacy skills in their pre-service teacher methods courses, however, they are doing so in very particular areas, with that, only certain media genres are

being accessed, analyzed, and evaluated. The study concluded that in theory, professors may support the idea of media literacy but they were not associating all areas of media literacy with their courses (Sellers-Clark, 2006).

In a more holistic approach, Keller-Raber's (1995) found that successful student mastery of media literacy required funding, administrative and district level support, community involvement, teachers' cooperation and flexibility, incentive and recognition of student produced media messages, and media literacy lessons centered on student-voice as crucial factors on forming media literate students. The literature still lacks research on teachers' training for integrating media literacy in the classroom. This study was intended to make a contribution to the scholarship regarding effects of teacher training in media literacy. Hobbs (2011c) identified opportunities for research in media literacy pointing to the need of "a new level of precision in designing, implementing, describing and analyzing student engagement, teacher motivation, instructional practices and learning environments" (Hobbs, 2011c, p. 30). Media literacy core competencies were expected to be developed at every grade level across disciplines; "there are also opportunities to include media literacy studies in elementary classrooms" (Morrell et al., 2013, p. 166). But early childhood educators were lagging behind, "there are few case studies of media literacy education in the context of K-6 education" (Al-Humaidan, Cabrai, Ebrahimi, Hobbs, & Yoon, 2011, p.155). Scholars point to the general lack of professional development materials and curriculum resources available to teachers as reasons for the gap on research and argued that "case studies of effective use of mass media, popular culture, media, and digital technologies in the context of K-6 education can help develop this field" (Al-Humaidan et al., 2011, p.155). One of the goals of this study was to make a contribution to the scholarship as it

investigates the influence of media literacy training in teachers' practice.

In America, the growth of media literacy is emerging in despite of lack of institutionalization and funding, thanks to the effort of devoted teachers. Hobbs (2004) detailed, "Media literacy education depends on the courage and perseverance of individual teachers who are inspired and motivated by a wide range of different understandings about the role of them as media and popular culture in society" (Hobbs, 2004a, p. 56). However, limited time and funds devoted to professional development in most school districts deprive teachers from developing technical skills they need to fully integrate media literacy into their practice (Goodman, 2013). Such challenges, Goodman argued, stem in part from negative perceptions many educators have towards media literacy education, which was widely seen as entertainment for students and a source of distraction. Goodman continued, "Devoid of those academic rituals that supposedly give a subject its weight and rigor, such as tests, book reports, and nightly homework assignments, media education has not been considered to be academically serious subject matter" (Goodman, 2013, p. 101). Therefore, teaching visual literacy, applied semiotics, juxtaposing language and images, producing multimedia messages extrapolate the framework of the written word, which the current educational system is largely based on. Lacking proper training, teachers are then forced "to learn on the job how to become media producers themselves" in order to help students develop their media production skills," far from ideal (Morrell et al., 2013, p. 165). While some teachers have argued that this marginalization frees them to be more independent and innovative (DeAbreu, 2008), Goodman argued that the lack of institutional and financial support has hindered the overall growth of the field, and warns to the risk of isolating media literacy efforts from the communities they are designed to serve as a result of educators

being forced to promote media literacy outside the school curriculum (Goodman, 2013, p. 101).

In China, scholars argued for inclusion of media education in the official curriculum in Hong Kong, on both primary and secondary levels. According to Cheung (2005), “It is our job to make use of media education to prevent the further exploitation of children by the mass media” (Cheung, 2005, p. 363). It is implied that educators have the responsibility to encourage students to decode and question media messages’ values, but they are unable to do so, if the larger context of schooling does not support this important initiative. Gainer (2010) added, “Teachers interested in critical media literacy must make efforts to create space in the curriculum for all students, regardless of academic track, to debate culture through collective analysis of media and creation of alternative representations” (Gainer, 2010, p. 372). In practice, it translates into 1) making the room in the curriculum for integration of media literacy, which is mainly concerning how to teach rather than what to teach; and 2) forming media literate teachers so that they can help students. Presently, there are three national media literacy organizations in the United States: the Center for Media Literacy (CML), the Alliance for a Media Literate America (AMLA), and the Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME); at large, American media education depends heavily on the dedication of standalone educators and smaller organizations (Gainer, 2010), the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute—pseudonym— is one such organization.

Faith Based Media Literacy

Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute. A 2010 brochure from the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute explained that the organization managed by Catholic religious women offers a pioneer program for teacher training in media literacy, an Advanced Certificate in Media

Literacy designed for educators. The certificate is recognized by two American archdioceses—encompassing 14 suffragan dioceses—the Department of Catholic Schools, and the Department of Religious Education for Continuing Education and Recertification as a Catechist Specialization. The program is unique as it partners with the dioceses to offer teachers’ certification in media literacy. The two archdioceses recognize this certificate as a Catechist Specialization. One diocese recognizes the Certificate for re-certification of the Basic Catechist Certificate.

The Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute was founded in 1995 with the mission to encourage and promote what it calls media mindfulness within the context of culture, education and faith formation. Therefore, the activities of the institute were centered on a) promoting media literacy education in schools and faith communities; b) providing a forum to encourage those involved in adult faith formation (parents, educators, catechists, pastoral ministers, clergy, religious, and seminarians) to explore new ways to bring the Gospel and culture closer together through the development of critical thinking skills about entertainment and information media; c) creating seminars and workshops especially for adults and adolescents on the world of media so as to become co-creators of a culture of communication centered on the dignity of the human person; d) collaborating with the media education efforts of individuals and groups who share similar goals; e) integrating media mindfulness with catechesis, ongoing faith formation for all ages, and spirituality. The program specifically aimed to “train the trainers” to teach media literacy skills for home, school, and the parishes’ various ministries.

History. The Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute is part of a heavily Catholic informed history of media literacy education in America. The roots of faith based media literacy

in the U.S. are in fact intertwined with the history of media literacy itself in the country. Jesuit priest, John Culkin, Ph.D. (1928-1993) was a pioneer advocate for media literacy education; his academic formation in film studies and friendship with world renowned mass communications theorist Marshall McLuhan shaped Culkin's work promoting media literacy initiatives in the early 1960s and granted him the recognition of being the founding father of media literacy education in the United States (Moody, 2003; Hailer & Pacatte, 2007). In 1969, Father Culkin founded the Center for Understanding Media in NYC, which he served as executive director. In the following years, his published work included *Films Deliver: Teaching Creatively with Film* (1970) co-authored with Anthony Schillac; *Films Kids Like* (1973) in collaboration with the American Library Association; *From Film Studies to Media Studies* (1974) in the *Media & Methods* journal; and *Doing the Media: A Portfolio of Activities, Ideas, and Resources* (1978) published by the Center for Understanding Media (Baker, 2013).

In the Catholic tradition, Sr. Elizabeth Thoman is a notable media literacy scholar from the 1970s. In 1977, Thoman founded the Center for Media and Values, in Los Angeles, California (Baker, 2013), and published a groundbreaking magazine *Media & Values* that served as “a forum in which to discuss the social and cultural implications of new communication technology” (Iaquinto & Keeler, 2012, p. 15). Two decades later, in 1989, the Center for Media and Values was renamed the Center for Media Literacy (CML) and branched its work out from a mainly faith based focus, and it is today recognized as one of the most influential national organizations in the field (Martens, 2010). In 1993, the Center for Media and Values produced—in partnership with the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA)—the first official faith-based media literacy curriculum developed for Catholic classrooms and parishes.

The potential reach for the curriculum at the time was 7.6 million students in Catholic education in the U.S. (Jaquinto & Keeler, 2012). A couple of years later, in 1995, Sr. Thoman testified at the Congressional hearing on Television Violence, and in the following year the Center for Media Literacy held the second National Media Literacy Conference in Los Angeles. By the 1980s, the efforts of educators like Father Culkin and Sr. Thoman combined with Pope John Paul II's focus on evangelization through media education produced a ripple effect, and media literacy education was in the forefront of educational topics discussed by Church leaders in the U.S. In 1982, the U.S. Bishops publish the *Media Mirror: A Study Guide on Christian Values on Television*, and in 1998, the NCEA included a media literacy mini-conference during its annual meeting (Baker, 2013). At neighboring Canada, another Jesuit priest is credited with igniting faith based media literacy in that country. In 1985, the Jesuit Communication Project (JCP) was founded by Father John Pungente, and it sponsored—with the help of the Association for Media Literacy—the first North American Media Education Conference, which took place in Guelph, Ontario, in the following year. Father Pungent is currently the President of the Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations. Presently, in the U.S., the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute, subject of this study, is the most notorious initiative in faith based media literacy (Baker, 2013).

Media literacy: A social justice issue. Masterman (1985) stated that the ideological power of the media is proportionate to the apparent normalization of their representations; in Masterman's view the influential power of a medium lay on how well it passes off as "real, true, universal and necessary what are inevitably selective and value-laden constructions," permeated by the particular interest and ideologies of mass media producers (Masterman, 1985, p. 21). A

decade later, Kellner (1995) explored the ramifications of the media's ideological power, asserting that "media culture is a form of pedagogy that teaches proper and improper behavior, gender roles, values, and knowledge of the world" (Kellner, 1995, p. 249). Further, Kellner and Share (2005) pointed out that individuals are often unaware of how they are themselves educated and shaped by media culture because "its pedagogy is frequently invisible and unconscious" (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 372). Hence, they called for critical approaches to help people understand how the media constructs meaning, influences audiences, and impose their values. Kellner and Share said, "Students need to be empowered to critically negotiate meanings, engage with the problems of misrepresentations and under-representations" (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 382). Their hope was that through media literacy people would be more discriminating of the media they consume, and be empowered by producing alternative media messages. So, they called on teachers to equip students with the tools that allow them to negotiate their own ideology, or worldview, with that of others that can be more or less predominant in their social context. Masterman (1985) saw media education as an education for democracy, as a tool to subvert the status quo of power in mainstream media consumption.

Media education then is one of the few instruments which teachers and students possess for beginning to challenge the great inequalities in knowledge and power which exist between those who manufacture information in their own interests and those who consume it innocently as news or entertainment. (Masterman, 1985, p. 11)

In an effort to show how mass media is intrinsically connected with socioeconomic exploitation, Masterman went further to explain the mass media business model and how it shapes its messaging, Masterman (1985) used commodities as a metaphor. In economy there are

three types of commodities: primary, intermediate, and end product— as in, wheat, flour, bread—“the audiences of the mass media are intermediate products. Like other factors of production, they are consumed in producing, i.e., selling, the end product” (Masterman, 1985, p. 22). Indeed, the mainstream media is in the business of delivering an audience to advertisers, “[combining] effective brands with lifestyle market segmentation, companies pinpoint ever more specific populations through identifying particular cultural and social values in order to sell their goods and services by appealing to their deepest—often unknown—needs, fears, and desires” (Caccamo, 2009, p. 301). Looking at the last 50 years of television, it is valuable to recognize “the signs of individualization from the very early years of television (and before) in strategies of audience segmentation,” which are meant to enhance advertising sales (Livingstone, 2009, p. 157); therefore “media education has a vitally important democratic role to play within society, a role which is counter-hegemonic and honourably subversive of established authority” (Masterman, 1985, p. 199). The propagation of media literacy is pointed as essential. Fast-forward twenty years, and this topic is still relevant despite the developments on media literacy during this period of time. Kellner and Share (2005) linked media literacy to radical democracy, and still envisioned a social context in which media consumers would have critical skills and master the use of media as instruments to enhance democracy. According to Kellner and Share, “Technologies that could help produce the end of participatory democracy, by transforming politics into media spectacles and the battle of images and by turning spectators into passive consumers, could also be used to help invigorate democratic debate and participation” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 372-373). In a media literate society technologies have become tools for young students and ordinary citizens to promote democracy and social advancement (Kellner &

Share, 2005). A decade later, and more training in media literacy is still needed to achieve the aspired media literate society.

Using the literature on media and social change, media literacy, and media advocacy, Marshall (2003) examined the relationship between people involved in social protest and the media coverage. Analysis of more than 4,000 media reports suggested that media and big business have often conspired to produce coverage about a controversial issue before social groups entered the mass media arena, and further, that a social protest group's level of literacy with regard to media practices was closely tied to that group's ability to champion their cause. Beyond reading the word, a literate person should be able to read the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Media literacy is an extension of other literacies (Kane, 2003; Potter, 2005), and aims precisely to form critical thinkers (Petress, 2004). The main goal of media literacy education is to help students to be aware of the relationship between their own culture and the ideology portrayed in the media (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Media narratives shape public opinion perception of reality (Habermas, 1989). All media messages are ideologically constructed, in other words, the media serves its own agenda, which is heavily ideologically informed and commonly has financial profit goals. The mass media indoctrinate and control mass culture shaping public opinion. The perceived free population is “generally unaware of the extent to which they are manipulated, managed, and conditioned by the media” (Key, 1989, p. 95).

Media influence is a social justice issue, given that non-elites are more affected by the media than elites. Graber (1982) argued that the receiver's intellectual resources will determine to what extent media agenda is more or less influential on forming the receiver's worldview. Media messages represent one of the many sources of information available for elites. These

messages are analyzed in the light of all the wealth of information elites are able to accumulate. So elites make informed conscious decisions of whether to incorporate a media message, only part of it, or reject it completely. On the other hand, non-elites have the media as their sole source of information. The receiver is bound to interpret media messages according to his or her own worldview. Eco (1979) said, “The reader approaches a text from a personal ideological perspective, even when he is not aware of this” (Eco, 1979, p. 22). Media literacy offers an effective approach to examine an unjust social order and its consequences on the lives of poor students, and how schools play a critical role in this context. Through dialogue and reflection critical pedagogy motivates the constant challenging of social power structures and their impact on the lives of youngsters (Apple, 1990).

In today’s society, mainstream media messages are decisive in setting national agendas on both popular culture and politics in America. Perse (2001) said, “The media agenda does not merely establish a set of issue priorities in the public; it may also set the criteria that the public use to judge the effectiveness of political leaders” (Perse, 2001). This is exactly where media literacy can come in handy helping students to form a critical reception of influential media messages. Humme (1993) commented, “Part of the reason for this influence is that our nation is flooded with unmediated information. People simply do not know where to turn for guidance” (Humme, 1993, p. 68). Media literate educators can play a fundamental role in ending this void. The scholarship consistently argues that critical media studies promote students’ empowerment, multicultural awareness, motivation for learning, and the lifelong habit of critical thinking and positive acting (Considine & Haley, 1992; Reutzel & Cooter, 1992; Semali, 2000; Sinatra, 1990; Smith, 1984), hence, forming media literate students promotes social justice. Integrating media

literacy in the curriculum allows students to find new ways of thinking that can indeed make a difference on their own lives and on their communities (Sholle & Denski, 1993). Including media literacy in the K-12 curriculum would foster the balance of power in the relationship between students and mass media.

There seems to be a general assumption that deconstructing media messages through the lenses of feminism, gender studies, or Marxism is critical thinking because such ideologies are put forth from oppressed groups. However, if a teacher is to deconstruct media messages through the lenses of the Judeo-Christian tradition, then it would be merely indoctrination of students, because after all the Judeo-Christian tradition is the Western dominant religious ideology, such view is in itself oppressive. According to Morrell (2002), "Any investigation of popular culture must emanate from and serve the interests of members of marginalized groups" (Morrell, 2002, p. 75). The marginalized groups are invited to explore their own social and cultural realities, forming personal conclusions, and hopefully politically engage on social reform, as Freire envisioned, "unveiling . . . reality and thereby coming to know it critically" (Freire, 1996, p. 51). Hence, critical thinking is translated into liberating knowledge for oppressed groups, who beyond enjoying the intellectual breakthrough are also empowered to take social action in voicing their viewpoint.

Genuine media literacy provides different viewpoints of a message (Hailer & Pacatte, 2007). Excluding the Judeo-Christian ideology from the acceptable pool of ideologies that can be useful for deconstructing media messages that oppresses the values held by the people who hold such ideology is in itself oppressive. Further, the reader cannot lose sight of the fact that the critical thinking fostered by media literacy is not about providing the right answers. It is about

asking questions relevant to the social experience of students. In today's society media literacy is paramount to develop students' inclination to critical thinking because of its predominance, so much so that people today experience life through their media experiences (John Paul II, 2005).

Anti-Catholic media. Fiske (1987) defended that media messages demand an ideological analysis in order to be fully understood. According to Fiske, "A text is the site of struggles for meaning that reproduce the conflicts of interest between the producers and consumers of the cultural commodity" (Fiske, 1987, p. 14). Media messages are then the site of conflict between their forces of production and modes of reception. Fiske argued that because all media messages are ideologically constructed, receivers should always inquire about the larger ideology a determined message serves. Receivers are urged to look into what values are represented, misrepresented, or omitted in order to identify the dominant ideology underlying the message. Take for instance the exploitation of contraception, sex, and violence in American media. Streitmatter (2004) said, "American magazines and newspapers were clearly instrumental in popularizing the birth control pill and, thereby, bringing about social and cultural changes that otherwise would have occurred much more slowly, if at all" (Streitmatter, 2004, p. 11). During the 1960s, for instance, mainstream news magazines like *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Fortune*, the *New York Times*, and the most popular women's magazines in America were unanimous and emphatic in their support of what the media called "the magic pill," the media at large downplayed the downsides of artificial contraception. According to Streitmatter, "In choosing to promote the birth control pill, the country's magazines and newspapers took a position in direct opposition to the Catholic Church" (Streitmatter, 2004, p. 8).

Pope Paul VI's words on the *Humanae Vitae* (1968) encyclical turned out to be

prophetic. The Holy Father Paul VI taught about the dignity of human life, and the snowball effect that artificial contraception would have in devaluing human life and promoting mass abortions. Indeed, what started under the label of liberation against sexual repression became media obsession as soon as producers realized that sex sells. The television show *All in the Family* (Lear, 1971) was pioneer on exploring sexuality on American primetime. By 1969 CBS had spread the sexual appeal to the network's main programs: *The Ed Sullivan Show* (Moffitt, 1948), *The Jackie Gleason Show* (Brunetta, 1952), and the *Red Skelton Show* (Gaut, 1951). These came accompanied by well delineated demographics that had buying power and were especially interested in sex, the college-educated-early-twenties, therefore:

A small number of creative thinkers began to speculate that if a program could use sexual content to lure the huge population of the twenty-something viewers to a particular TV show and the items advertised on it, those men and women would remain faithful to a brand—Breck shampoo, Crest toothpaste, Lay's potato chips—for the rest of their product buying lives. (Streitmatter, 2004, p. 59)

The media business model delivers an audience to advertisers for profit, and in order to do so, it often challenges the social norm because what is new and shocking attracts audiences. Regarding exacerbated violence in the media, Potter (2003) indentified five stakeholder groups that directly contribute to the problem of proliferation of media messages that glorify violent behavior, they are: the public, entertainment producers, policymakers, researchers, and the press. According to Potter, "The people within each group usually want a solution that places the blame and the burden on the other groups, so that their own needs and lifestyle are not hindered" (Potter, 2003, p. 228). The growing media exploitation of human suffering is seen on the ever

more violent video-games, the bloody news media coverage, the large number of television cop shows, and the nothing-is-off-limits Hollywood blockbusters. The most concerning aspect of this is that effects of media messages operate on both the physical and the moral levels (Hill, 2006). American media corporations' profit goals trumps any religious moral code, hence, their messages are often at odds with Judeo-Christian values.

Fostering Catholic Social Teaching through media education. Catholic Social Teaching provides a framework to understand and interpret social conditions in light of the Gospel. According to Plitt, Belanger, and Belanger (2012), "We are called to first examine these conditions in light of the principles of human dignity, the common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity for all people, with particular attention to people who are poor and vulnerable" (Plitt, Belanger, & Belanger, 2012, p. 124). These principles were meant to guide the faithful when engaging in action for justice in issues like civil rights, peace, poverty, hunger, workers' rights, housing, child welfare, immigration, environmental preservation, among others. Catholic Social Teaching stemmed from the biblical calling to pursue justice "Justice, justice alone shall you pursue, so that you may live and possess the land the Lord, your God, is giving you" (*Oxford Annotated Bible* RSV, Deuteronomy 16:20). Old and New Testaments instructed the faithful to be just toward the most vulnerable people: "You shall not pervert justice for the needy among you" (Exodus 23:6), and in Jesus' words:

Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.
(Matthew 25:34-36)

Starting with *Rerum Novarum* (1891) published by Leo XIII (1878-1903), the Pope focused the Church's attention to the long standing tradition of Church efforts in the promotion of social justice, which go back to the very foundation of the Church, were documented through the early centuries, and served as support for the teachings on *Rerum Novarum* (Heft, 2006). Heft (2006) indicated that "[successive] popes have continued to write about the application of the Gospel to the social order" (Heft, 2006, p. 13). Documents issued by Popes and Church councils and synods governed Catholic Social Teaching. The purpose of Catholic Social Teaching was to offer the faithful principles to be applied in social questions (Belanger, & Belanger, 2012). The core of Catholic Social Teaching can be found in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004), but over the years leading up to the publication of the *Compendium*, Bishops around the globe wrote documents connecting Catholic Social Teaching to the specific cultural, socioeconomic challenges, and idiosyncrasies of their flocks in their particular geographical territories. McLoughline (2012) elaborated, "Implicit within our Bishop's the common good and the Catholic Church's social teaching is a strong sense of the CST as a branch of moral teaching based on sound doctrine" (McLoughlin, 2012, p. 165).

In the United States, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops organized Catholic Social Teaching into seven principles: 1) life and dignity of the human person; 2) call to family, community, and participation; 3) rights and responsibilities; 4) option for the poor and vulnerable; 5) The dignity of work and the rights of workers; 6) solidarity; and 7) care for God's creation (USCCB, 1986). In attempting to develop an in-depth understanding of how media literacy training can advance Catholic Social Teaching, this study's research questions and theoretical framework informed by Freire beg the investigation of principles of Catholic Social

Teaching that are more abundantly explored through Freirean pedagogy. Therefore, the scope of this study is limited to the principles of: a) rights and responsibilities, which relates to reflecting on students' ontological vocation to be active agents (Freire, 1967); b) option for the poor and vulnerable, which is noted on Freire's advocacy for student proposed topic of discussion in the classroom, and the problem-solving dialogue practice this scholar proposes (Freire, 1970); and c) the dignity of work and the rights of workers, which can be directly connected to emphasizing the social context of the student (Freire, 1979).

Rights and responsibilities. Social justice provides conditions that allow societies and individuals to enjoy which is rightfully theirs by the dignity of their humanity. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1997), "Respect for the human person considers the other 'another self.' It presupposes respect for the fundamental rights that flow from the dignity intrinsic of the person" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997, para. 1944). The concept of rights and responsibilities upholds human rights. Catholic Social Teaching preaches that equal human rights flow from the dignity of the human person. According to the CCC, "The equal dignity of human persons requires the effort to reduce excessive social and economic inequalities. It gives urgency to the elimination of sinful inequalities," (CCC, 1997, para. 1947). The Church in essence called for respecting the transcendent dignity of man and invites the faithful to solidarity "an eminently Christian virtue" (CCC, 1997, para. 1948). Among all human rights the right to life is seen by the Church as the most basic of all rights, because only after one has ensured his or her right to life, the person can enjoy all other rights like "the means necessary for the proper development of life, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and, finally, the necessary social services" (John XXIII, 1963, para. 11). Therefore, one's right

originates another's duty to respect that right. For the Church, each basic human right derived authority from natural law, which attaches to it its respective responsibility, "to claim one's rights and ignore one's duties, or only half fulfill them, is like building a house with one hand and tearing it down with the other" (John XXIII, 1963, para. 30), while the Church taught that each person should collaborate with others in protecting and promoting human rights, it also noted that each person should do so freely, without any type of coercion, and out of their own initiative (John XXIII, 1963, para. 34).

Option for the poor and vulnerable. Christ urged the practice of almsgiving and considered a kindness done or refused to the poor as done or refused to himself. The gospel of Matthew stated, "As long as you did it to one of my least brethren you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40). Hence, the faithful who possess material or intellectual wealth was instructed to use them for "the perfecting of his own nature, and, at the same time, that he may employ them, as the steward of God's providence, for the benefit of others" (Leo XIII, 1891, para. 17). The Church's concern for the poor arose from the Sermon of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12), Jesus' own poverty, and of his love for the poor. The Church seeks to aid those who suffer with material poverty, as well as those who are in any other way oppressed, or are in some level denied the justice that is due to them. The faithful is encouraged to practice works of mercy—charitable acts intended to assist those in spiritual and bodily needs—instructing, such as, advising, consoling, comforting, and forgiving. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God (CCC, 1997, para.

2462). The U.S. Bishops (1986) stated that the primary purpose for their particular commitment to the poor was to “enable them to become active participants in the life of society” (para. 88). The pursuit of the common good compelled the Church to unite in solidarity to alleviate human misery. Plitt et al. (2012) said, “Therefore, CST’s core commitment to promoting human dignity requires a commitment to fostering the common good” (Plitt et al., 2012, p. 123). The common good was based in three core principles: 1) respect for the fundamental rights of the person; 2) human society's spiritual and temporal prosperity; and 3) world peace (CCC, 1997, para. 1925). The common good is a major goal of Catholic Social Teaching.

The dignity of work and the rights of workers. The principle of dignity of work and rights of workers is at the intersection of economic activity and social justice. The Church establishes that “work is for man, not man for work” (CCC, 1997, para. 2248; Mark 2:27). Every person has the right to provide to themselves, their families, and serve the common good through their work, and also has the right to be aided in case a person is unable to work for no fault of their own, with a clear distinction from anyone who is unwilling to work, who—the Church teaches—should also not eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Catholic Social Teaching advocated that “everyone has the right of economic initiative; everyone should make legitimate use of his talents to contribute to the abundance that will benefit all and to harvest the just fruits of his labor” (CCC, 1997, para. 2429). Further, everyone should seek to promote the common good through their work, especially those in charge of businesses who ought to be held accountable for the effects their operations, investments, and profit goals have on workers, the economy, and the environment (CCC, 1997, para. 2431-2432). In specific regards to workers’ rights, the Church defended access to employment to all; just wages; and a workplace free of

prejudice against sex, physical disability, and citizenship status. Catholic Social Teaching prescribed that the needs and contributions of each person must be taken into account in order to determine a fair pay. In addition, the Church sets the standards for remuneration for work as enough to provide the worker and his family with a dignified compensation to support material, social, cultural, and spiritual needs. Further, a simple agreement between employer and workers is deemed not morally acceptable to justify substandard salaries. Moreover, withholding wages can be a grave injustice, including not paying the social security contributions required by law, and striking is morally legitimate, however unacceptable when it is motivated by greedy and goes against the common good (CCC, 1997, para. 2433-2436). In Chapter 4, this study shows how participants perceive the link between media literacy instruction and the particular Catholic social justice principles of: a) rights and responsibilities; b) option for the poor and vulnerable; and c) dignity of work and rights of workers.

Common good. The pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio* (1971) told the Church that media content—be it hard news or entertainment—should be judged by the contribution it makes to the common good. The information shared should be focused on helping students to understand their community problems and use the media in order to work on solutions. Pope Paul IV (1971) said, “Use of the media for education should have a creative quality and elicit an active response. In this way, the pupil is not only led to knowledge but learns to express himself by using the media” (Paul VI, 1971, para. 48). The document also alerted Catholic educators to be on the lookout for opportunities to use audiovisual aids as teaching instruments.

The Vatican called for media engagement to go even further, stating that it is necessary for educators to train students in the basic principles governing the working of the media society. Urging that training should include practical considerations of technical specifications of each medium, its penetration in the local community, and how it can best be used. In addition to defending that educators ought to consider that receivers' (students) need for basic training in media in order for them to fully benefit from it, such training is always meant in the context of the community, in which the student becomes instrument in helping peers through the understanding of the role of mass communication, and production of mass messages. All to be done as early as possible, children from early age should be made aware of the dynamics involving media (Paul VI, 1971). The Second Vatican Council called Catholics to carefully—in the light of the faith—discern what new work and responsibilities the modern means of social communication place upon them. Pope Paul VI wrote, “If Catholics are to be of service to the means of social communication and to act so that these may serve humanity's ends, it goes without saying that it is in the spiritual sphere that the Church can best help” (Paul VI, 1971, para. 82). The desired outcome is the faithful's deeper appreciation for the basic nature of social communication so that the dignity of the human person, both producer and receiver, would be better understood and respected. Additionally, the Church hoped that well equipped media consumers would be able to demand higher quality in media messages. Pope Paul VI said, “Catholic schools and organizations cannot ignore the urgent duty they have in this field” (Paul VI, 1971, para. 82). The Church considered it to be one of her most urgent tasks to provide the means for faith based media education, so that young Catholics will be truly active citizens in the media age. Concerned with the media impact on public opinion, shaping one's view of society

and moral values, John Paul II (2005) placed upon the Church the responsibility to safeguard and promote Catholic thought in the media, because of the Church's mission to educate mankind.

The Church, which in light of the message of salvation entrusted to it by the Lord is also a teacher of humanity, recognizes the duty to offer its own contribution for a better understanding of outlooks and responsibilities connected with current developments in communications. (John Paul II, 2005, para. 10)

In John Paul II's view, mass media was to be placed under the restraints of social rights and duties, respecting ethical responsibility, laws and institutional codes. John Paul II moreover called everyone to take on the responsibility to promote media at service of the common good, precisely because of the impact of mass media on economics and politics. It is an inherent right of the Church to adopt the media for the instruction of Christians. Pastors ought to instruct and guide the faithful so that they can take advantage of media to their own spiritual growth, and help others. The laity also must strive to instill a human and Christian spirit into the media (Paul VI, 1963). When mass media is put at the service of the Gospel, the Good News reach millions of people, "the Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims 'from the housetops' [Matthew 10:27; Luke 12:03] the message of which she is the depositary" (Paul VI, 1975, para. 45). Engaging the media the Church keeps up with modern technical evolution, and reaches the masses. An encyclical letter about media awareness first came out of the Vatican in 1936, when Pope Pius XII wrote *Vigilanti Cura* (Latin for *Vigilant Care*) warning the faithful about how antagonistic the motion picture industry had become to Judeo-Christian moral values. Ever since, all the Popes after him have consistently expressed their concern with the Church's

engagement on media. From early on, Pope Pius XII encouraged the effort of Catholic educators to instruct receivers through the framework of Christian education, calling it most praiseworthy.

Right training and education of the spectators in this fashion will ensure, on one hand, a lessening of the dangers which can threaten harm to morals; and, on the other hand, permit Christians, through the new knowledge they acquire, to raise their minds to a contemplation of heavenly truths. (Pius XII, 1957, para. 62)

Pope Pius XII also defended that all generations should be mindful of the role media plays, and bear witness to Christ in their dealings with media at all levels. Further, he highly recommended media education to be integral part of Catholic schools, action groups, and parishes. Unfortunately, religious institutions in general are still to adapt to a heavily mass media informed society. According to Hess, Horsfield, and Medrano (2004), “Christian religious educators, for instance, have to re-imagine our role within communities of faith. Rather than being transmitters of doctrine, we need to become interpreter of culture” (Hess, Horsfield, & Medrano, 2004, p.154). Catholic educators are called to engage mass media from a critical perspective to be able to become mediators for their students, in other words, to equip them with skills to critically rethink the culture.

Conclusion

The literature showed a high volume of media consumption by children, while media literacy as a discipline is still developing in the U.S., and has a long way to go if compared to other countries. In America, teacher training in media literacy relies at large on community based organizations like the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute. The literature also showed new literacy as the latest trend among critical literacy scholars, and pointed to most commonly

used rubrics for media literacy instruction. The review of the literature further emphasized the effects of media literacy instruction on students. The second part of the review of the literature discussed how mainstream media manipulates public opinion, and suggests media literacy as a tool educators can use to equip students to mindfully consume media messages. It also highlighted how mainstream media historically opposes Judeo-Christian values. The third and last part of this chapter substantiated how the Church has called Catholic educators to practice media education as fulfillment of their apostolic mission. Further, scholars argued that advancing media literacy education is a social justice issue because: a) media shapes the culture (Torres & Mercado, 2006); b) media is the primary source of entertainment and information for children in challenging socioeconomic situations (Gale & Densmore, 2000); c) media literacy helps children to critically analyze dominant mainstream media discourse (Kellner & Share, 2005); and d) therefore rethink their own social condition (Freire, 1970, 1996). In summary, the review of the literature pointed to the need of media literacy training of teachers (Al-Humaidan et al., 2011; Damico, 2004; DeAbreu, 2008; Gainer, 2010; Ian & Temur, 2012; Keller-Raber, 1995; Schmidt, 2012), and urged Catholic educators to engage in media education (John Paul II, 1992, 2005; Paul VI, 1963, 1968, 1971 1975; Pius XII, 1936, 1957). This study aimed to answer these concerns by adding to the academic research in the United States on the topic of the influences of media literacy instruction through the investigation of how teachers' perceive the discipline after undergoing training, as well as by recording to what extent adoption of media literacy inquiries has helped teachers foster Catholic Social Teaching in their practice.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

In this chapter, a justification and description of the qualitative research method used to answer the research questions are provided. This chapter also includes a rationale for selection of study participants, followed by the description of data collection and analysis processes. The case study method adopted used inductive categorical development, which originated patterns and themes from the data. Data collected and analyzed consisted of notes from in-classroom observations, personal journals, transcripts from interviews, lesson plans, artifacts, and other documents. A qualitative data analysis software aided analysis process.

Overview

Informed by the Catholic teachers' calling to engage students through media education within the frame of Judeo-Christian values as shown in the literature review, and concerned with the lack of teacher training programs in media literacy, this study investigated how a faith based media literacy training program influenced participants' perception of media literacy and its link to Catholic Social Teaching. The investigation allowed for a better understanding of how media literacy training can promote Catholic Social Teaching, how participants' perceptions of both media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching, and the link between the two, were influenced by a 60-hour training program designed for teachers and catechists. The findings of the study shed light on the value of teacher training in media literacy to advance Catholic Social Teaching in the school setting.

Because this study's theoretical framework was Freirean critical literacy, I focused on principles of Catholic Social Teaching that were more abundantly explored by Freirean

pedagogy. Therefore, this study concentrated on the following principles: a) rights and responsibilities, in terms of students' ontological vocation to be active agents (Freire, 1967); b) option for the poor and vulnerable, arising from Freire's advocacy for student proposed topic of discussion in the classroom, and the problem-solving dialogical practice this scholar proposes (Freire, 1970); and c) the dignity of work and the rights of workers, directly connected to emphasizing the social context of the student pontificated by Freire (1979).

Qualitative research is a “systematic empirical strategy for answering questions about people in a particular social context” (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000, p. 96). The qualitative research approach allowed for a deeper understanding of what people do, how they do it, and the meaning behind these phenomena. Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman (2000) detailed that “[qualitative] researchers assume that there are aspects of reality that cannot be quantified” (Locke et al., 2000, p. 97). Further, qualitative researchers believe it is important to understand how people make sense of their social world. Therefore, qualitative research is grounded on the investigation of social interactions, the meaning-making process, and the outcome of social experiences (Mashall & Rossman, 1999). Case study is the most fitting method of investigation to achieve the purpose of this study. Case study research is in fact ideal when a holistic investigation is required (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991), because it is an “in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in real-life settings and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 634). Taking into consideration chiefly teachers' perspective and field observations, this case study assessed how a media literacy training program advanced Catholic Social Teaching; how teachers' perception of media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching were influenced by attending the program; and to what extent this

training informed classroom practice thereafter, according to accounts from alumni of the program.

The participants selected included the educational leader who envisioned and executed the teacher training certification program in media literacy, Sr. Mary, her assistant who also teaches a couple of the classes in the program, Sr. Teresa, a trainee attending the program, Clara, and four alumni of the program, Elizabeth, Pierre, Paul, and Dr. Agatha. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, journals, and collection of documents (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Descriptive data and direct quotations from participants were recorded (Yin, 1994). The data were coded and then organized in general patterns, themes, and categories to facilitate analysis. Participants' statements were cross-referenced in order to identify new codes and patterns. Through a funnel process, the relevant data were coded and cross-examined to identify recurring answers which were only then identified as the participants' opinions (Tesch, 1990). For validation purposes, participants were requested to give their personal approval of accurate representation of their statements prior to inclusion in the study (Creswell, 2003).

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

- 1) How does a faith based media literacy training program promote Catholic Social Teaching?
- 2) How does a faith based media literacy training program influence participants' understanding of media literacy and its link to Catholic Social Teaching?

As shown in Chapter 2, scholars have presented little input from teachers themselves

about the implications of teacher training in media literacy. The media literacy scholarship thus far has concentrated its efforts on investigating students' performance after media literacy instruction (Cheung, 2005; Fuxa, 2012; Gut & Wan, 2008; Park et al., 1993; Radford, 2003; Salomon, 1983, Torres & Mercado, 2006). In addition, Catholic school teachers are expected to educate students on Catholic Social Teaching in a culturally relevant way (Benedict XVI, 2008; John Paul II, 1987, 1990, 1992, 2005; Paul XVI, 1963, 1971, 1975; Pius XII 1936, 1957). In an attempt to contribute to filling this gap in the scholarship and in order to help advance Catholic Social Teaching in Catholic schools, this study was designed to explore how a media literacy training program promotes Catholic Social Teaching.

Teachers themselves can provide the scholarship with first-hand experience of what aspects of their own media literacy formation are most useful in their practice. The input from teachers on effective ways of teaching media literacy, however, has been neglected with exception of a couple of studies (DeAbreu, 2008; Flores-Koulish, 2005). Therefore, it is paramount to learn from teachers how media literacy training has influenced their perception of media literacy, as well as how media literacy training has informed teacher practice (Al-Humaidan et al., 2011; Flores-Koulish, et al., 2011; Ian & Temur, 2012). Consequently, this study also asked: How does a media literacy training program influence participants' understanding of media literacy and its link to Catholic Social Teaching?

Participant Selection

The participants in this study were key stakeholders in the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institution's teacher advanced certification in media literacy, a teacher training program shaped by faith based media literacy, in which Judeo-Christian values are used to dismantle and interpret

media messages (Hailer & Pacatte, 2007). Participants in this study were the founder and executive director of the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute, hereafter identified as Sr. Mary; a teacher attending the Institute's training program in media literacy, Clara; and four alumni of the program, including a middle school teacher, Elizabeth; two high-school teachers Paul and Pierre; and a college professor, Dr. Agatha (See Table 11). The program was a pioneer in its model, recognized by 14 suffragan dioceses within two archdioceses, and accredited by several Catholic educational organizations in the United States. The educational leader, Sr. Mary, a religious woman, has achieved international recognition as a media literacy scholar and practitioner. Other participants were four Catholic school teachers, and one professor at a Christian university, all of them successfully completed this media literacy certification. Teachers who attended the media literacy training program usually worked in Catholic schools, they sought or needed additional archdiocesan certification, or were catechists interested in media.

In order to thoroughly investigate participants' input, this case study focused on one participant undergoing media literacy training at the time of field observations, Clara. The limited sample allowed me to take a detailed look at the participant's accounts, while comparing and contrasting findings as a way to enrich the individual analysis which characterizes the case study method (Creswell, 2003). Participants' voices were crucial for this study. The professional experiences they shared largely shaped findings on the extent that media literacy training has influenced their perceptions about media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching, and how teacher training in media literacy advanced Catholic Social Teaching in the classroom.

In order to better understand the context in which the participants received training, to provide a richer description of the research site, and to further explore themes generated by the data collected, I also attended the media literacy certification program as a trainee. Although enrolled as a regular trainee, my role was that of a participant-observer, who benefited from insights from an insider’s perspective. Participating as a trainee gave me a better understanding of what teachers go through in the training program, this unique outlook was well documented in journals and field notes.

Table 11
Participants

Participant	Role
Sr. Rose	Director of the Institute
Sr. Teresa	Program instructor
Clara	Teacher in training
Elizabeth	Middle school teacher
Pierre	High school teacher
Paul	High school teacher
Dr. Agatha	College professor

Advanced certificate in media literacy. The Advanced certificate in media literacy syllabus and trainee benchmarks set by the committee that designed the training program delineate learning expectations as well as workload. Table 12 identifies the course modules. In summary, during training, teachers learned how to develop critical thinking through analysis of media messages, both in print and electronically. They were introduced to a wide variety of media literacy resources, and learn practical media literacy exercises and basic skills for low-cost media production. Teachers were taught the key questions and core concepts of media literacy delineated by Thoman (1997), and were expected to investigate the relationship between communication, media, and culture, and to explore how the media influenced their own beliefs, values, and lifestyle. Teachers were asked to recognize the influence of entertainment and

information media on children, teens, parents, and the society in general. Teachers evaluated and critically analyzed advertising as a media type, and its function in media consumers and the larger economy. Certified teachers were familiarized with media industry concepts, and its business model.

In addition to understanding the role of the media in influencing attitudes and behavior, those who graduated the program should grasp how media representations of the human person—race, gender, age, social status, religion—influence and shape culture. Instruction were interactive and concepts were illustrated by use of visual and audio clips, as well as hands-on experience. Interactive technology was also used. Group-analysis of media and opportunities to work in small groups were provided to create instructional strategies and hone critical skills. Beyond deepening their understanding of media literacy education, its pedagogy and praxis, teachers also surveyed and compared educational philosophy and theory. In addition, trainees were exposed to the teachings of the Church on media education and its connection to Catholic Social Teaching, culture, media, and social communications. Teachers were familiarized with emerging fields of Catholic theology, philosophy, and spirituality of communication, in order to form a foundation for incorporating media literacy into and across curricula. Further, they were required to design a proposal for integrating media literacy into their school curriculum or parish religious education program. A home or group viewing program was to be completed and a personal assessment of the presentation project submitted for credit.

Upon completion of the program, teachers were expected to understand dimensions of how people learn from information and entertainment media, and how and why attitudes about them are formed, to articulate a theory and practice of media literacy that integrates a Catholic

philosophy of education, and to examine and incorporate media literacy pedagogy and praxis in and across the curriculum, with a focus on religious education by integrating Church teaching in media literacy instruction. Finally, trainees should be skilled enough to evaluate, upgrade, or design a media literacy project, program, or syllabus to train students, fellow teachers, and parents.

Table 12

Course Modules for Advanced Certificate in Media Literacy

Media literacy: key themes and core concepts

Character education and media literacy

Pop culture and advertising

Adult formation and media

Music and pop culture

History of cinema and analysis

Philosophy, ideology, and media

Web literacy

Globalization, Catholic Social Teaching and media literacy

Faith based media literacy

Theology and spirituality of communication

New media and five ways to make a difference

Theory and praxis

Note. Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute handout, 2014.

The teaching methods included media in the forms of television and film clips, print, and music. Students were encouraged to work in pairs to analyze, evaluate, and upgrade their existing media literacy applications. Field trips to a film and television studio, a film pre-premiere, and incidentally, a media literacy convention were included in the program.

Site Description

The study was conducted at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute located in one of the largest archdioceses in the United States. The Institute was a hub for Catholic media. It hosted media literacy training and other activities centered on Catholic spirituality, and ministries, including worship at their own chapel. The institute housed offices for several

religious women who work with Catholic media. It boasted one of the largest Catholic book stores in the archdiocese. The laity was also directly involved in the day-to-day activities of Institute through volunteer work or as employees. Observations and interviews took place mainly at this teacher training site. In addition, at participants' requests, interviews were conducted at their places of residence and at their workplaces.

Access to Site

I contacted the founding director of the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute on different occasions through e-mail, phone, and in person to share ideas about this research. She welcomed this study to take place at the organization she leads, and written permission to conduct the study at their site was granted. She also facilitated my contact with teachers who graduated from the media literacy certification program to inquire about their willingness to potentially participate in this study (See Appendix A). Each participant granted me written permission to interview them at their worksites, homes, and in one instance at a public space (See Appendix B). Participants decided where and when interviews should be conducted. In addition, follow up questions to clarify information and collection of documents were accomplished through digital tools including e-mails and instant messaging software. Follow up phone calls were also used to collect further information from participants.

Methodology

Case study design is generally adopted whenever the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; participant behavior cannot be manipulated; contextual conditions are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or the boundaries between phenomenon and context are unclear, all of which apply to this study (Yin, 1993). Case study is an empirical inquiry that

investigates a contemporary occurrence in the social world (Yin, 1994). The general principal is that case study consists of an "in-depth exploration of a particular context" (Yin, 1994, p. 12). Stake (1995) defined a case study as intrinsic when the researcher has an interest in the case and as instrumental when the case is used to understand more than what is obvious to the observer. Both categorizations applied to this study because of my own professional involvement in Catholic media, the applied research strategy of drawing conclusions through the detailed analysis of participants' voices, and by using multiple sources of data. In attempting to represent teachers' viewpoints in an accurate manner and to properly answer the proposed research questions, I went beyond the mere observation of input and outcome, taking in to consideration documents including: lesson plans, students' assignments, and other artifacts, such as, media messages, and teachers' presentations. I made sure that participants' perspectives were an integral part of the study (Lipsey, 2007). The research question begged for a scrutiny of the dynamics involving the role of the Educational Leader, Sr. Mary, and the learning process experienced by teachers themselves (Bickman, 1987). Hence, the case study method was deemed the most effective for this particular study.

Data Collection

Following Yin's (1994) model for case study, data collection encompassed direct observation of participants' interaction in the classroom setting. I interacted with trainee teachers, while trying to remain as unobtrusive as possible to the normal class dynamics. Therefore, I purposefully took on a primary observer role, and did my best to comply with what was expected of me as a trainee. Observations were conducted during the full 60 hours of training. More than 30 hours of audio recordings were collected, over 10 hours of interviews and

four hours of in-class instructions were transcribed. Semi-structured and open-ended interviews were conducted with the educational leader, a program instructor, a teacher in training, and the four alumni (See Appendix C). Dozens of pages of field notes were taken following an observational protocol (See Appendix D) based on the theoretical framework of this study. Collection of descriptive data and direct quotations from participants were also obtained through full seven days of journaling (See Appendix E). Pre-established open-ended questions were set to help the primary goal of answering the research questions; the follow-up questions were dictated by previous data analysis, and sought to clarify or expand participants' earlier statements, and varied from participant to participant.

To answer the first research question—How does a faith based media literacy training program promote Catholic Social Teaching?—I collected data directly from the Educational Leader, Sr. Mary, through a three-part interview cycle. The interviews with the Educational Leader provided me with a better understanding of the context in which teachers receive training, and helped me form a detailed description of the training site, curriculum, and its organizational culture as it related to media literacy instruction. Documents and artifacts—written records, curriculum, syllabus, promos, policies, pedagogical tools, handouts, lesson plans, student-produced media messages, lecturing materials, and instruments—were collected for analysis and triangulation (See Appendix F). Concerning the second research question—How does a faith based media literacy training program influence participants' understanding of media literacy and its link to Catholic Social Teaching?—the study was based on one participant undergoing media literacy training and four alumni who successfully graduated from the program in order to develop a deeper understanding of how teacher training in media literacy played out in

advancing Catholic Social Teaching at the school setting. The goal was to capture how media literacy training shaped participants' understandings of media literacy, Catholic Social Teaching and the relationship between the two. Document analysis, in class participant observations, and journaling helped to answer the second research question. Data from interviews were transcribed and analyzed for recurring patterns. Data collected drove subsequent inquiries, and participants were asked to build upon patterns identified and to express their thoughts on noted omissions. See Table 13 for data collection categories. To check for validity, participants were invited to reflect on my understanding of their statements. Representation of data received participants' approval of accuracy regarding their statements and opinions.

Table 13
Type of Data Collected and Analyzed

Data	Length
Field observations	60 hours
Field notes	42 pages
Audio recordings	30 hours
Transcriptions of interviews	10 hours
Transcriptions of in-class instructions	4.5 hours
Journaling	7 days
Documents	16 items

Data Analysis

Data analysis was inductive (Glaser & Straus, 1967) and adapted as the study proceeded and relevant patterns, topics, codes, and themes emerged. Data analysis and data collection were done sequentially with preliminary data analysis informing future data collection. The data was organized in general topics, then coded to facilitate its analysis (Trochim, 1989; Yin, 1994). The coding of the data followed the Tesch (1990) model. The first step included a review of the full data to obtain a sense of the information available and to identify general patterns. A closer review followed looking to identify topics to facilitate the analysis of the data, and codes were

created to help classify themes within each topic. I grouped similar themes and classified them as major themes, unique themes, and leftovers, and I then codified each theme according to their relevance at that time. Data were then re-analyzed through the lenses of the codes available in an attempt to find new themes or new codes. Subsequently, I examined whether themes were interrelated and to what extent they complemented or contrasted with each other within and across topics, as a result themes were merged and new themes emerged. I located “useful quotations and multiple perspectives on a category or theme” (Creswell, 2003, p. 193). All data collected was cross-examined in order to identify new patterns, and then coded and again cross-examined to identify recurring themes for further examination each time new data were introduced until exhaustion (Tesch, 1990; Yin, 1994).

The data drove the coding of emerging themes. I looked for “codes that address topics readers would expect to find, codes that are surprising, and codes that address a larger theoretical perspective in the research” (Creswell, 2003, p. 193). Attention was given to repetitive concepts and silence. Broader themes were defined on the first stage of data analysis, funneling to the most recurring themes on the subsequent data gatherings to define even more focused themes, which were scrutinized separately at first, and then within the broader context of the data findings. When no new significant themes emerged, final conclusions were drawn. The basis for data analysis was the research questions, and the interpretation of the data was guided by the literature reviewed. Data were represented in discursive text, and narrative passages were used to convey findings (Tesch, 1990). NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, was used to aid management of collected data (See Appendix G). Transcripts, field notes, journals, content from observational protocols—which analyze documents such as syllabi, class plans, and

presentations—were entered in NVivo. Queries were run to find common patterns within data. Results yielded numerous codes that were grouped by commonalities, forming themes. Data analysis informed follow-up inquiries generating new data, which were analyzed in a funnel process. When no new codes were identified, they were combined by similarities resulting in 17 themes organized in five categories.

Validity and Reliability

The protocols used to ensure accuracy of data interpretation and to identify alternative explanations are called triangulation. The data gathered from the participant observations, field notes, semi-structured interviews, journals, documents, and artifacts served as source for triangulation (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Triangulation was needed to confirm the validity of the processes through the use of multiple sources of data (Yin, 1994). Triangulation was also necessary to reduce redundancy and misinterpretation (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

In order to ensure validity and reliability of the study I triangulated different sources of information: interviews, field notes, and documents. I examined the evidence provided by each source to build a coherent justification for themes. I also interviewed administrative staff and colleagues of participants to grasp a better understanding of the culture of the educational institutions where they worked. Further, I performed a cross analysis of findings from each participant teacher. Each source of information was interpreted within the larger context of each participant's reported experiences. I also used member checking to determine the accuracy of the findings by sharing the report draft of the study with participants for their evaluation of accuracy. All participants' recommendations were taken into consideration before issuing the final report. Further, I used rich descriptions to convey the findings, providing readers with an

in-depth portrayal of the research settings, participants, and discussions.

Ethical Considerations

All research is interpretative, guided by a set of beliefs about the world, which in one way, or another dictates how something should be studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Likewise, critical theory research is ideologically informed and centers on empowerment goals. Conversely, this study sought to empower Catholic educators with an account of how media literacy training influences teachers' perceptions of the link between media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching, aiming therefore to assure sustainable empowerment of this specific group since the study itself focused on their needs and concerns (Freire, 1970; Mashall & Rossman, 1999; Park et al., 1993). Catholic teachers are categorized as what Freire (1970) would call a marginalized group because they generally lack professional training in order to provide students with a Catholic framework to critically engage the media (Al-Humaidan et al., 2011; Damico, 2004; DeAbreu, 2008; Gainer, 2010; Ian & Temur, 2012; Keller-Raber, 1995; Schmidt, 2012). Considering the ethical-moral dimension of study, I attempted to provide "a fair, honest, and balanced account of social life" (Newman, 2003, p. 185). Therefore, close attention was paid to accuracy during data recording and representation in order to best reflect participants' intended statements. My neutrality was maintained throughout the entire research. In addition, every effort was made to respect all rules set by Loyola Marymount University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Confidentiality of participants was respected both during the research and after its conclusion. In order to ensure protection of participant anonymity all participants and institutions participating in this research had their names changed. Further, written consent was

required prior to accessing research sites. Likewise, I obtained written consent from all participants prior to conducting any data gathering, including observations. Participants were informed of all data collection devices and the research schedule. Verbatim transcriptions and written reports were made available to each participant. Participants' rights, interests, and wishes were considered first when choices were made about reporting the data. Additionally, research materials, such as, but not limited to, voice recordings, documents, and transcripts, were kept confidential at all times, even after conclusion of the study. I made it clear to participants that participation is anonymous, voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the study at anytime without consequences. Participants did not receive any financial compensation or any other tangible benefit for participating in this study. I followed Loyola Marymount University's policies for conducting ethical research during all stages of the study: data collection, data analysis, and reporting.

Positionality of the Researcher

I am a practicing Catholic; therefore, I understand the promotion of Catholic values as the desired outcome of every educational effort in Catholic schools. My professional background is in mass media, not in education. I have served as national correspondent, anchor, and editor on radio and television for the number-one broadcasting network in Brazil, Globo, for several years. It was also in my native Brazil where I first learned about Freire and became increasingly interested in his scholarly work. In the United States, I have held different editorial roles with companies like FOX Latin America and CNN *en Español*. I served as international editor—approving translations in English, Spanish, and Portuguese—for featured films and television programming from main Hollywood studios, such as Fox Twentieth Century, Universal, WB,

Sony, DreamWorks, MGM, Paramount, Disney, Cartoon Network, BBC Worldwide, and Discovery Networks. I led digital content initiatives as editorial director at Catholic.net—one of the most popular Catholic websites worldwide—and as managing editor and content strategist at CesarsWay.com—the flagship website for National Geographic’s television program *The Dog Whisperer with Cesar Millan*; lastly, at varying publicity roles I have served organizations like the Ronald McDonald House Charities, Loyola Productions, the National Hispanic Media Coalition, the AFL-CIO in Los Angeles, and Marketwire, a leading financial newswire service, which provides multilingual real-time newsfeeds of material news to the Associated Press, Google, Dow Jones, Bloomberg, Reuters, Yahoo!, CBS MarketWatch, AOL, MSNBC, Motley Fool, Lexis-Nexis, and Factiva, among others.

CHAPTER 4

DATA

Chapter 4 presents the data from a case study of a faith-based media literacy certification program, which I attended as a researcher/trainee. Further, I conducted interviews with five teachers who graduated from the same program at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute. One participant taught at a middle school, three participants taught at the high school level, and one participant was a psychology professor. They all worked at faith-based private educational institutions. I performed in-class observations and journaling during the training program. This chapter is divided in three parts. First, an overview of the training program is offered, based on my experience attending it as a trainee. Secondly, the experience of each participant teacher is described in the light of the themes that emerged from the data analysis. Lastly, a thematic analysis is provided substantiating the findings of the study. In order to protect the privacy of all participants, all the names used for people and institutions are pseudonyms. The two research questions that guided the data collection and analyses were:

1. How does a faith based media literacy training program promote Catholic Social Teaching?
2. How does a faith based media literacy training program influence participants' understanding of media literacy and its link to Catholic Social Teaching?

Several data sources informed this study, such as in-class observations, field notes, audio recording of the lessons, journals, multiple interviews with the educational leader who runs the program, and with each of the participant teachers. Interviews with supporting staff and colleagues of participants were also performed in order to acquire a better understanding of their

workplace culture. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded. In addition, data were collected through follow-up conversations with participant teachers through telephone, e-mail, Skype, and electronic messaging. I also collected documents, such as lesson plans, syllabi, presentations, and media messages produced by alumni, and other items had used in media literacy instructions. All data were coded in relation to the research questions, then cross examined for the identifications of patterns in a funnel process until it was finally organized into 17 themes allocated under five categories.

The Training Program

My journal entry from the first day of class (See Appendix E) is largely paraphrased here. It is a Sunday afternoon. I was annoyed to have to attend class on a Sunday, I do not like to do anything on Sundays. I do my best to make it my rest day, a religious observance. I am Catholic. On my hour-long drive to the training center, I kept asking myself “Why in the world would these nuns have anything on a Sunday, don’t they know we are supposed to take the day off?” (Journal entry, July 7, 2013, Sunday, Day 1). I arrived a few minutes early. People started arriving one by one. The class was small—four trainees total including me. We were there to attend the advanced media literacy training certification provided by the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute. The goal of the first day was to meet and greet, and to get acquainted with the location, the program, each other, and what was ahead for the weeklong training.

There were two sisters in charge of the program for the day. I had already been introduced to them before, but this was the first time we were spending a significant amount of time together. The trainees were very friendly, and as the afternoon progressed I found out they were very interesting people. Laura, one of the trainees, worked as an IT administrator at a

Catholic school, and was a volunteer catechist at the school's parish for several years. She wanted to learn about media literacy to become a better catechist. Another trainee, Luca, was a former public high school teacher who was looking to improve his professional skills. The third trainee, Clara, was a Catholic high school teacher who was interested in learning more about media literacy to improve her practice.

We were each given a flash drive with content to be used during the upcoming classes. We also received a bag of class materials with three books on catechesis through media, a notebook, pen, markers, a magnet of the media mindfulness strategy chart, the course schedule, syllabus, and a brochure of a faith-based film production company. An additional book was required, but it had to be purchased separately. The setting was very welcoming, lively, peaceful, organized, and functional. The classroom was well lit; there was free Wi-Fi connection available (See Figure 1); each desk had its own power outlet so laptops and other electronic devices could be conveniently charged (See Figure 2); there was an overhead projector and a flip chart, the room temperature was very comfortable, in despite of the summer heat outside. Catholic icons were everywhere, hanging from the walls, on the top of furniture (See Figure 3). I felt home. We were given a quick tour of the facilities, including the chapel, the conference room, the store, kitchen area, restrooms, patios, backdoor, fire exits, authorized parking spaces, and we were provided the password for the locked doors.

The program started with a beautiful prayer, it reminded me that the Sunday is made for men/women and not men/women for the Sunday (Mark 2:27). We briefly introduced ourselves. A lecture on introduction to media literacy followed. Then, we answered in group a 14-question survey about our personal media consumption habits (See Appendix H). The survey was

emailed to us the week prior, and we were instructed to answer and bring in a hard copy, which we all did, but the lecturer wanted to comment on the questionnaire. So, we orally answered together questions about how much radio, television, and Internet we consume, preferred genres in different media types, and critical consumption questions like whether the media impacted personal action, and whether we had questioned the media content we consumed in light of our Catholic values. We were given homework assignments. We were asked to keep a journal log of all media we consumed during the week of the training, outside of training activities, and to read one chapter of an additional book that was handed to us during class. We concluded the day with a shared pizza dinner.



Figure 1. Instructor apparatus. Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute, 2013. All photos taken by the researcher.



Figure 2. Trainee desk. Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute, 2013. All photos taken by the researcher.



a 3. Religious and Media Icons Side by Side. Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute, 2013. All photos taken by the researcher.

Sister Mary

The second day started with a lecture from Sr. Mary, a soft-spoken Italian-American nun best known for her work in the field of faith-based media literacy education. She joined the convent as a teenager in 1967, and founded the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute almost

three decades later, inspired by the late Pope John Paul II's writings about media and catechesis. In 1990 in *Redemptoris Missio*, he wrote that "The first Areopagus of the modern age is the world of communications" (John Paul II, 1990, para. 37C), in reference to the high importance of mass communications in modern society and expanded on why it is important for the Church to use media in its evangelization efforts. Sr. Mary took it to heart. At the time of this study, she headed the Institute as its founding-director, and also served as media literacy instructor for the certification program. Her interest in media literacy actually started when she first encountered Sr. Elizabeth Thoman, who was a keynote speaker on the topic of media and values in a Catholic media event. Sr. Mary was immediately captivated by the intersection of media and values, and therefore very interested in the work of Sr. Thoman. Sr. Mary described what it was like meeting Sr. Elizabeth Thoman for the first time:

She was one of the pioneers, of course, of media literacy education in this country. I was head over heels because this was like the missing piece of our mission to me. I remember thinking "We're producing media, but what are we really doing to confront the culture?" Because we meet parents who hate the media because their kids are losing too much time with it, or it's maybe influencing them or the parents perceive that it's influencing them.

Sr. Mary explained that part of the mission of the traditional and globally widespread congregation of Catholic nuns she belonged to is "to use media to transform culture with the word of God, to bring Jesus through the media, using the media." After meeting Sr. Thoman, Sr. Mary started doing her own research on how media literacy fits in with the constitutions of her congregation. Their constitution states that the sisters are to form opinion leaders in the media, to work with professionals in the media, to provide a spirituality for them and also to promote an

ethical and moral context for their work, in addition to working with young people to help make them critical consumers of media in the world. “Media Literacy is an integration of our mission—it’s completely consistent with who we are as a congregation of sisters devoted to education through media,” Sr. Mary explained. She said their work goes much producing media, or understanding media, it is also concerned with understanding and influencing the culture that produces media, “an awareness that leads to other questions that you’re going to have; to human dignity; to social justice; to fairness; to truth of the human person; and to participation in society,” she added.

Sr. Mary was also inspired by the work of Father Pierre Babin, OMI, who was asked by the Vatican to create an organization dedicated to blending media and catechesis. He then founded an international research and training center for religious communications in Lyon, France, called *Crec Avex* that would use audio and visual media to advance catechesis. Father Babin is renowned for his innovative vision for a new approach to catechesis, in which he incorporates media messages as integral part of catechetical programs. Sr. Mary’s work resonates his vision. Sr. Mary has developed an extensive media work informed by the Gospel message. She has written for countless Catholic media publications online and in print, authored a few academic papers, and co-authored a book on the topic of media literacy education, which has been reprinted twice. She has been a film reviewer on radio for several years, and often makes appearances in popular mainstream TV shows with the goal “to be a presence of the Church where people are,” she told me. She has also served as a script consultant to film and television productions, and as a spokeswoman for media issues concerning Catholicism on mainstream news outlets. In addition, Sr. Mary has been a popular blogger, podcaster, on-

demand international speaker, a member of several professional media associations, and a board-member at a few of those. At the time of data collection, her curriculum vitae boasted 27 awards. In addition, Sr. Mary has served as curriculum developer in media literacy at a prestigious Catholic university for the last decade. She holds a bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts from a Catholic college in the East Coast of the United States, and at the recommendation of Father John Pungente, SJ, she enrolled in a media studies program at the department of education at a university in London back in the early 1990s, and graduated with a master's degree in education in media studies.

Accreditation

Sr. Mary created the syllabus for the advanced media literacy training certification (See Appendix I), which was the subject of this study. Then, she shared the idea with a couple of her personal contacts in the archdiocese where her institute is located, and with a nun who worked at the archdiocesan Catholic school office, another diocesan nun, and a priest who was responsible for catechesis within the archdiocese. "I just called them up. They really wanted this too, so they came over for a meeting. I had all the paperwork done in the background. I said, 'How do we do this?'" recalled Sr. Mary. They reviewed coursework content, hour load, graduation requirements, certification title, and marketing strategy. She said, "They pretty much left it up to me because they liked the syllabus. They did a little tweaking of it, and then they said it would be a catechist specialization," considered continuing education for Catholic school teachers.

The advanced media literacy training certification was intended for Catholic school teachers and catechists, functioning as continuing professional development for teachers, or as a catechist specialization. The archdiocese where the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute is

located was implementing a new requirement that every Catholic school teacher become a certified catechist, this policy made certifications like this one even more relevant, Sr. Mary anticipated that “it will be interesting to see the new Catechist specializations that will be created.” The key for getting diocesan permission and even recognition for running this training certification program was establishing a good rapport with the local Bishop and the religious education or catechetical office within each diocese. The sisters said it is important that the Bishop himself and diocesan officials understand what they do and how they are working in their diocese. “We’re missionary sisters, but we have to let the Bishop know what our mission is, and the different things that we do offer,” the sister in charge of logistics told me. The sisters had even built a strong relationship with the official in charge of the education office in their archdiocese, which had proved helpful in getting the word out about the certification to Catholic school administrators. They were recognized in two of the largest archdioceses in the United States, encompassing 14 suffragan dioceses, in addition to another two large dioceses in the country. Before contacting each diocese, and sending their background information, and a proposal for the certification, the sisters worked within the diocese and built a local professional network. Once they had become known, they moved forward introducing the media literacy training certification program. Sr. Mary said that rather than a burden, she found that working with the dioceses resulted in positive contributions to the program, offering “wonderful insight,” specially her own archdiocese that “couldn’t be more welcoming to work with.” She reiterated “This is a great archdiocese.” Endorsements from Bishops helped them get their projects approved in other dioceses, and prior diocesan approval opened doors to new dioceses willing to allow their media literacy training certification for their school teachers. Further, they had a

policy of not moving on with the program without proper authorization. “If we pursued it, we could get every diocese on board,” said Sr. Mary, and the reason they had not was attributed to limited human and financial resources to run a large operation for something that, while it complemented their mission, represented an additional demand to their religious life and the financial upkeep of their congregation. The approval process could be lengthy, taking up to one year from first pitching the idea to Bishop’s approval to conducting the course.

Program Content

After starting the accreditation process, Sr. Mary applied and won a couple of grants, plus financial help from a priest, and from her provincial—the sister who heads her congregation in the country. Sr. Mary executed a renovation in the upstairs floor of the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute (See Figures 1, 2, and 3), meanwhile the Archdiocese approved the curriculum, and the Certification started to be advertised. The inaugural class graduated in 2006. The 60-hour program is modeled after the master catechist's program that the archdiocese offers. Initially the Certification was only a year-long program with classes offered on Saturdays, from 10:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. After that, the Institute started to offer the certification during summers as well, in an one-week condensed format, with classes meeting from Sunday to Saturday, from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m., with one hour lunch break in between. The Sunday class was a half-day in the afternoon. Both formats offered the same content and workload. I attended the weeklong format, in which classes were organized as shown on Table 14 below.

Table 14
Class Schedule for Advanced Media Literacy Training Certification

Date/Time	Morning	Afternoon
Sunday	N/A	Welcome, Introduction, Media Consumption Self-assessment
Monday	Key Themes and Core Concepts (Sr. Mary)	Character Education and Media Literacy (Sr. Mary)
Tuesday	Pop Culture and Advertising (Sr. Mary and Sr. Teresa)	Adult Formation and Media; Music and Pop Culture (Sr. Grace)
Wednesday	Content Review (Sr. Mary) Film Studio Tour (Sr. Teresa)	History of Cinema and Analysis (Guest Instructor)
Thursday	Philosophy, Ideology, and Media (Sr. Mary) Web Literacy (Sr. Teresa)	Globalization, Catholic Social Teaching and Media Literacy (Sr. Mary)
Friday	National Media Literacy Conference (off site)	Faith Based Media Literacy Seminar (Mandatory)
Saturday	Theology and Spirituality of Communication (Sr. Teresa) New Media and Five Ways to Make a Difference (Sr. Mary)	Film Pre-premiere; Theory and Praxis (Sr. Mary)

Note. Source: Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute, 2013.

The key themes and core concepts lesson explored why it is important to study media; the Media Mindfulness approach to critically analyzing media; key themes and core concepts of media literacy, Thoman (1997); media production techniques; advertising techniques; consumerism; and storytelling. The character education lecture invited students to reflect on how character education and media mindfulness might connect. Trainees expressed their values and reflected on how popular culture represented in the media they consume supported or contrasted with such values. Trainees were presented with examples of how character and virtue—according to the Judeo-Christian framework—played out within media messages. Media mindfulness strategy was used.

In Pop Culture and Advertising class, trainees were introduced to the idea of differentiating between needs and wants as a way to combat consumerism proliferated by media advertising. The lecturer uncovered aspects of pop culture and advertising, and cajoled students to challenge aspects of pop culture as they were introduced to marketing techniques. The adult formation and media class examined official Church teaching on media and demonstrated how to use media mindfulness strategy in catechesis. The music and pop culture lesson introduced students to the top 10 of popular music and media mindfulness, which presented trainees with information on knowledge of pop music; the power of pop music as a medium; a scope of the music industry; a case study of *American Idol* as a pop culture phenomenon; statistics about youth and music; the Internet as the media of this generation; the pop music culture; theology of popular music; media mindfulness and music; contemporary hit music; and how to navigate the pop music culture as a catechist. History of cinema and analysis was presented by a guest instructor with in-depth industry experience. The lesson started with an explanation of the four dimensions of a film's life cycle: production, distribution, exhibition, and education. A brief chronological overview of the history of cinema followed along with the history of film and television genres. Then a description of World Cinema was provided along with mentions of significant films and directors, concluding with notes on contemporary cinema, and resources for film scholarly research.

Philosophy, Ideology, and Media touched on definitions of philosophy and great philosophers; definitions and applicability of ideology, relativism and communism; the understanding of Christianity as an ideology; and how media serves as vehicle for propagating ideology. Web literacy was presented within the perspective of using web literacy for catechesis.

It started by divulging official Church documents that advocated for the faithful engagement with the digital media and the Internet for catechesis. Web literacy was defined as the ability to access, analyze or question, evaluate, and create digital media messages, as well, as to participate in online-based communities. Rules for academically sounding online research were provided. A comprehensive glossary of web jargon and other resources for navigating the web were also offered.

Globalization, Catholic Social Teaching, and Media Literacy introduced scholarly literature on Globalization and shared resources for furthering researching the topic. A succinct literature review of Catholic Social Teaching was presented along with an analysis of the concepts laid out by the U.S. Bishops (1986), including rights and responsibilities, preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, and the dignity of work and rights of workers; following introductions to the notions of common good and solidarity. Media education was presented as a response to addressing social justice issues, and a theology of media education was also provided with Church documents on the topic. Then, core principles of media literacy education and Catholic Social Teaching were shown side-by-side with a class discussion of how Catholic Social Teaching could be taught through media literacy instruction.

Theology and Spirituality of Communication was centered in Catholic theology and offered an in-depth analysis of social communications through an understanding of God manifested in the Holy Trinity. New media and five ways to make a difference delved into the influence of the digital age on faith formation; how to develop critical skills when accessing digital content; what a responsible use of technology would look like; how to build and manage online communities; how to critically interact with society and popular culture online. Theory

and Praxis dealt with education theories and media literacy. The class touched on the work of Montessori (1967) emphasizing children as natural learners. It also covered pragmatism with Dewey's (1998) learning by doing method. It also explored democracy in education with Freire (1970) focusing on teacher and students co-learners against the "banking system," and connecting it to Masterman's (1990) on media education, which echoes much of what Freire defends. It further included Piaget's (1936) theory of cognitive development, and Lev Vygotsky's (1978) social development approach.

Syllabus

The syllabus of the advanced media literacy training certification (See Appendix I) outlined the skills trainees were expected to acquire during training. The document established that trainees should develop a critical understanding of the power of media, and of how media influenced their lives. Trainees were expected to learn how to develop critical thinking through analysis of media messages. It further stated that trainees ought to be introduced to the basic theory and practice of media literacy, to the key questions and core concepts of media literacy, to a strategy for media mindfulness, and to a wide variety of media literacy resources. Trainees were set to learn practical media literacy exercises and basic skills for creating low-cost media productions. Trainees were also asked to design a practical plan for integrating media literacy into their school curricula, or parish religious education program. Trainees were expected to explore how children and adults learn about media and the elements that contribute to their attitudes about information and entertainment media. Trainees also had to review, contrast and compare educational philosophies and theories. By the end of the course, trainees were expected to be equipped to deepen the content of media literacy education and its pedagogy and praxis.

Trainees were set to discover the teachings of the Church about media literacy and to identify the connection with Catholic Social Teaching, culture, media and communications. Finally, trainees were supposed to learn about and experience the emerging fields of theology and spirituality of communication. An archdiocesan catechetical certification or equivalent was a pre-requisite to attend the advanced media literacy training certification.

In accordance with Freire (1970), the syllabus defined that “the instruction methodology is highly interactive because teachers and students are considered co-learners” (See Appendix I). In fact, all classes followed student led inquiry model proposed by Freire (1970). Trainees and instructors interacted as peers and learned together, even when the classes were ministered by guest lecturers. Visual and audio clips, interactive tools, and hands-on activities were used to teach new concepts. A field trip to a media production company was standard in the syllabus, the goal of the tour was to give trainees insight on how mainstream media is produced. Locations visited could vary among television, sound, and film studios, newsrooms, marketing agencies, and publishing houses. The certification aimed to prepare trainees to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media, modeling the media literacy definition set by the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy, which took place at the Aspen Institute in 1992. Hence, the importance given to learning the mechanics of producing media messages, as well as, the business model the media industry follows.

In order to receive the certification students must attend all classes, participate in class discussions and exercises, conceptualize a screening program; maintain a media consumption diary throughout the training, and finally demonstrate the integration of skills learned during the training by presenting a plan to integrate media literacy to the trainee’s current teaching practice.

This was not exclusively, but usually accomplished by a trainee creating a PowerPoint presentation, also called, the exit project. The advanced media literacy training certification was also aimed at training the trainers, in other words, trainees were encouraged to teach media literacy skills to others at home, school, and at their parish through various ministries. The exit project was meant as a tool to help trainees accomplish that. Trainees produced a presentation about the basics of media literacy in whichever format they desired. In the semester long course, this presentation was shared with the class, and in the weeklong version, it was simply e-mailed to the instructor weeks after the training.

Around the World

The Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute was also able to take this certification around the country by offering the weeklong format in several different dioceses throughout the United States. Another way the sisters promoted media literacy education in Catholic schools was by integrating the topic into book fairs, and other events their congregation traditionally held or attended, including having book displays in parishes in different dioceses, in education and religious education gatherings, and in events organized by lay organizations. Sr. Mary explained how she takes media literacy education into school sites:

We also offer to speak at Catholic schools about media mindfulness, that is applying media literacy in the faith-formation area, or across the curriculum within a Catholic school—to be mindful about media. So that’s how we’re extending media literacy within our own institution as we seek to institutionalize media literacy education because schools of education are still not doing it. Until we institutionalize this and make it a part of teacher training, it’s always going to fall on the teacher who stumbles upon it at a

conference, or in her reading, or his reading, and they say, “Oh my goodness.” Because it speaks to them, like Clara this year, or Elizabeth a few years back.

Sr. Mary had a right arm, Sr. Teresa, who took care of much of the administrative duties of the program. She also taught a couple of the classes, and was in charge of logistics from catering service to field trips. Her work allowed Sr. Mary to be more actively involved with writing assignment and speaking engagements. Another sister who was received formal post-graduate training in media education, Sr. Grace, taught a couple of lessons when she is available, usually during summer. A few other sisters from their congregation around the world had also been dedicated to formal media education training, notably one obtained a doctoral degree in media literacy in Asia, which allowed their center in the Philippines to offer a master’s degree program in media literacy education. Another Sister in India received her bachelor’s degree in media literacy at a Jesuit university there, and published a book, which was the starting point for a whole group of nuns who run a media literacy training program in that country. In addition, a nun in South Korea had been teaching media literacy there, after attending a Jesuit university in Seoul. Sr. Mary commented on the media literacy education work her congregation performs internationally:

So, around the world, we have sisters who are interested in media literacy and we are being allowed to pursue it, but institutionalizing it, making it part of our formation is just gonna be a matter of perseverance, and I’ve been doing it since 1995.

These sisters have become media literacy advocates within their own order. “We’re trying to integrate this into the sisters’ initial formation. Very difficult to do, because the formation program is so locked,” Sr. Mary lamented. She also regretted that most of the sisters

in charge of the postulants' formation program lack media literacy education themselves, making it more difficult to convince them of the importance of it. Sr. Teresa pointed out a generational gap "Older sisters are more likely to resist the idea." Last year, all of the order's postulants came to the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute and their director took the course with them, which was a great accomplishment for Sr. Mary. Moreover, she has used speaking engagement opportunities within her own order to raise awareness to media literacy education. "They often invite me to talk to the novices, but usually, it's about our constitutions and mission, but I bring in the media literacy," Sr. Mary confided. Their superior generals have given them the green light from the beginning, including financial support until they were awarded grants to keep the program running, but Sr. Mary still has a long way to go before media literacy can be seen within their congregation as a mandatory part of their formation, nonetheless she was hopeful. "Change takes time. It takes work. It takes dedication. It takes belief. It takes enthusiasm," Sr. Mary said. Sr. Teresa told me that the sisters in her order who are catechists but do not integrate media literacy into their practice lack training, and for that reason often feel afraid to tackle media literacy. Sr. Teresa explained:

Not all sisters are as open to implementing and really offering media literacy presentations where they are. They don't feel comfortable doing it because of lack of education in the area. It's a new thing, too So, we're constantly trying to encourage them.

Challenges

Running this program was met with its share of challenges, starting with advertising. In the first year, once Sr. Mary secured the archdiocese's approval, it was time to put the word out

about the certification. During the approval process the sisters were collecting contact information of people who had expressed interest in learning more about the certification, but they ran through that list fast and over the years they concluded that a more aggressive marketing strategy was needed, which brought the next challenge: personnel. They operated with a lean staff, due to funding restraints. The funds they had earned for the program thus far have barely allowed them to break even, Sr. Teresa revealed. “It’s not enough to give us a salary. My writing is also contributing to our support,” added Sr. Mary.

The certification received grants to help subsidize the attendance cost, especially for trainees who are local teachers. One particular foundation committed to sponsoring 18 trainee teachers in 2015. Contributions from funders also allowed for the purchase of computers and media paraphernalia needed for instruction. Keeping the curriculum relevant was also among the challenges. Sr. Teresa told me that the media landscaping was dynamic, constantly offering new content, format, or technology, keeping up-to-date with industry trends is also taxing on the sisters. “We have the challenge of continually keeping updated with the information, because it’s constantly evolving, constantly changing,” said Sr. Teresa. Sr. Mary attested that running a media literacy program demanded a constant education and re-education, beyond the administrative duties, such as, marketing, fundraising, and class logistics. Sr. Mary said, “It takes more than one person to run this, and thank God I have Sr. Teresa, she’s essential.” The constant changes in the industry are reflected on the course syllabus from year to year. Most recently, the sisters were considering adding a segment on social media to the certification program. Sr. Teresa came up with the idea because she became increasingly concerned with how advertising is hidden in the form of content marketing, she wanted the trainees to be

equipped to identify those sneaky selling tactics, often in times expressed through celebrity endorsements in their social network accounts. Sr. Mary said trainees recognize the importance of integrating the latest media trends in their practice:

They get it. I think teachers see the culture—especially see the influence of the culture—they want to respond in some way, and media literacy is a very positive way to build up culture in their conversation between faith and culture, as well as between humanity and the culture that humanity creates.

Media Mindfulness Strategy

To date 90 trainees have earned the advanced media literacy training certification, among them one priest. In addition, 25 sisters from Sr. Mary's own order have been certified as well. Beyond learning the basics of the media literacy discipline, alumni were introduced to the media mindfulness strategy, which is meant to help form media literate students and encourage them to consider how media messages influence their communities and social issues, and to respond to that by means of media production and also of community engagement. Sr. Mary explained that media mindfulness is media literacy education within the context of faith formation, adding that media mindfulness is based on the Church's teaching about pastoral communication, mass communication, and society. In sum, media mindfulness is media literacy education integrated into religious education or catechesis. Additionally, in her words, media mindfulness looks beyond the surface and aims at forming a whole individual: "The student learns to read and write, learns the functions. They learn how to do all these things, but when it comes to faith formation, we're talking about the whole person, the dimensions of the whole person." Sr. Mary said that traditional education in the Western civilization falls short from a holistic education,

which forms character, leaving up to the faith community to help develop in the student a sense of awareness to the needs of others, and a concern to how the choices they make impact the common good. Sr. Mary explained media mindfulness:

Media mindfulness is about walking in the footsteps of another. It's about 'doing unto others as you would have others do unto you.' It's the basic golden rule. It fits right into media literacy, character education, and faith formation. That's all part of media mindfulness. It's being mindful, paying attention, being aware and making choices consistent with the values that you have in yourself as a human person.

The term "media mindfulness" was coined by Sr. Gretchen Hailer (1996) in her book *Believing in a Media Culture*. She later expanded to say that "Media mindfulness adds Gospel values to the media literacy approach, discerning God's presence in media stories and discovering what this reflection process means for us as disciples" (Hailer & Paccate, 2007, p. 14). Sr. Mary's work at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute has developed the concept of media mindfulness with the certification program, and the countless workshops, and speaking engagements Sr. Mary leads. Sr. Mary has found that media mindfulness is a prolific model to help teachers integrate media literacy into their practice in order to inform the critical analysis of media by the students through a proposed reflection on the students' core values, and on how those uphold the common good. She considers the media mindfulness strategy especially helpful in aiding teachers who hesitate to tap on media literacy for lack of formal training in media education. Sr. Mary described a generational gap:

There's a great hesitancy because teachers conflate knowing how to operate technology with understanding the various—the different mediums and how it all comes together.

Age could also have something to do with it. You know, the older generations may not feel comfortable with the technology, or even with the weight of the study itself. They also may come with a certain bias against media. If you ask them to try to understand how it all works, it can be overwhelming. So, what are you gonna do about it? Media mindfulness shows teachers how to do something about it. They don't have to be silent. They can talk about what students watch and consume.

The media mindfulness approach offers a chart that guides teachers in classroom discussions about media messages students consume, or have been presented in class. Sr. Teresa said that the goal of the chart is to help teachers ask questions to unpack any given medium. "It helps the class discover what points of view are being told, what techniques are being used, who gains and pains with the media message, and how it affects the student's own life," explained Sr. Teresa. Drawing from Hailer & Pacatte (2007), the first question in the media mindfulness wheel (See Figure 4)—"What is going on?"—is concerned with media format, general story plot, major points of the message. The following questions are suggested to help students arrive at their answers: "What am I seeing? Hearing? Playing? Reading?" The second question—"What is really going on?"—is meant to uncover hidden agendas; subliminal messages; techniques used to provoke target audience's emotions, such as soundtrack, editing, close ups, etc. It also seeks to answer who or what is being ignored, as well as identifying the producers of the media message, and their possible goals. The supporting questions—"Who gains? Who pains?"—are intended to help students think critically about who benefits from the media message, and who suffers because of it. The third question—"What difference does it make?"—is intended to encourage students to think about the values that media messages support or defy and how those compare to

students' own values set. This thought process is helped by the supporting question "What Christian values does this media experience support or ignore?" Finally, question number four is key, it induces students to think about what their personal response to the message should be, it asks: "What difference can I make?" Students' responses range from ignoring the message, to engaging it with feedback, to producing their own media messages, to participating in prayer and community service. The supporting question to help students through this analysis is "What response seem appropriate in light of my Christian beliefs?" Most assignments during the media literacy certification training prescribe the use of the media mindfulness chart, or media mindfulness wheel, as it is also called.

MeDia MINDFULNESS

The following is a simple strategy for media awareness, called media mindfulness. Note that the strategy involves four questions that appear quite simple—but whose answers are sometimes (like life) complex.

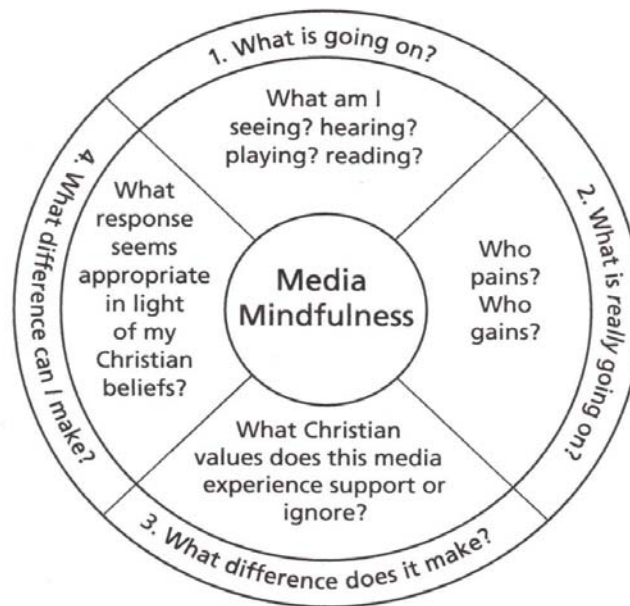


Figure 4. Media mindfulness wheel. Adapted from *Media Mindfulness: Educating Teens about Faith and Media*, 2007, by G. Hailer and R. Pacatte,. Copyright 2007 by Saint Mary's Press. Used by permission.

Classes Start

Monday. Monday came along and Sr. Mary started the day with a lesson on the key themes and core concepts of media literacy. It was sort of a dichotomy to see this nun dressed in full-habit talking about media conglomerates, the ins-and-outs of Hollywood, and worldly movies. It was refreshing. In an exercise on the prevalence of media in today's society, the class was presented with an alphabet made with logos from big media advertisers. In a couple of

minutes, trainees were able to point the brand name corresponding to each letter. Then the class was challenged to answer why this message was sent. In other words, why was our class being offered a reflection on the pervasiveness of media in our lives to the point that we have these logos memorized without ever had made the conscious effort to remember them?



Figure 5. American Alphabet. Adapted from *American Alphabet*, 2000, by Heidi Cody. Used by permission.

Sr. Mary talked about media mindfulness touching on receiver theories. All the content discussed was in one way or another connected to Catholic values, social justice, or Catholic culture, tradition, and history. Much of the conversation around media was illustrated with personal and family experiences of the instructor, which motivated students to share their own experiences as well. A trainee initiated a topic that quickly evolved into a class discussion about how parents at large have given their kids over to the secular culture and how Catholic teachers can use the media kids are consuming to teach Catholic values by using such values as a

framework to dismantle media messages.

In the afternoon, we learned about character development and media literacy focusing on how to teach Catholic values through media critical analysis. Values like the common good, personal rights and responsibilities, and preferential option for the poor, were part of the topics proposed as framework for media analysis. The day ended with a guest lecturer—a laywoman—who shared her work putting together lesson plans for media literacy and Christian values. She has built an extensive curricula for K-12 Catholic, public, and private schools using Catholic Christian values, including the Commandments, and the Beatitudes as framework for media interpretation. My media diary log for the previous day recorded: listening to online news radio via cell phone (30 minutes), listening to news radio during car ride (1 hour), music radio in car riding back (1 hour), and engaging on social media—Facebook, YouTube, Twitter—via mobile phone (1 hour).

The third day started with a lesson on pop culture and advertising. We watched clips of documentaries regarding advertising and the moral and social implications of ads and mass consumption. One of the videos was the *House Hippo* (Concerned Children's Advertisers, 1999) a public service announcement (See Figure 6), which shows a miniature hippo that roams in houses at night. It is a fictional animal but the video uses documentary techniques to show the North American House Hippo, which puzzles many viewers, and some might believe it to be true, especially younger kids. Then, a class discussion on how to recognize media's persuasive tactics and how to identify facts followed. Subsequently, trainees were invited to look at different print ads in a couple of assignments. First, we looked at a set of ads and tried to identify the target public. We also analyzed those ads using the media mindfulness chart,

answering its questions, and focusing on who gains and who pains with each message, and how we should respond to the message in light of our Christian faith.



Figure 6. House Hippo. Adapted from a *North American House Hippo*, 1999, by the Concerned Children's Advertisers, 1999. Used by permission.

Tuesday. Next, Sr. Mary presented us with different ads and we had to guess the product. Lastly, each one of us was paired with a classmate to produce and play our own 30 seconds ad, which was recorded in video by Sr. Teresa. The reflection that followed this activity was centered on how we are able to do an ad with ease when prompted to do so for the very first time. Trainees concluded that we are able to pull it off because we have been conditioned all our lives through our personal media consumption. Next, we looked at advertising through the perspective of consumerism, along with the moral dilemma of needs and wants. The dignity of work and rights of workers were also part of the discussion, mainly through consideration of child labor, living wages, and social economic inequalities supported by the mainstream media. “Did you see any workers in the ads we looked at today?” Sr. Mary asked and continued, “No? How come? Aren’t there workers who make these products? Why aren’t they shown?” A trainee

answered, “Because work isn’t fun.” And another “Because it isn’t glamorous.” And Sr. Mary added, “What does this silence reveal about the nature of advertising?” As trainees pondered, Sr. Mary went further: “What role does escapism play in advertising?”

In the afternoon, we were introduced to Sr. Grace, a learned nun who specializes in faith-based media literacy education through the lenses of popular music. Sr. Grace started her lecture by touching on Church documents about media and the Vatican’s consistent urging of catechists to engage the popular media as a tool for evangelization. Sr. Grace focused on the New Evangelization and how the Church advocates for a catechetical approach that mingles the Gospel with the media, rather than placing the Gospel on top of it. She explained how the Church has historically and now—through its advocacy for faith based media education—engaged pagan cultures using their symbols and costumes as a gateway to introduce the Gospel and Judeo-Christian values, citing as an example the celebration of Christmas, which was introduced by the Catholic Church in replacement of a pagan feast (Roll, 2000). She contrasted this approach with heavy preaching, or the intention to shield people from the media, which for her are out of touch with today’s culture and with how we communicate in society currently. She concluded with two hours of pop music exercises. First, a music genre quiz, followed by interpreting lyrics, and finally, identifying interpreters teens listen to currently. There was almost no change on my media diary log for yesterday: online news radio via cell phone (30 minutes), I did not listen to the radio, but rather to educational CDs teaching the French language on my way to class and back (2 hours). At night, I accessed my social media accounts—Facebook, YouTube, Twitter—via mobile phone (1 hour).

Wednesday. Sr. Mary started the fourth day conducting a brief recap of what we had

seen so far and a brief overview of what she has planned for the days ahead. Then, we left the building for a tour through a major television and film studio. Sr. Teresa drove us there and secured our permits to enter. We participated in a guided tour. It began with the screening of a short documentary on the history of cinema and television. Next, we were introduced to the display of actual Oscar statuettes the Studio was awarded over the years. After that, we took a walk through the Studio's scenic downtown, also visiting its live music sound-studio, where soundtracks for several blockbusters have been recorded. We were also shown the sound special effects room to see how professionals use all kinds of objects as tools to produce sound for any type of scene. We also visited the sets of a couple of the most iconic television shows in history, and saw how they put together the set for a new sitcom. Afterwards, we visited the area where a couple of the most famous movie actors/directors keep their offices in that particular lot. Hundreds of teenagers were in line to audition for an upcoming reality television show. It was interesting to see firsthand how the screen magic is produced. We were able to see hundreds of mainstream media workers on the job, and speak with a few, and acquire a better understanding of the work that goes on behind the camera. The field trip took about two hours.

In the afternoon we had a class about analytical history of cinema conducted by a guest instructor, a layman. He showed clips of different movies representing different film genres and their evolution over the years, but the most interesting part of the class was a reflection on the concept of Catholic Imagination (Greeley, 2000). It was curious to realize how even when movie producers set themselves to make edgy films that challenge traditional Catholic values they cannot help but reinforce these same values, as they press on to highlight the contrast between good and evil—within the framework of the Christian faith—from mob movies, to

horror movies, to sexual exploitive movie scenes, to science fiction films. The day ended with a lovely dinner shared by trainees and instructors at a local Asian restaurant. My media diary log for yesterday showed listening to online news radio via cell phone (30 minutes), news radio during car ride to class and back (2 hours), social media—Facebook, YouTube, Twitter—via mobile phone (1 hour).

Thursday. On the fifth day, Sr. Mary presented a lecture on philosophy, ideology, and media. She assigned the class to complete a gender exercise. We had to browse through the building's Catholic bookstore on the first floor making a content analysis of book covers. Our goal was to review as many book covers as possible within 30 minutes and determine how many portray a female versus a male. Everyone counted more males. Next, we were each given a random local newspaper, and instructed to do a content analysis of the front-page, as well as of a random news page within the publication to determine the number of women cited as opposed to the number of men. Again, everyone found more male depictions. We then discussed our findings and the implications of the predominant male voice on media in light of Catholic Social Teaching, specially focusing on the theme of rights and responsibilities. This conversation led to an exploration of rights and responsibilities of media literacy teachers with respect to applying inquiry based instruction, and treating students as peers in the classroom learning process (Freire, 1970). Sr. Mary introduced Vygotsky's social development theory—how society at-large influences learning—and his idea of zone of proximal development, the gap between pre-existing knowledge and what one learns through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1997), in order to support the importance for media literacy instructors to respect students' diverse opinions. Sr. Mary was emphatic:

I greatly appreciate Vygotsky's theories of learning because of his insight on how people learn and make meaning, and how we can therefore respect the meaning that each individual makes based on their own experience, their own level of learning, and their interests, validating their expectations.

Clara interjected contrasting Sr. Mary's view with banking education (Freire, 1970). Clara asked, "Would you say that the zone of proximal development opposes spoon-feeding information to students, or banking education? You're leaving room for the other person to think." Sr. Mary agreed with her and they engaged on a discussion about how acclaimed film directors often make use of similar tactic. "The good films—the ones that really stand out—are the ones where the director doesn't tell everything and the viewer has to think," added Clara. Sr. Mary's adoption of democratic education surpassed just encouraging student interaction in the classroom, she has actually incorporated the work of past certification trainees into her current certification instruction (Dewey, 1998; Freire 1979). One such example was a trainee's exit project entitled *What Makes You Happy*. It was a content analysis of media messages about happiness, and how they compare with the Judeo-Christian understanding of happiness. The certification graduate who authored the project was a psychology professor, Dr. Agatha. The presentation was shown to provoke trainees' thoughts on the dominant ideology of the mainstream media as it compares with the Christian ideology.

All the lectures during the certification program were accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation. The sisters always used this tool for teaching. They do it so often that they share an internal joke "Death by PowerPoint" to convey that a sister is tired of either putting PowerPoint presentations together or presenting them. However, later in the morning, the sisters

gave the PowerPoint a rest, as we experienced a videoconference with one of the most respected scholars in the field of media literacy, who also happens to be a literacy professor at a Catholic university in the East Coast. She was accompanied by her 14 of her graduate students who were taking a summer media literacy class to be counted towards their master's program in the school of education. She has been teaching this class for the last eight years. They had several questions for trainees ranging from how everyone was using media literacy in their practice, to what media messages and activities were applied in their classroom, to how formally or informally media literacy has been integrated to the curricula in their schools. Most of her students were public school teachers interested in synergies between media literacy education and the Common Core Standards. It was both informative and inspirational.

In the early afternoon, we had a web literacy class with Sr. Teresa. She explored moral issues about Internet use, best practices for teaching using the Internet as a tool, some background on Church documents, and how the Vatican taught about Internet use thus far. The class discussed ideas including Catholics as digital citizens, and why the Church teaches that the faithful's online identity should be an extension of their social identity, rather than an identity disconnected from who they are in their communities. In addition, Sr. Teresa led a class discussion on how the Internet should be used to bring people together instead of a tool to keep them at bay; and how the Internet is a powerful tool for catechesis when used appropriately. Next, Sr. Mary gave a lecture on globalization, in which she played a short documentary called *Story of Stuff* (Fox, 2007), it discussed world economy and the threats to ecology as it shows how "stuff" is produced often at the sacrifice of safe and fair working conditions, and environmental conservation, as illustrated in Figure 7.

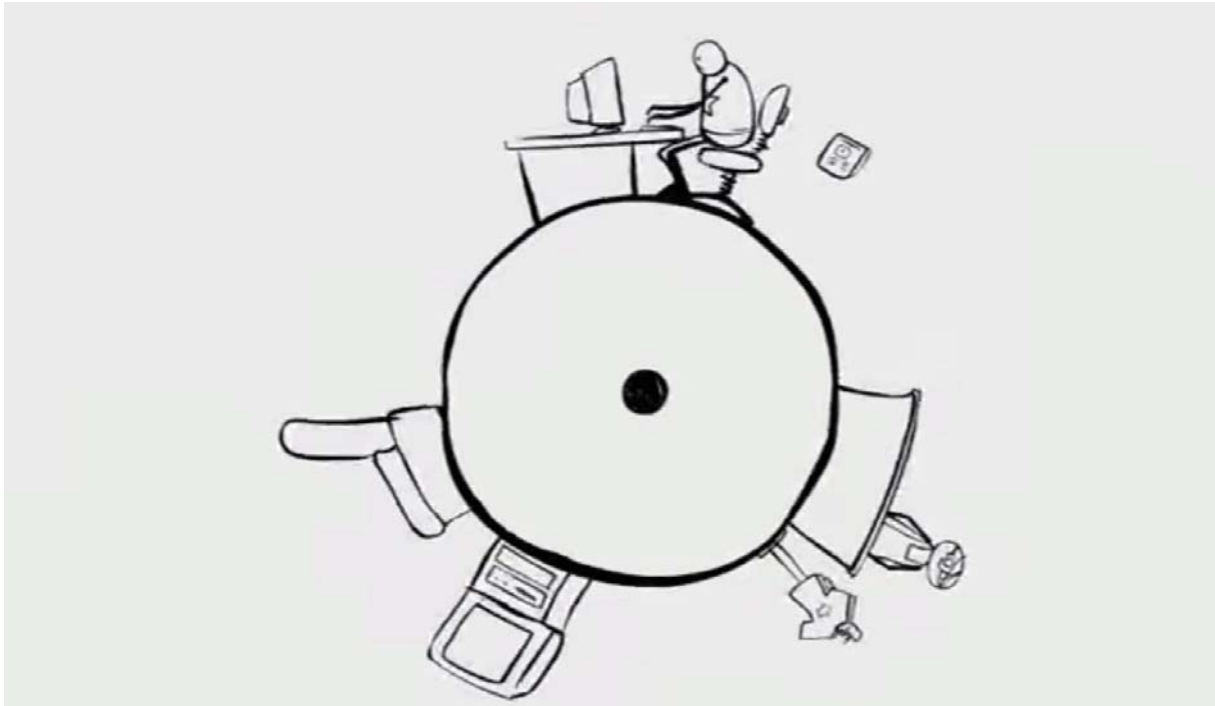


Figure 7. The Story of Stuff. Adapted from *Story of Stuff*, 2007, by L. FOX. Copyright by The Story of Stuff Project. Used by Permission.

After that, a class discussion on Catholic Social Teaching took place. Sr. Mary drew from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1997) to navigate the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and the common good. “Catholic Social Teaching and media literacy mingle very well,” she said. The lesson explored culture and how it is transmitted, and what culture has to do with globalization and social justice. Then, she posed the question “What commentary do the principles of Catholic Social Teaching offer and what response can media literacy provide in a disposable world?” This was the gateway to introducing the concepts of Catholic Social Teaching, which she organized in the following way: life and dignity of the human person—rights and responsibilities; preferential option for the poor; solidarity—one with the human family; integrity of creation; universal distribution of goods—rights of workers; subsidiarity; and

finally, family, community and participation—the common good. “There is an ideology in every piece of media that is created. What is the dominant ideology of American television today?” Sr. Mary asked. The class discussed it, and Sr. Mary concluded giving examples of how movies can help us dialogue with the Gospels to discover social values and teaching. Citing films like *A Few Good Men* (Reiner, 1992), *Men with Guns* (Sayles, 1997), and *Blood Diamond* (Zwick, 2006), she summarized her approach to deconstructing media messages as follows: 1) identify values reinforced or downplayed in the film; 2) articulate these values to students, deepening their viewing of how the values cited parallels the Gospel; 3) engage students in dialogue, and suggest a reflection; finally, 4) encourage students to take action, which can be producing their own media message, providing feedback to media producers, writing to authorities in government about issues, volunteering in community service, and whatever other actions students find appropriate (See Figure 8).

Sr. Mary proposed Catholic Social Teaching as a framework for analysis of media messages. She said that from the media piece a teacher selects to the questions asked media literacy can help promote the common good and vice-versa. She went through the concepts of Catholic Social Teaching explaining each and providing supporting Church documents respectively.

How movies can help us dialogue with the Gospels to discover social values and teaching:

- Identify values
- Articulate values
- Deep viewing(Gospel parallels)
 - Dialogue
 - Reflection
 - Action



Figure 8. Reading the Media through Gospel Values. Adapted from PowerPoint presentation, 2014, by Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute. Used by permission.

For the purpose of this study, I focused on the concepts that closely match the Catholic Social Teaching concepts adopted in this study, these are as follows: the concept of life and dignity of the human person—rights and responsibilities, which directly corresponds to the theme of rights and responsibilities. The concept of preferential option for the poor, which corresponds to the theme of preferential option for the poor and vulnerable. The concept of universal distribution of goods—rights of workers, which is equivalent to the theme of dignity of work and rights of workers. Regarding rights and responsibilities, Sr. Mary cited scriptures representing the foundation of this teaching, for instance, that human persons are of infinite worth and created in the divine image (Genesis 1:27). Additionally, that the human person is central to all teachings about justice; and the very reason for justice. Likewise, the human person is the center of all forms and processes of true communication (Psalm 8:6-8; Genesis 1:26).

About preferential option for the poor Sr. Mary defended that “when people’s needs are satisfied it becomes really hard for them to be sensitive to the needs of others. They need to be mentored.” She then provides scriptures highlighting the importance to advocate for the poor (1 John 3:17). Sr. Mary also cited Saint Ambrose as quoted by Pope Paul VI (1967):

You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his. For what has been given in common for the use of all, you have arrogated to yourself. The world is given to all, and not only to the rich. (*Populorum Progressio*, 1967, para. 23)

Concerning the dignity of work and rights of workers, Sr. Mary paraphrased Pope John Paul II (1991) saying that work is a good thing because it expresses and increases the worker's dignity. Through work we not only transform the world, we are transformed ourselves, becoming humanlike (*Centesimus Annus*, 1991, para. 32). She added that the obligation to earn one's bread presumes the right to do so. A society that denies this right cannot be justified, nor can it attain social peace. (*Centesimus Annus*, 1991, para. 43). Sr. Mary also cited scriptures to support her reading of Pope John Paul’s encyclical (Matthew 20:1-16; 1 Timothy 5:18). The Catholic Social Teaching lesson that day concluded with considerations about the common good. Sr. Mary said that the common good is central to Catholic Social Teaching, and all themes, concepts, or any categorization of the Church’s social teaching, which necessarily has the common good in its core. She cited Pope John XXIII (1961) teachings about the common good as a societal goal that enables individuals, families, and organizations to achieve complete and effective fulfillment:

The economic prosperity of a nation is not so much its total assets in terms of wealth and property, as the equitable division and distribution of this wealth. This it is which guarantees the personal development of the members of society, which is the true goal of a nation's economy. (John XXIII, 1961, para 74)

There was not much changed on my media diary log from the previous day. I listened to online news radio via cell phone (30 minutes), and to the French language CD (two hours) in my way to class and back. I accessed my social media accounts—Facebook, YouTube, Twitter—via mobile phone (one hour). I noticed that checking my social media accounts serves as an unwind session, I have every day before bed time. On Facebook a few of us commented on our dinner photos Sr. Mary shared on her wall. I was excited with anticipation for our class field trip the next day, a full-day event. We were set to attend a bi-annual national conference on media literacy, one of the most important events to attend for a media literacy scholar or practitioner in the U.S. Sr. Mary explained that in the standard certification curriculum, media professionals are invited to lecture one day out of the week, or one Saturday in the semester format. This time she decided to take the trainees to the conference instead, taking advantage of the fact that the event was coincidentally taking place in her metropolitan area this year.

Friday. We arrived early in the morning at a four-star hotel, there were several workshops and lectures going on all day, it is a four-day event. We were attending the first full-day of activities. The event was well organized. Just like a regular trade show, each participant received a bag of goodies with books, DVD, brochures about media literacy programs around the country, and services aimed at schools and educators. I was thrilled to be meeting several media literacy scholars I have read over the years. I sat through presentations all day and evening. I

wanted to attend all of them, but we had to choose because there are so many, and a few offered at the same time. My classmates were not interested in the same ones I was so we split up, but we all attended the faith-based media literacy workshop that Sr. Mary was moderating. This was mandatory for us. The event was also a great opportunity to meet people from all over the country who are also interested in media literacy. The highpoint of the event that day was the very last speaking engagement I attended, in which six scholars who were collaborating on a book, discussed their thoughts and answered audience's questions about where the field of media literacy is moving, and where they think it should go. I was surprised to see how they unanimously agreed that the terminology digital literacy is to be avoided because it needlessly, and unproductively breaks away from media literacy which is intended to cover all media types, digital included. It made sense to me. My media diary log for the prior day read online news radio via cell phone in the morning (30 minutes); news radio during car ride to class and back (two hours). Social media—Facebook, YouTube, Twitter—via mobile phone (one hour). I have the habit of scanning Twitter for daily news every night like a ritual, and follow dozens of news media outlets.

Saturday. The last day of classes started with a lecture on theology and spirituality of communication with Sr. Teresa. The class was based on Catholic theology covering topics such as Creation and the Holy Trinity through a perspective of media education. Sr. Teresa navigated through several scriptures, encyclicals, and other Vatican documents directed at communicators and educators. Then she moved on to new media and ways to evangelize through that medium. Next, we were off to a pre-premiere screening of a children's 3D animated movie. Sr. Mary was invited to the exclusive event, and she took us along. She would normally play a movie and do

an exercise in class, but the opportunity to take the class to an event to rub elbows with studio executives and their families, made the experience even more special. Sr. Mary explained that pre-screenings are also test screenings that studio researchers and marketers watch closely to document the audience's reaction to figure out what works best on their promotional campaign.

We were pressed for time, so we all decided to have Mexican takeout for lunch in the classroom, while we discussed—through the lenses of Catholic values—the movie we have just seen. Then, Sr. Mary proceeded to instruct us on praxis of media literacy showing different routes one could take to teach about this film through the lenses of the Catholic Social Teaching. Subsequently, she asked each one of us to come up with a lesson plan for this movie through the lenses of Catholic Social Teaching. We each presented our plan to the class, and received feedback from the group. After, Sr. Mary talked to us about the final project each one of us is assigned to do on the topic of “teaching others.” In order to complete the course, each trainee is instructed to produce a media message with that theme. Using my professional experience, I chose to create a website plan for the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute. Their website needed updating. Finally, Sr. Mary told us about the catechists Mass that we were expected to attend, in which the Bishop would hand us our media literacy catechist certificate, along with other catechists receiving a variety of certificates for their training that year. She explained that these are annually events in which the cathedral is packed with catechists. Then, we were asked to respond to an exit questionnaire giving our opinion about the certification program.

In final reflection, the training was more than I ever expected. Although I was going into it thinking I knew what to expect, I was surprised with how committed the sisters are to media literacy, the breadth of their academic knowledge, and the professionalism in which the whole

program was managed. My media diary log for yesterday reads online news radio via cell phone (30 minutes), music radio on my way to the hotel and back (about four hours). No social media, it was too late, I was tired. For the last day, I listened to online news radio via cell phone (30 minutes), news radio during car ride to class and back (2 hours). No social media.

Media Mindfulness Instructors on Catholic Social Teaching

In a one-on-one, Sr. Teresa told me that Catholic Social Teaching is essential to media mindfulness. “There are so many different issues that are murky and misunderstood in our society, so the Catholic Social Teaching helps us to look at those media depictions and go, ‘What is our Catholic understanding of this issue?’” she said, adding that media often depicts issues in a way that dismisses Catholic Social Teaching, but dismantling those messages through media literacy techniques actually helps students’ character formation. She recalled a trainee’s reaction after a media literacy class using the principles of the Catholic Social Teaching to analyze a film: “I was just in awe because she said, ‘You know, this is the first time I can say I understand what the social teaching of the Church is.’ It’s like, Wow! That’s it!” I asked Sr. Mary to assess to what extent Catholic Social Teaching informed the media literacy certification program that she leads. Her answer: “Completely.” She said that media literacy is about promoting the human person, helping to create participative citizens who are critical media consumers, and who seek the betterment of their community by entering into discourse with their neighbor or with the society-at-large. Sr. Mary works for a media literacy that promotes the common good:

All of the values of Catholic Social Teaching are human values. They are drawn from the scriptures and rearticulated in Church teaching. These are basic fundamental human values. So, they go together, as does character education. I think that media mindfulness

is a total marriage between media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching. It's a symbiotic relationship, if you will. They don't exist separately. Any media literacy education teacher sometimes push the envelope with the questions. Media literacy education is about asking questions.

In order to understand better the marriage between media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching, I asked Sr. Mary to describe how it plays out within the three concepts adopted in this study: rights and responsibilities; preferential option for the poor and vulnerable; and dignity of work and rights of workers. "I love the blending of Catholic Social Teaching and media literacy because these two things, you know, they call for each other," Sr. Mary stated, adding that such blending brings about character education, which builds spiritual values on human values. Sr. Mary explained that "[character] education is the epitome of human values, of those human traits that we hope that our children are developing as they grow up but are greatly challenged by the media that's out there." For Sr. Mary, the lens of Catholic Social Teaching is a prolific one for educators seeking to put forward character education. She further explained that when one looks at a media product—on a screen, on a billboard, in a magazine, in a book, in pop music, etc.—the media message is something tangible, one can experience it with one's own senses.

According to Sr. Mary, it all plays out with media mindfulness teachers starting by asking what is it about? Then, what is it really about? Who is it serving? Who is being included? Who's being left out? "So, it becomes about the responsibility of those who create the content, those who create the technology that carries the content, but also the responsibility of the media consumer for the content they choose," said Sr. Mary. Adding yet a new dimension, Sr. Teresa stated that media mindfulness differs from media literacy as it goes beyond to link moral values and/or faith

values to the critical analysis of media. Sr. Teresa explained how values inform media mindfulness:

When teachers look at the values, they're saying, 'So, what are the Gospel values here? What are the values that go against the Gospel, or against our Christian values?' Media literacy explains how it works, how a piece of media is put together, what the focus of that message is, and then, media mindfulness takes it a step further by linking it with the faith.

The Catholic social justice concept of rights and responsibilities can be fruitfully explored, according to Sr. Mary, in the dynamics of media consumption. She said the conversation about rights and responsibilities takes place in the space between the product and consumer: "Rights and responsibilities come into play when students start to reflect on what their responsibilities are as media consumers. Because my rights end where yours begin." Sr. Mary stressed that media mindfulness is concerned with what happens beyond the media consumer, how media messages impact communities, and the moral implications of the media consumers' response to the common good. "Media education can help free people from the shackles of oppression. Because people start asking questions, and if you ask questions, then what's the action that follows from the answers?" asked Sr. Mary. In her view, a media literate person actually has the right to media consumption and media production, and also ought to take responsibility for the productions that he or she creates or is part of, and for what they consume.

In Sr. Mary's analysis the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable plays out on media literacy from how stories are told, how they are marketed, whether or not the poor are exploited, or even depicted. She asked, "If you're telling a story about human trafficking, how

are you going to tell that story in ways that don't repeat the violence or the exploitation of the very persons that are involved?" She said educators must realize that the media-makers of tomorrow are in our pews, living rooms, and classrooms today. She wondered about what the storytellers of tomorrow will produce if they are not equipped to rethink today's media. "Are they going to talk about the poor or are they going to marginalize the poor even more? Are they going to continue to leave women out of every story?" she asked. Sr. Mary gave a practical example of how the option for the poor and vulnerable can influence media literacy. It would be the encouragement of female students to become storytellers as a way to close the gap on female representation on the mainstream media. In addition, Sr. Mary stated that work is generally not upheld as something desirable or as something good in mainstream media depictions. She pointed out that television commercials and magazines generally do not show people working: "Nobody is sweating on TV. Very rarely, and if there is someone, it is probably in a comedic sense." Sr. Mary mentioned the short documentary *Story of Stuff* as an example of a media piece that raises questions about personal responsibility of consumers:

Overseas people are doing dull and repetitive work and making next to nothing to fulfill our consumption habits. How do we deal with that? I think the conversation about the dignity of work and consumerism needs to take place in media literacy instruction, so our humanity is also enhanced.

Sr. Mary stated that another aspect of dignity of work and rights of workers that media literacy instructors can tap on is the context within which media production takes place, more specifically the media industry's workforce. There are deep ethical issues that media producers need to grapple with, Sr. Mary said, adding that in a society that allows freedom of press with

very little control over media production, it is important for media producers to have an ethical code. She said, “When I talk to filmmakers and people who are producing media, sometimes they say ‘I need the work. It might not be something I would do otherwise.’ This is the plight of the media workforce. This is part of the whole package of media production.” Sr. Mary concluded that, hence, media messages students are consuming commonly lack such ethical values, so media literacy teachers are left with the challenge to help students to make sense of it. She said, “Teachers have to look at the overall morality or the overall meaning of the story, maybe it has a redemption element. It doesn’t necessarily have to be a religious experience.”

Sr. Mary indicated that the common good is the link between media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching. She said, “The common good enhances the human community.” Whether it is the family, the worker, or groups of people in solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, in her view, the common good promotes the idea of community and communion. Beyond equipping students with media literacy skills the media mindfulness strategy provokes students to do something about social justice issues. Sr. Mary said, “Media literacy is something that can be fully integrated into all human activity by teachers asking questions and instigating in students the interest to participate in society helping making it a better place, transforming society for the poor and vulnerable.” Sr. Mary said that this is accomplished by having students dismantle media messages, asking questions like what is the message about? What is really going on? Who is gaining and who is paining? Does it make a difference? How can I make a difference? (See Figure 4). This line of questioning leads to considerations about social justice issues in media representations, as Sr. Mary discussed:

Some people gain so much to the detriment of others. When looking at this huge

imbalance in humanity and how it's represented in the stories that are told—whether it's in advertising, or entertainment, or information stories, no matter how—it's our critical thinking skills that come to bear and that can lead to making a difference, to making pro-social changes.

Sr. Mary was motivated by Paulo Freire's ideal of empowering students (Freire, 1970): "It's the ones with the power who tell the stories, and those who tell the stories own the culture because it's the values of the storyteller that influence the consumer." She warned teachers about the danger of thinking that students can think for themselves, hence media literacy is unnecessary, and she added, "I've been asked 'Well, who are you saying is empowered? You know, people can think for themselves.' Sure, they can. But there are not a lot of options in learning to think critically." Sr. Mary attested that media mindfulness is effective in opening up opportunities for students to acquire critical thinking skills and to join the conversation about social justice issues, which in itself creates community and participation, in her opinion. Likewise, Sr. Teresa said that Catholic Social Teaching used a framework to deconstruct media messages empowers both teachers and students:

Media mindfulness empowers teachers to a deeper understanding of how to implement media literacy using the different media that the students prefer. Bringing that into their classroom and then opening up the kids' understanding of the media and of the social teachings of the Church. Because so many times, I've heard teachers—and even principals—say that teachers are so afraid 'cause they don't know how to use the media, so they decide to show students a religious movie, and that's it. No, that's not it at all! Because it turns kids off. Teachers need to be able to implement media mindfulness by

having students deconstruct media messages they are already familiar with. Some of their rap songs and rock songs really tap into some of the different issues, and they have great values in them, and so teachers can bring that into the classroom and then ignite the students by talking their language.

Sr. Mary revealed that teachers are often surprised to learn that the Church has consistently taught since 1936 that the media are gifts of God, wonderful fruits of human creativity and invention (Pius XI, 1936, para. 2). “Is media used for the good? They fall into the hands of people who want to make a profit, and then anything can happen, but the basic understanding of the Church is that they’re the gifts of God,” Sr. Mary sustained. An even bigger realization Sr. Mary’s students have is that media messages necessarily carry and ideology and are never neutral. Sr. Mary said, “The media are not neutral because the means of technology are not neutral by the simple fact that different people own them.” Media ownership and control over media production also contribute to bias in the media, according to Sr. Mary, who added, “Media are not neutral because controlling it says something about our economic status, and if we have it, it means somebody else doesn’t. Somebody else is making it for us. That’s the way capitalism works.” As a response, media mindfulness expects media literate students to influence their communities for the common good. “It could even make a difference in how people vote,” Sr. Mary added, defending that media literacy informs democracy, because if one is able to critically analyze a news report, a television spot, or an interview on the radio, they can dismantle the political agenda behind those media messages by answering questions such as: Who paid for this? What is this party’s agenda? Where does this news outlet usually side on the different issues? What are the arguments of the opponents?

Voters assuming this critical disposition would strengthen democracy by making a vote priceless, because regardless of how much media a candidate could afford to put out during a political campaign, it would not be nearly as effective in convincing media literate voters. Sr. Mary also cited issues involving human dignity as important topics that can be integrated with media literacy education to promote the values of rights and responsibilities of students with the media they consume and produce in how it influences their own lives and their communities. She said, “How can I make a difference? Students ought to be asking that. The common thread certainly is human dignity.” Ultimately, Sr. Mary hopes that her work in media mindfulness can bring about transformation of society and of the world in favor of the common good. She stated, “As a Catholic educator, I hope that through media mindfulness we attain the ability to be humane with one another. I hope that people will respect the rights of others as human beings.”

Clara: The Trainee Experience

Christ the King was an all ladies Catholic high school in operation for over 130 years at a sketchy part of a large American metropolitan city. Its 300 students were mostly African American and Latinas, 60% of them, were not Catholic, among these most had an evangelical background. Eighty-six percent of the pupils received tuition assistance, which made the school’s mission as social as it was educational, according to a school administrator. The school was run by an order of sisters, and staffed by religious educators and male and female lay professionals. Clara was the director of the Arts and Media Program at Christ the King. She teaches all the school’s communications classes. Clara, 27, grew up in a Latino family in the East Coast of the United States, and she has been passionate about media since her childhood. She described her life: “In grade school, I had to draw a thing that said, ‘What do you want to be

when you grow up?’ I remember putting, ‘I want to be a media mogul.’” She explained that a media mogul was someone who uses all the different types of media to pursue their creative interests. Because television, movies, and magazines were part of her growing up, she wanted to use them to express herself creatively, and to do that for a living as well. She went off to study communication and cinema at one of the most renowned American universities in the field of mass media, and graduated in 2008 with a bachelor’s degree in communications with a minor in cinema. There, she also learned about new media, adding, “Media has always been a part of who I am, even as a kid, I knew I wanted to do something in the media industry.” During college, Clara spent a summer interning at her diocese back home in their communications department. She worked on their website and did ghost-writing for the Bishop. Clara described her faith:

I’ve always been pretty faith-centered. My Catholic faith has always been a key piece in my life. So, that combination of faith and media has always been big. When I was in school, I was involved in campus ministry on all levels. In the back of my mind, I sort of knew that doing something with my Catholic faith would be important.

Once out of college, Clara wound up working at a talent agency, but it did not take long for her to seek a career change, “I quickly realized that working in the secular world was not something I wanted to do. I just needed something more fulfilling, and just being a Eucharistic minister wasn’t cutting it. I needed to do something else.” She then applied for a film teacher position at her current school, where she had been working for five years. Even though she had no teaching experience, the school was willing to take a chance on her. It worked out, and since then she had been teaching high school communication classes: journalism, film, and media

mindfulness. Before getting hired at her school, Clara came across literature from the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute while at a Catholic education congress: “I saw the book and it was about integrating faith in the understanding of media, so that attracted me.” She bought the book, and later on when she started teaching she used it as a guide along with the media mindfulness wheel. She added, “It was sort of God’s plan coming together, I started using that book, and of course it led me to look up, ‘Well, who wrote this? Who are these Sisters?’” She eventually found the Sisters’ website and learned about the advanced media literacy certification program, and decided to attend it. Clara recalled:

I came into the class, not being arrogant, but thinking there’s probably not going to be a whole lot that we talk about that I’m not aware of, just ‘cause of my background in COMMS, and because of what I’ve already been doing. I’ve already been teaching this class. [Laughs]. I was a little bit like, ‘Alright, let’s see what else I can glean from this.’

Clara said that she learned media literacy skills in most of her theoretical social communications classes in college. It was clear to her that the media literacy training touched on corresponds to social communications theory and cinema classes, however the concept of media literacy was never presented to her in college: “I don’t remember them ever giving the label ‘media literacy,’ but the whole time, we looked at how messages are communicated and how to pick them apart.” In Clara’s college experience media literacy skills were central to what she learned, but the concept of media literacy as discipline or scholarship was never conveyed to her then. She said, “I didn’t know that media literacy existed as a separate thing until I read Sr. Mary’s book.” After undergoing media literacy training Clara defined media literacy as “the process of recognizing, analyzing, and interpreting media messages, then creating your own in

the way that you want.” She said that there is an important component to this process which is understanding how media is produced and its business model in order to better discern hidden agendas within media messages. In addition, a unique perspective that the Sisters’ approach brought to her practice was incorporating the faith piece to the puzzle encouraging students to compare their interpretation of media messages to their own Catholic values by, “asking themselves the question, ‘How does this piece of media dovetail with my values?’ Then going from there with their own decision-making,” she added. Attending the training also gave Clara a more in-depth understanding of the media mindfulness strategy proposed by the Sisters, beyond what the book provided, which made her reformulate her understanding of what it meant to be media mindful. Clara explained media mindfulness as a set of skills:

Media mindfulness essentially means being able to recognize the different forms of media and how the messages are put together so that you can understand how the content affects your decision-making; how it influences your thoughts; how it influences your culture; and societies; other people; and other media. So, instead of being a passive media consumer, you become an active participant in it.

Another important element of the media mindfulness approach for Clara was what she called the “faith aspect,” which means encouraging students to inform their response to the media they consume in light of their Catholic values. Clara cited commercials as an example of how students can critically analyze and question the media they consume through the lenses of Catholic Social Teaching. She said, “They can start asking questions like, ‘How much of it is worth integrating into my being?’ And ‘How much of it is the commercialism that I can kind of put aside?’ And then, ‘How do media and values interact together?’” Clara hoped that

cultivating critical thinking skills will enable her students to more easily identify deception in the media: “They will be able to go like ‘Oh, this commercial is fake.’ Or ‘This product can’t be this good.’” Undergoing the media literacy training helped Clara make connections between media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching that she had not yet made by just using Sr. Mary’s book. She said, “I was missing that piece of asking the question, ‘What about the people who pain and gain beyond the art?’” Clara said that this newfound perspective helped her greatly in making a clear strong connection between Catholic values and media. Because of her media studies training, during media literacy instruction she used to pose questions about how media affects students themselves never before bridging the conversation to the larger community. Clara explained how her understanding changed with the training:

I was very much focused on the art and then the implications of the immediate people consuming the media, and going like, ‘How do these movies affect your body image, young ladies?’ I never took it a step further to the global sense of, ‘Who’s making this product?’ Like, ‘Who’s making these soccer balls?’ Or ‘What about these impoverished kids who are factory workers?’ I had not made these connections before, but this class showed me how to go beyond and make that connection. I think those first questions are important, ‘What is this as an art form?’ And ‘How is it influencing you, as a community, right here?’ ... It’s important to bring in that external awareness about larger, global issues that are involved in this big commercial sphere.

Lastly, but certainly not least, Clara added that media mindfulness equips students to ask themselves how they will respond to the media, “What can I do about it?” It is up to each student’s discretion to deem how to respond, the expectation is the pupil will be able to produce

her own media message, if compelled to do so, and/or engage on social service to address social justice issues. After studying media mindfulness with Sr. Mary, Clara decided to integrate in her practice a macro sphere social justice line of inquiry that promotes the common good when adopting media literacy in class: “It’s fine for students to be aware of how songs and television shows are influencing them, but they need to also ask ‘Is there a greater issue that I’m called to address in the bigger sphere?’” Clara detailed. Clara was also more aware about the need to encourage her students to be selective of the media they consume as a result of the training, “You can’t expect kids to fall in hook, line, and sinker and be able to even recognize trash from the good.” In her view, even adults have a hard time finding and selecting quality media and she said that “kids would have an even tougher time,” so Clara intended to help her students to develop a greater sense of responsibility over the media they choose. She added, “Students should be able to find something redeeming in any piece of secular media, and if they can’t, then they really have to ask themselves, whether this is something they need to have in their life. Seriously!”

Clara conceptualized the Communication Arts program she now directs in her school. The school was interested in developing extra curricular programs in different professional areas, it was something that Clara grew into, creating, developing, and bringing into fruition her own program. After attending media literacy training she planned to modify the program adding a greater emphasis to media literacy instruction. She said, “As I fine-tune the program at Christ the King, I’m gonna definitely make sure to include media literacy in the mission statement.” Clara planned to take a step back to rearrange the whole program based primarily in teaching students media literacy skills. She continued, “I’m kind of retrofitting onto this whole process,

explicitly about media literacy.” Attending the media literacy training helped Clara’s resolve to provide her students with formal media literacy training. “The first goal of the Communication Arts program will be to teach media literacy to students, which I had been doing, but I was not so overt about defining it, but I’m now going to define it,” Clara attested that the training at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute encouraged her to make the change emphasizing media literacy skills and identifying the discipline as such. She also felt a sense of responsibility to promote media literacy after discovering during the training the wealth of Church documents on media education. The training helped her recognize the importance of media literacy instruction at Catholic schools, “Especially because we’re a Catholic school, we have to make media literacy a key piece. We just have to. The Church is asking us to.” She decided to make use of the resources she discovered through the training to make it happen at her school, adding, “We have all these tools and resources available to us in Sr. Mary’s curriculum, and in all of these encyclicals. So, it’s important that Christ the King stays on the cutting-edge of that.”

Clara has taught a media literacy class since the beginning of her career because she felt that her students needed a Judeo-Christian framework for analyzing the media they consume, which was why Sr. Mary’s approach appealed to her so much. But now, instead of making media literacy just one class out of many that her students take in her former Communication Art program, she intended to make media literacy the foundation of the whole curriculum, adding, “I’m going to make media literacy the key, the first key step. Like, this is the entry.” She decided to require her students to master media literacy skills before producing their own media messages: “Before students learned how to make their own movies. Before they learned how to write their own music. Now, before any of that, they’re going to have this basic, working

knowledge of media literacy, and how to apply it.” Attending the media literacy conference; meeting professors dedicated to the discipline, who publish books on the topic; seeing the thousands of media literacy practitioners and students who came from all over the country just for the media literacy conference; and getting acquainted with organizations dedicated to the promotion of media literacy studies gave the discipline even more relevancy in her eyes. At first, she thought it was just by dumb luck that she stumbled upon Sr. Mary’s book, which summarized everything she was trying to accomplish with her students, but she gained a new perspective. She said, “Now, after attending the conference, I have the knowledge, the background, and I guess the confidence to say, ‘No, this is a legitimate arena that the program can be based on.’” Clara shared that beyond educational benefits, there was a monetary need to have the extracurricular programs at the school, hers included. The school did not have the resources to support the programs fulltime on its own. “Needing outside support to even just keep me hired on,” Clara confided, and continued, “So, I have a list of elective courses that I ask the girls to take.” A class needs at least 12 students, therefore it may or may not be offered depending on student demand. Clara described how she intends to work closely with the development department at her school:

What I’m looking to do is work with the development department to put together a program—that already existed but packaging it in a way—so we can go out and get grant money. So, I can stay hired, and we can hire more people to do other things like more music.

Clara hoped that rebranding her Art Communications program as a media literacy based program will help it grow independent of school enrollment and without needing any financial

support from the school itself. She said, “That’s just the nature of working at a small school. Catholic education is not a moneymaker.” Clara told me that there were many philanthropists who were willing to support individual students, and her school performs above average in terms of getting underprivileged students into college, but overall teachers and administrators were poorly compensated and there was virtually no money available for extra-curricula activities, which impacted her greatly since all the Art Communication classes were elective. She continued, “It is pulling teeth to get enough of the student enrollment to afford extra programs, because what I ask of my students is on top of their regular coursework.” At Christ the King, media mindfulness class, film production class, and art of film class were outside of the core curriculum, hence, the school needed financial resources to support the infrastructure to offer these extracurricular classes. “It’s a challenge to support extracurricular programs,” Clara lamented. She explained that when there were budget cuts at the school, elective classes were terminated: “Electives are the first thing that goes. Art, music, all the fun electives get tossed out the window,” which is why she made sure that she had the right financial backing in order for her program to be offered independent from the school’s budget.

After attending the media literacy training program, Clara came up with a three-fold strategy to gather the financial resources necessary to not only maintain but grow her Art Communication program. First, it was based on media literacy skills, which she saw as a discipline in demand. Second, it provided evidence for this claim to potential donors with a collection of peer reviewed academic work—as the ones she observed during the media literacy national conference—in order to legitimize the discipline. Lastly, but also central, was highlighting the fact that her students were from ethnic minorities and from disadvantaged

socioeconomic backgrounds, which was an already established issue with the school's donors. She wanted to emphasize to donors how much women of color have been misrepresented and underrepresented in the mainstream media. Clara recognized that gender discrimination on the American mainstream media had improved in the last years, but in her assessment it was still a relevant issue in the media landscape. She was confident that honing in these three factors can garner the necessary financial support for her department's extracurricular activities. Clara passionately and eloquently described her vision:

We'll tell donors what our answer is: "Knowing what we know about media literacy; knowing what we know about Catholic Social Teaching; knowing what we know about how the industry looks right now; we can offer an opportunity to educate these young women, and to support them going out into the world, becoming the creators of tomorrow's media, having the confidence, the tools, and the spiritual grounding to create their own stories; to create their own content that reflects their values, and that promotes themselves as women—women of color—in a way that will change the media landscape for the better.

Clara stated that the link between media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching rests on using media literacy to promote social responsibility through getting students to be concerned about the people suffering different social injustices like poverty, hunger, violence, discrimination of all sorts, religious persecution, and homelessness, among others. Clara said, "Media mindfulness teaches students to be sensitive to people who are less fortunate." She advocated for teachers' use of media literacy instruction as a way of equipping their students to evaluate the media messages they consume in light of Catholic Social Teaching, which in her

opinion transcends religion and is chiefly concerned with human wellbeing. She added, “It’s our responsibility as Catholic educators to make sure that people learn how to recognize the good from the bad, and to recognize the Gospel values, even if the secular media doesn’t know what they are.” Dissecting media messages through Catholic Social Teaching helped Clara make connections with human social conditions beyond a religious label like the dignity of human life, which in her opinion was an issue that went beyond Christian belief, it was an expression of humanity. She explained, “Media mindfulness can be a powerful tool for anybody to just stay focused on the dignity of humanity; and then, once you understand that, it naturally trickles down into a greater awareness of wanting to help and serve people.” Learning to integrate media literacy into her practice as a way of teaching her students about their responsibilities as Catholics was one of the most useful skills Clara acquired through media literacy training: “It was very valuable that they made a clear distinction—that I hadn’t made on my own—between us being media literate, ourselves, and then being able to teach that, as a responsibility. I’m grateful for that.” Clara also found the media literacy approach helpful in discussing social justice issues with students because “[media] literacy teaches students to think of the questions and to raise the questions.” The training made her appreciate media literacy as a valuable teaching strategy to help students identify Catholic Social Teaching concepts within the media messages they consume, which was a blind spot for her before attending the training. “Rights and responsibilities in the social teaching perspective, it’s recognizing that you have an obligation to promote other peoples’ rights, but the responsibility to also convey your Christian values,” she said. Asking her students questions concerning people’s rights and responsibilities never occurred to her before, until a class discussion, during the training, about the Edward

Zwick's film *Blood Diamond* (2006). Clara said, "I never taught to ask! How key is that literacy component that we don't just look at it from a production perspective like, 'Oh, this creative person drew this picture that represents what they wanted to convey.' No!" Clara explained that analyzing the media through the lenses of Catholic Social Teaching took her as a teacher beyond exploration of art form and ideology to the exploration of how social justice issues were depicted within media and how one ought to respond to the larger issue in a tangible practical way. After an intellectual analysis a moral call-to-action was expected to arise from the student herself, as Clara describes:

It's about that extra step of saying, 'Where does this product come from? Who made this product? Who's benefitting from this product? Who's losing from this product? Are these the diamonds that have been harvested from these terrible working environments in Africa? Right? That's the piece that was missing from what I was teaching that I'm now going to incorporate.

As a Catholic educator, it is important for Clara to teach her students the universal nature of the Church and the issues it addresses on global scale. Although most of Clara's students knew firsthand what was like to face socioeconomic disadvantages, Clara wanted them to also be aware of critical social injustice cases that happen beyond the boundaries of their diocese, or country. She found that bringing the element of media into the lesson, and applying the media mindfulness model were helpful in raising her students' sense of responsibilities towards global social justice issues. Clara claimed, "When looking at rights and responsibilities, teachers have an obligation to consider the dignity of human life and how that's being treated in the media, not just in our own communities, but in the world around us." Clara said that during the process of

media research in preparation for integrating media literacy instruction, teachers should favor media messages concerned with social issues. She said, “As we’re getting media from all these different pieces and places that have connections to other world issues, I think it helps make students citizens of the world, and not just confined in their own little bubble.” Clara highlighted that Catholics are “called to be stewards of the poor.” She recognized that the media can be helpful for Catholic educators to fulfill this calling: “The media is such a powerful tool to get the word out on different social issues of the poor.” Nonetheless, she said teachers must be keen in discerning the media that can actually denigrate Catholic Social Teaching by either promoting antagonistic discourse, or silencing on social justice issues altogether. She added, “The key is learning how to recognize the media that promotes that message, and the media that doesn’t.” In Clara’s view, media literacy skills are fundamental in helping teachers analyze media message, a proficiency worth acquiring to enhance Catholic school teachers’ effectiveness in addressing social justice issues. She said, “A teacher can use the media—that powerful tool—to reflect on ways of reaching out to the poor. We have an obligation to see that through.”

One of Clara’s newfound perspectives on understanding media was considering the workforce of its industry. She counseled students who aspired to join the media industry in the past, and now she wants her students to recognize that media production requires collaboration of diverse professionals. Clara detailed, “There are so many different people that come together to make any one piece of media. It’s not something created in a vacuum by one person. It involves a whole team of people.” Clara recognized that media production as a group effort could help students trying to break into the industry, but more importantly for her, it connects with the idea of solidarity and the promotion of the common good which are central for Catholic

Social Teaching. She mentioned, “It promotes that culture of everyone being interdependent.” She thought this approach could also help her convey to her students ideas such as different but equal, and equitable and equality: “First of all, recognizing that there are a ton of people who work on any given media project, and they’re at all different levels, all different types of people,” Clara said, adding that each of them is essential, which speaks to the Catholic Social Teaching concepts of dignity of the human person; rights of workers and dignity work. Clara was intrigued by the customary criticism of mainstream media being overly commercialized, the need of media workers to make a living, and their work condition, in which art has been industrialized. Clara discussed the dignity of the media workforce:

We’re called to work, and to work in ways that are going to uplift the human condition. We’re designed for work. Jesus worked, he was a carpenter. So, from that perspective, work inherently carries a lot of dignity, and when we really learn how to recognize what the media is. We see a lot of dignity in it, in these workers who show up everyday and who do it, and, who can promote good work in other spheres.

After training, Clara was poised to carry discussions about workers in the media industry with her students because she thought it was an opportunity to “ask questions about work in general,” using the Catholic Social Teaching of rights of workers and dignity of work to question her students about their professional aspirations, and work ethics. Clara also planned a media mindfulness class for the following winter, its final assignment was on women in the media (Appendix G). This project accounted for 50% of the students’ final grade. The other 50% were from commercials students had to produce for the class. Both assignments replicated exercise she had undertaken during the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute. The final assignment

required students to choose a piece of media, such as a film, song, commercial, comic book, video game, website, television show, newspaper article, or radio show. Then, students selected a female character of any age, race, ethnicity, or class from the media message chosen. Subsequently, students were asked to analyze the character by applying the media mindfulness wheel strategy (See Figure 4). At the surface level, students had to identify “What was going on?” by answering questions like: “What is the purpose of this media?” “What role does the woman play in this purpose?” “Who is the target audience of the product?” At the next stage, students were asked to identify the demographic information about the main character and target public, and whether the piece’s main purpose is education, ideological, or commercial. Then, pupils investigated the deeper message, or hidden agenda, by seeking to identify “What was really going on?” So, students answered questions like “What hidden/subliminal messages are there about sex, relationships, gender roles, and culture?” and “Is the woman depicted as a sex symbol, a homemaker, or both?” Students had to support their answers with the reasons that lead them to their conclusions, such as, the role the woman was portraying, her physical appearance, behaviors, and how others interact with her. At this point students were encouraged to include any other observations they may had.

Catholic Social Teaching was introduced to the exercise as students reflected on what difference that particular media piece made in promoting the common good by initially answering the big question “Who cares?” Then, they were prompted to reflect more specifically about “What Christian values, morals, or social issues does this piece of media support or reject?” and “What is the worldview behind it?” Following, students reflected on “What difference can I make?” expressing what response seemed appropriate to them and why. Finally,

students discussed the differences between boycotts versus being aware. Through this process students were asked to complete the “Media Mindfulness” wheel to help them sort through their own ideas. Clara thought it was important to allow students to analyze media messages of their choosing. In fact, she found that using pop culture to make faith connections replicates Jesus’ own preaching style of using activities of everyday life with which his audience would be familiar (Matthew 20:1-16; John 10-11-18). Clara recalled that in the Gospels Jesus told stories that the common person could relate to regardless of their religious or cultural background. She said about Jesus: “‘Y’all are farmers, y’all are working in the vineyards. Y’all have sheep.’ He tapped into pop culture when he was here on earth, so, the masses could understand him.”

Clara compared the universality of Jesus’ message of love for the neighbor with the broad reach that mainstream media has by offering outlets that people from different walks of life—rich, poor, old, young, black, white—can experience and enjoy. She said, “Media is such a pervasive part of our culture, for better or worse. It’s just everywhere.” In her view, media served as a unifying factor, hence Catholic school teachers did not need to exclusively use media messages that are theologically correct according to Church doctrine, but as Jesus did, they could use expressions of pop culture to communicate the Gospel. She said, “You can get the next blockbuster and apply Jesus to it,” she said. Clara found it useful to look for redeemable aspects on media messages that she could potentially use in the classroom for supporting Catholic Social Teaching instruction: “There’s so much potential for carrying pop culture as a vehicle for social change, and as a vehicle for identity and for the passing on our values—the Church has a responsibility to be inherently involved in that.” In the class about faith formation and the media, one of the Sisters lectured about how the Church has effectively in the course of its

history used popular culture to advance the Gospel instead of overlaying Church doctrine on top of the popular culture. Clara was particularly sympathetic of this method as she saw media literacy as a fruitful tool for applying this strategy with the goal to convey Catholic values, Catholic Social Teaching included. Clara explained:

You don't just overlay on top, "Oh, these are our Church values, but they're somehow above pop culture." No! We have to get inside the culture and change it from within.

And, that struck me really powerfully, because that's what we do. That's what the media does to everything.

Clara was inspired by the Sisters' approach to popular music as a tangible example of how to promote change in the popular culture values from within. Although she would consider the lyrics in most of the songs heard in class objectionable, she was impressed with how redeemable messages were easily brought out through the discussions of the songs and artists, and how helpful it could be to her students. She detailed, "It exists—not putting our heads in the sand—and recognizing that this is what our students are listening to. This is what's being played in our cultural milieu." Clara said that teaching media literacy skills through the analysis of popular music can be a powerful opportunity to start a dialogue to raise awareness to social issues.

Clara observed that her students could not know how to recognize positive messages in media unless they also knew what the negative messages were. She explained, "It can be used as a foil, 'Oh, this song's just about sex.' Well, let's put that apart and say, 'When is it appropriate? Why, why are we obsessed with sex?'" Clara said that it is important for Catholic school teachers to be open to discuss controversial subjects as learning opportunities when alternatives can be

presented to students. Teachers, for instance, she said, could explore the blessings of human sexuality if it takes place in the right context. She continued, “We can explain what sex is really about, unconditional love, giving of one self, these are all things a teacher can pull out of there.” Clara described her experience undergoing media literacy training as a discovery of the human condition accompanied by the inspiration and resolve to promote love towards one’s neighbor through media. Clara said, “Certainly the whole gestalt that it’s about the human condition and love. I love that!” Clara affirmed that the training was effective in conveying how to identify the so-called “good media,” media that supports common good values, and the “not-so good media,” which ignores, downplays, or exploits them. Clara was also appreciative of learning directly from Sr. Mary about the core concepts of media literacy, how to formulate the questions to ask, and how to pick media apart, “Because that’s what I use for my students,” she said. Clara thought it would be a mistake for Catholic school teachers and catechists to write off media as being a bad influence when they start talking about Catholic values and pop culture: “I love how Sr. Mary’s course doesn’t persecute the media.” One of the principles that captivated her at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute was the upholding of media as a “gift of God,” something that promotes the common good (Pius XI, 1936, para. 2).

Clara wished teachers at her school were more open to media literacy. She said most lacked basic media training. She observed a generational gap, while younger teachers were generally willing to try it, while older teachers commonly shied away from the media literacy talk. She explained that older teachers were not intellectually inferior, but preferred to ignore something they did not necessarily understand: “They don’t want to have to deal with it.” Clara found that when she led sessions coaching her colleagues on media, including Internet

navigability and social media usage teacher became more open to the idea. She added, “All of a sudden, they become a lot more at ease in talking about it.” Clara was compassionate about teachers who feel they lack the expertise to integrate media literacy instruction into their practice, acknowledging that her academic formation in mass communications gave her an advantage point. She said, “I take for granted that I know how the industry works, all those ins and outs of the business.” She noticed that teachers often told her that they did not use media in their practice because they either did not have experience producing media messages or did not understand the business model of media. Clara told me teachers at her school had expressed that they were not knowledgeable of media, they had never produced a media message, they simply did not consider themselves creative people, or did not even know how media works. She said, “If they knew how the business works, like the process of how movies are made—or even the profit structure— then, they’d be more comfortable in recognizing it as something they can talk intelligently about.”

For Clara, it would be useful for teachers to know that media literacy is about asking questions, not answering them necessarily. She said, “Teachers inherently want to have all the answers. They’re the ones that are used to be asked questions, and they have the answers.” Media literacy provides a shift in this paradigm as it opens the discussion for students to provide their own answers (Freire, 1970). In Clara’s opinion many were uncomfortable with the idea of relinquishing classroom discussion topics to students. Clara said it was challenging for some teachers to accept that during media literacy instruction they were asked to surrender power to students, and proposes: “Maybe that’s where to start helping teachers, turning to them and saying, ‘You don’t have to have the answers, you just have to raise the questions.’” Clara gave

the example of student led media literacy instruction citing the *Kony 2012* (Invisible Children, 2012) video that went viral online. It asked people to buy a campaign promotional kit with posters, t-shirts, stickers, and other marketing collaterals to help raise awareness to kids that were kidnapped in Africa. She explained, “The issue wasn’t a hoax, but the movement to stop it was, and my students bought hook, line, and sinker. They’re like, ‘This is such a huge war crime, we have to do something.’” Clara watched the video her students recommended: “I could tell it was propaganda, so I took a pause and I started asking them questions about who made the video.” Using the media literacy inquiry method she engaged her students coaxing them to analyze it critically by asking questions like “Where did this come from? Where did this footage come from? Why is it edited together like this? What is it asking you to do?” She felt it was pressing to go through that exercise with her students right away because they were very impressed by what they watched. She was also able to link the media message her students were watching with their calling to take action to help the poor and vulnerable. Clara made this a learning experience for her students teaching them how to identify hoax, as she explained:

It’s great that students want to help people in need and that they’re sensitive to these global issues. But, they still have to be really careful, learn what to look for, and maybe use their desire to help people in other ways.

Clara deemed crucial for students to beyond having critical thinking skills—such as the ones highlighted in the Common Core Standards—to be taught how to produce media messages, “I still need to have my face time about the production piece.” Clara defended that media production is a basic literacy skill in today’s society and that it should be part of school curricula, at least as an elective course. Every student should be able to identify media types (print, film,

radio, television, digital) and media genres and codes within each media type, for example, having familiarity with television programming and knowing how to discern sitcom, drama, newscast, and commercial. Clara explained that “[we] do that with literature. Students should be able to recognize poems versus novels. But that doesn’t necessarily teach them how to write a novel, or how to write a poem—that’s the creative writing class later” Expanding that to encompass media would satisfy basic media theory understanding for Clara, which she thought would be more helpful than, for instance, creating a separate course in the school curriculum.

Clara was convinced that students’ media literacy level would improve significantly if teachers incorporated media in their regular subject instruction and took a few minutes to acknowledge media techniques, genre, and hidden agendas every time they used media messages. In her view, if this was the case it would suffice to offer media production as an elective, “Students can take creative writing, but even if they don’t take creative writing, they still know what a poem is, what a novel is. We could do the same with media.” Clara said textbook publishers appeared ever more proactive in offering multimedia content—online or through DVDs—in order to enrich lessons through digital interactivity. “Why not just have any multimedia piece contain just one media literacy question?” she proposed, adding that by doing so teachers would purvey the content that the media piece was helping support, and also supply an example of something to talk about through the lenses of media literacy. Clara said this change would be rather worth it because in her view, “Media literacy is an amazing vehicle for promoting values and the human experience, learning and love.”

Elizabeth: Media Mindfulness in Middle School

Red brick walls, exquisite landscaping, and religious statues led to a locked gate, which

you could only enter if someone on staff was awaiting you, and after presenting proper identification. Elizabeth welcomed me with a big smile and captivating bright green eyes. Inside, I found a traditional small parish school alike many across America. Young children were playing in the patio, and older children were still in the classrooms. She explained that a few of the students were attending a summer day care program filled with fun activities. She had been with the school for 14 years, and for the last couple of years, beyond teaching she also served as the vice-principal, a job that entailed helping out the principal in day-to-day activities running the school. Elizabeth held a bachelor's degree in anthropology, with the minor in religious studies, from a reputable state university, and a master's degree in religious studies, focusing on the spirituality of media at a well renowned Catholic college. She taught social studies, history, and religion to the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. The school enrolment is around 180 to 200 pupils per year, with a diverse student body encompassing mainly Latino, Asian, and White students, 95 % of them were Catholic. Elizabeth's interest in media began in her childhood when her father worked at a major Hollywood studio. She had since been fascinated with comic books, and later—because of her strong Catholic faith—with how religious values are represented in the media. Her interest in media eventually led her to the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute, where she attended the advanced certification in media literacy back in 2006. Elizabeth described her experience there:

It was wonderful to bring my Catholicism and Catholicity [Catholic identity] to the study of media because I always loved the religion. The passion of understanding it and learning it and being able to explain it to somebody else was always really fascinating to me.

Elizabeth wanted to be able to have her students understand that what was on television was not always the truth, and realize that just because they saw something on television or on the newspaper it did not mean it was right: “I wanted my students to be really careful. I wanted them to be aware.” She was interested in media literacy training to acquire the tools to accomplish that. She mentioned, “I wondered ‘How am I going to develop the ability to convey to my students that their spirituality is everywhere within the media?’ It’s everywhere—it permeates everything.” As a Catholic educator, Elizabeth was interested in teaching her students the moral compass, and plant media literacy seeds, “In elementary school we’re planting the seeds. High school fertilizes the plant and then it blooms, and it becomes what it is in college.” Elizabeth recognized that the one who plants the seeds was not always able to see the flowers, “But, you want to be able to plant the seed that says, ‘Can you discern whether this media is entertainment, teaching you a value, or it is dismissing one of your values?’” Elizabeth added that this was something that she wanted to learn more about, when she attended Sr. Mary’s training.

In her sixth grade history class, the content started with the ancient world all the way up to the Roman Empire. In the seventh grade, she taught the fall of Rome, Western civilization, and American history until the Declaration of Independence and Enlightenment. The eighth graders study American history culminating with the Civil War. In her religion class, sixth graders saw the Old Testament, from Genesis to Exodus. She related, “We do all the Torah, and then we move on to prophets, and then we end with Ecclesiastes, and the Wisdom books.” In seventh grade the focus was Christology “It’s all Jesus, so I use a lot of media with that.” In the eighth grade the focus shifted to the Apostles after Pentecost and community service. She said,

“It’s fun because we end with the Catholic Social Teachings.” Although Elizabeth was not primarily an English or communications teacher, she found a way to include media literacy as integral part of the curriculum, and she was always on the lookout for fresh media content to support her instruction. When *The Bible Miniseries* (Mitchell, Reece, & Spencer, 2013) came out, for instance, she immediately included it in the sixth grade curriculum that year. The effort paid off as her students pondered on the biblical representations on screen. Elizabeth said she could not see herself having the capability of teaching in a public school without the ability to bring God into the lesson plans: “I wouldn’t be able to function without having God existing in each of the lesson plans. I can always bring the social justice themes within social studies.” She was glad she could explore Catholic Social Teaching with her junior high students: “It’s really easy to bring in the Catholic Social Teachings into the social studies lesson plans because we’re talking about human cultures and stuff like that.” Elizabeth used Catholic Social Teaching extensively with her students, especially eighth graders: “We really discuss and dissect the Catholic Social Teachings. I ask them ‘What is social justice?’” Elizabeth challenged her students to articulate the meaning of justice. She told me justice is love and that often in times love is best expressed through service, so she had her students focus on community service. Her sixth graders on the other hand focus on the fairness of justice. When they studied about the world wars, for instance, they were encouraged to ponder whether they were justified, including biblical wars. Elizabeth explained:

I ask them ‘Is this war justified?’, or ‘What Saul did—was it justified?’, ‘How come the Bible says Saul went out of favor with God because he didn’t kill the king of his rival?’ Explaining that to the kids is really interesting. You have to tread lightly, but you also

have to be completely honest with them, 'cause they can tell when you're not. Then comes the element of media and kids are wide-eyed. They just get so excited when you bring the God aspect into the media conversation, and that's what they want to talk about. Even if it's a bad movie, I want my kids to realize there's still something good about it. Even if the ethics aren't right, or the violence, they gotta look for God in it, and they can find it. I have them answer 'Is this right?', 'What would be another alternative?'

Participating in media literacy training changed Elizabeth's perception of both media literacy and social justice, as she realized the major role media plays in the human condition of modern society, "It brought to the forefront of my perspective how important Catholic Social Teaching is for understanding media, because media is so pervasive and Catholic Social Teaching is about what it means to be a human being." Elizabeth noticed in her practice how palpable the difference is between students who were media literate and those who were not. She said, "I've seen the effects of media on kids who haven't been taught, and I've seen the effects of media when they have been taught, and know how to break it down." She explained that media literate students are more engaged and can make more meaningful connections between the media messages presented and the content. She introduced media literacy in class by asking her students to name their favorite song and television show. Then, she asked students to question themselves about why that particular show and/or song is their favorite. She said, "I start asking them questions that possibly nobody else bothers to ask them. 'Why do you like a TV show that demeans other people?', 'Why do you watch it?', 'What messages are you getting from it?'" It was not her goal to make children change their media consuming options—although some reportedly had—but rather to question their media choices. She said, "Questioning is very

important, because if I don't start asking questions, my students will not gonna ask the questions themselves. It's really not something innate." Integrating media literacy into her teaching meant extra work for Elizabeth as she aimed to find age appropriate yet thought-provoking media messages to share with her students, "We're only allowed to show G rated content, even PG is too much. So our choices are limited," she lamented. The film ratings system was established by the Motion Picture Association of America (1968) in order to inform parents about the appropriateness of film content for children. This tool was useful for Elizabeth when selecting media messages to be used in class with her students. Elizabeth was careful about adapting the Catholic Social Teaching content to her students' age as well, as she described:

I can definitely talk to them about what they are seeing in the media and what that has to do with justice—how it fits into it. I don't get into liberation theology with them [laughs] or feminist theology, or even eco-theology. I don't. We don't really go into all of that. I would if they were in high-school, but in middle school I talk to them about what it means to be a human being in the image and likeness of God—and I go back to that again and again—teaching them that justice means loving another person because they are God's children—not because we can get something out of it.

Her school aimed to be service-oriented, this was integral to the school's identity, therefore the school helped families struggling financially by partnering with non-profit organizations to combat hunger in their community. The focus on service was also reflected academically. Elizabeth introduced the topic of hunger to her students by showing documentaries exposing hunger around the world: "It's important for them to see it. We talk about the difference between just giving the poor fish and teaching them how to fish, and what

charity is all about, not a one-time handout, but truly loving our neighbors, which is more demanding.” One of the video clips she showed in class was from a documentary produced by a missionary priest in Haiti. She detailed, “My kids are often puzzled and ask me ‘Why are those children so happy?’, so I ask them ‘Wouldn’t you be happy if you were in that situation?’, ‘Why?’,” Elizabeth explained, adding that she pushed the envelope to help students ponder about consumerism by asking them, “Are you happy with what you have or do you always want more?” She also talked to students about the importance of sharing, “I ask them ‘When you get those new pair of shoes, are you making sure that somebody who doesn’t have shoes gets shoes?’” Elizabeth wanted her students to learn the difference between a need and a want, “We do a lot of that. I ask them to reflect ‘Do I really *need* this?’ It’s important for them to understand that the poor is not just an un-faced human.” Elizabeth made the poor a focal point of her lesson, explaining to students that the poor are anyone below the poverty line, and about students’ personal obligation toward the poor, “they are taught that as a Catholic Christian it is their obligation to be of service to the world, and especially to the poor,” Elizabeth commented.

In order to experience firsthand what was like to go hungry in a rich world, Elizabeth’s students—sixth, seventh, and eighth graders—played a game called hunger banquet. At breakfast students had bread only, and did not eat until lunch time. At 12 o’clock, students picked a number. One meant the developed world, which was the standard American lunch, so they were fed a sandwich, salad, and a soft beverage. Those who picked number two, representing the developing countries, were also allowed to sit at the table, but were only given a cup of noodle and some juice. Students who got number three, representing the majority of the world, which is poor, sat on the floor with a bowl of rice and water. Students were expected to

reflect on the class division in the world exemplified by hunger. On the day of the exercise some students wished for a number one, while eighth graders often boast at enduring two years as a number three. Elizabeth hoped to be teaching them that hunger is not an unsolvable situation. She found media literacy helpful to address complex topics like hunger and the dignity of work and rights of workers with her younger students: “I can’t get into liberation theology, but I can talk a little bit about the rights of workers with my eighth graders when I show them the *The Story of Stuff*,” the same video which was used in the advanced certification in media literacy as an intro to discuss consumerism. Elizabeth explained why she used it:

The video is mind-blowing for the kids. They get so excited about it, ‘Wow! I didn’t realize that.’ I ask them ‘Do you need that five-dollar radio, which you know it costs more than five dollars to make?’, ‘What’s happening to the people that actually made that radio?’, ‘Do you realize those shoes you really want might be made by a 5-year old kid?’ The media literacy training definitely made me more aware that you need to use media in order to teach social justice. You can’t just name the Catholic Social Teachings. You can’t just give them a definition of what social justice is in the Catholic Church, and expect it to resonate with them. If you give them an example of what social justice is within the media, then it’s easier for them to understand it and go, ‘Oh, I get it.’

Elizabeth’s lesson prep ritual changed since she attended media literacy training: “Media literacy training with the sisters gave me a boost to go out there and look for more information about it.” She has since tailored her lesson plans to integrate media literacy into her instruction about Catholic Social Teachings and the media. She asked, “Is there a media component to this lesson?” In every lesson plan, Elizabeth made sure each of her students had a media mindfulness

wheel, or there was one visible for the whole class, she used it to guide the discussion. A lesson plan intended for pre-kindergarten through third grade students prescribes the opening sequence of *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995)—an animated film—and a follow-up discussion asking students to point out what the main message was and how it was relevant to their lives and to the gospel (See Appendix G). The discussion was guided by the questions from the media mindfulness wheel (See Figure 4). In addition, the teacher had visible bible passages about friendship displayed in the classroom. The lesson was mainly delivered through questions, which were led by students' answers (Freire, 1970). Pre-kindergarten and first grade students were initially asked: What images did you see? (What is going on?); Did the boy look like he was happy? (What is really going on?); Why? (What is really going on?); First through third grade students were already able to navigate the four inquiry cycles of the media mindfulness wheel and are asked in addition: What is a friend? (What difference does it make?); What do the lyrics of the song say about friendship? (What difference does it make?); How can you relate this to the message from the gospels about friendship? (What difference can I make?).

Although she was always on the lookout for new media messages she could integrate to her lesson plans, Elizabeth replicated activities and used content she learned during her media literacy training at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute. Discussing the *House Hippo* video was one such example. Students from the fourth to the sixth grades watched the video—which was made available online—in class and determined together what the message was and how relevant it was to their lives. They accomplish this by answering questions like “Is there really such an animal as the North American House Hippo? What is this message about? What kind of effects does the video use to grab your attention?”

Elizabeth expected her seventh and eighth grade students to be savvy media consumers who are able to identify media techniques used in different media formats, so she assigned students media analysis projects. One of them—also replicated from the Saint Gabriel media literacy training—asked students to identify the target public from different magazine ads. Students looked at an ad and circled points that the company was using to capture the attention of the reader. Students then asked themselves the questions on the media mindfulness wheel. In another exercise, students viewed the video *Story of Stuff*—the short documentary about world economy and the environment which explained where “stuff” comes from and where it goes when we throw it away. Elizabeth learned about this documentary in her media literacy training. Students reviewed the video through Christian values and determine their viable wants and needs. She likewise had seventh and eighth grade students use the media mindfulness wheel to guide in-class discussions, at this level questions were more open-ended “What can you do about it? What is it teaching you? Where can you go from here?” Students were expected to display a greater abstractive thinking and led complex discussions among themselves.

Convinced of the importance of media literacy instruction, once her training was over, Elizabeth was determined to share her knowledge with other educators, and took on the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute’s call to “train the trainers.” Upon her Principal’s approval, she presented her media literacy training final project to her school’s teachers ranging from preschool to eighth grade. The school has 11 teachers and has a total of 23 employees. Elizabeth also shared with teachers media literacy lesson plans that they could integrate into their own subject:

I was fired up and ready to go! For the final project, the sister told us we could do it on anything that had to do with media literacy. I wanted to use it for something in education. So, I did a PowerPoint presentation on how to teach teachers to be media literate, because a lot of the times teachers are afraid. We took a whole hour, I did the presentation and at the end I said, ‘Don’t be afraid of it.’

Elizabeth was met with resistance to the idea of implementing media literacy during instruction mainly from older teachers: “There are a couple of teachers that don’t even embrace the iPad. I think it is generational.” She said that while younger teachers were eager to try media literacy, older teachers seemed afraid, which caused her to focus her message on telling teachers they have nothing to fear. She said, “Don’t be afraid of teaching students the ability to discern what they are watching.” Elizabeth encouraged teachers to help students to decipher on their own the media messages they consume. She said teachers were more open to the idea of aiding kids to find the positive in media messages: “Regardless of how young they are—even if it’s a cartoon, there is a lesson to be learned. ‘Cause, usually stories do have some type of morals and do have some endings that are for the common good.” Her administrative role as vice-principal gave her a platform to promote media literacy more consistently among the faculty. In order to help teachers who were fearful to take on media literacy, Elizabeth even designed lesson plans tailored to students’ age (See Appendix F), and coached teachers individually. “I always tell teachers not to be afraid of the kids expressing what they’ve seen. I tell them to use the Internet,” she said, recalling a simple strategy she learned from Sr. Mary, during her training, as an effortless way to integrate media literacy in their practice. Sr. Mary told her class to access a news website, and watch the news for five minutes with students, then

turn it off and pray with them for the people featured on the news. “That’s all it takes to get started. You’re teaching them about current events, social studies . . . also teaching them to have a prayer life and to reflect on how much media desensitize us to the suffering others,” Elizabeth defended. At her school, about half of the teachers were resistant to the idea of integrating media literacy into their practice. “Teachers say things like ‘We don’t have the Internet capability’, or ‘It’s going to take too much of my time,’ and—really balk at it,” lamented Elizabeth, while also celebrating the other 50 % of teachers at her school who did adopt media literacy, “We integrate it, which is great!” Elizabeth cheered.

The teachers that embraced media literacy often shared with each other a new website or a video clip they thought other teachers would be interested in for media literacy instruction. Elizabeth explained that is a time consuming task to find appropriate content for 11 through 13-year-old students in a Catholic school, so after scavenging through YouTube, GodTube, TheReligionTeacher.com, and the like, teachers were eager to share a gem find. She said religion-publishing companies were proactive in offering multimedia content to aid teachers as well with extra multimedia resources that were often helpful for media literacy instruction. Nonetheless, Elizabeth told me that it was an uphill battle to coax more teachers in her school to integrate media literacy in their practice: “A lot of the times the teachers say, ‘I need the tools, if you want me to do this,’” Elizabeth explained adding that “part of that process is getting iPads, better Wi-Fi, and teaching them how to use the projectors and not being afraid of that. It’s an ongoing process and they’ve gotten a lot better,” Elizabeth observed.

Elizabeth credited the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute with her understanding that through media literacy kids can grasp that the reality the media portrays is intended to grab

audiences for-profit: “Media conglomerates are for-profit organizations. Kids need to understand that the reason why there are commercials during their favorite show is because the media wants them to buy the stuff.” She often told her students that the media needs their money to continue on, and uses the example of television cartoons and their commercials, a format her younger students were familiar with. Elizabeth attested that media literacy training has influenced her teaching a great deal starting with helping her understand the multidimensional nature of media messages, as she described:

Everything has a hidden agenda—everything—whether be it a commercial, or a program, or a movie, or the news. Even the news is manipulated to a certain point. Media literacy has helped me understand that everything put out there has a purpose. The sisters really talked about that and it moved me. It changed my teaching. It, in fact, made me want to disseminate that to the kids. So media literacy has helped me a lot in understanding that a story is there to convey what the storyteller wants me to hear.

In Elizabeth’s assessment media literacy was just as important as math, so she was pleasantly surprised with the Common Core’s focus on critical thinking, because for her all students should be equipped with the skills to dissect the media they consume. She said, “When kids begin thinking critically, it helps them to become independent thinkers. Because they will not always be sheltered in the Catholic educational system, when they get out in the world they will need to be savvy media consumers.” She said it was customary for her diocese to tweak government educational standards to make sure the content was always Gospel centered, “For the Diocese it’s all about finding Jesus as the core. Whether we’re teaching science or English, Jesus needs to be at the core of each lesson, it’s part of our Student Learning Expectations.”

Elizabeth eagerly awaited the result of how the Common Core will influence diocesan standards. She anticipated a greater emphasis in teaching critical thinking skills for which media literacy will come handy in her opinion.

Paul: Media Mindfulness in High School

Cleanliness is next to godliness. The place was strikingly clean—smelled beautiful—and there were religious icons all around the living room area, the home was peaceful and cozy. Paul was an opera and choral singer in his spare time. He grew up all over the East Coast in a military home. Later, he decided to become a priest and entered the seminary only to find out that his vocation was to be a lay teacher. Paul taught theology at a Catholic high school. He talked with the slang that kids use, dressed casually, had tattoos, and wore earplugs; he was 45, but from a distance one could easily confuse him for a highschooler, except with one of his students, because Paul taught at an all-girls college-preparatory. He was proud of his multiethnic background: Native American, French Canadian, and Irish on his mother's side, and his father's side of the family was Eastern European. Paul had a bachelor's degree in science with a minor in psychology and music, and a second baccalaureate in psychology from a private Christian university on the East Coast. Later, he enrolled in a pontifical degree program at a traditional Catholic university (S.T.L., Licentiate in Sacred Theology), in preparation for the priesthood, but ultimately left—after achieving 46 graduate credits in communications, philosophy, and theology—when he decided ordained life wasn't for him, although he remained a practicing Catholic. Paul described his faith:

That's one of the cool things about being Catholic, you know, we say it's not a Sunday job, it's a lifetime vocation of building something bigger than yourself, of learning how to

get out of yourself, of learning how to live all those groovy ideals that we've been spending a lot of time trying to learn and teach. So that's kind of where I come from: trying to get the kids to see this, because if they don't, it's gonna be a long year. [Laughs] That's my experience.

Paul had been teaching at the same school for 17 years. The campus also houses a convent built in the 1950s. A significant amount of international students, mainly from China, and 70 % of students identifying as Hispanic made for a diverse school community, with which Paul was highly involved. He was a full-time teacher, and also worked in student life helping out with campus ministry, specifically, coordinating the retreat program. In addition, he was the senior class coordinator, and coached the junior varsity swim team. Paul said that he first heard about how media literacy was taught in other countries without fully grasping what the discipline was. He said his Canadian cousins engaged in media literacy beginning in kindergarten all the way through 12th grade, not only studying media, but actually learning how to create it: “They knew way before I did. You know, when you see the credits in the movies and you go “Who are all these people? What do they do?” They learn that in the eighth grade.” Paul was fascinated with his cousins’ media knowledge: “I thought it was interesting that they knew all this stuff, and I wondered why I didn’t, and always thought ‘I have to look it up.’ But I'd never thought about it much until Sr. Mary’s class.”

Paul defined media literacy as the ability to evaluate media, and compared it with traditional literacy saying that to understand a Shakespeare play one would need to understand the genre, the time period, the society which it represented and to which it spoke. For Paul, media literacy was the ability to evaluate media messages objectively, to look through them, to

take them apart, to dissect them, to understand how they are made, to understand what their biases were, to understand their emotional appeal, and how one was affected by it. He said his students looked at media through their own lenses and at the same time media was affecting the lenses through which they looked at the world: “It's a two-way street and I've never thought of it like that until I sat through that class. It really never hit me that hard until I sat through that class.” During his training at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute, Paul realized that media literacy was not just about students being able to dissect what media was, but also, what were the messages it sent and how those messages were affecting them and the way they saw the world. He said, “Media literacy helps students hone in on these things to analyze 'What's really happening here?', 'What's the real message?', 'Why is this being made?,' 'What went into the making of it?' Those are questions we don't ask. We don't.” Paul said that attending media literacy training made him a much savvier media consumer, and after training, even going to the movies compelled him to critically engage the media: “I'm afraid it will haunt me for the rest of my life. I really am, because it's forced me to ask some really uncomfortable and unsettling questions even about stuff that I'm really fond of.” Paul was an avid consumer of as many types of media as it was made available to him, especially musical media. The media literacy certification program at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute was the first time Paul ever took a formal class on the subject. He said, “When media literacy was introduced to me, I found it insanely fascinating.” Paul was a graduate from the first Institute's class in 2006, he recalled his class picture published on the Archdiocesan newspaper, “It was a really big deal,” he comments.

Attending the certification meant going through a learning curve for Paul. He says that even although he had always been an avid media consumer, he was not a media expert by any means. He said, “The first lesson that clicked with me was that media is power. It is a power tool for lack of a better word. It’s a tool that exercises the power of the dominant culture, and any show you turn on you see the dominant culture.” Paul said the training at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute opened his eyes to aspects of the mainstream media he had never considered before, such as racial bias on American television. In a journal assignment he kept track of his favorite television show for one year. He tracked *Dexter* (Dahl, Gordon, & Shill, 2006), and it was the first year the show was on, he was amazed to uncover the racial media bias. He wondered, “How can you possibly fathom a story that takes place in Miami, which is one of the most Latino places on the East Coast, and yet the main character is a White guy, and everything revolves around him?” Paul had never before thought about racial stereotypes in the media: “I never thought of it that way before, you know? Now, I see that a lot of shows still have a very difficult time portraying different cultural groups as different cultural groups and not as walking stereotypes.” This realization made Paul concerned for his students because in his view media perpetuates stereotypes, and he wanted his students to be aware of racial bias in the media they consume: “Hollywood, L.A., these gotta be some of the most diverse places in the world. You mean to tell me you cannot find extras for a show who do not look like they just rolled off the Hitler Youth bus?” Media mindfulness for Paul was not just about understanding the content of the message, but understanding the content behind the message. It is about going deeper from a faith perspective. He said the media mindfulness component came in when he started asking

his students the bigger questions like: who made this? Why did they make this? And, what are the messages that are being sent? Paul explained how he fit Catholic values into the puzzle:

Looking at it through the lenses of my Catholic faith: How do I evaluate that media?

How do I see that intersection? What's the media doing to me and how does it affect how I act in the world? When my students do this they're surprised. They're actually kind of shocked to understand how we are so conditioned by this.

Paul used the media mindfulness strategy to teach his students about how media drove consumerism in America. He highlighted to students how advertising strategies, specially prey on people's insecurity: "We're constantly being sold this bill of goods. So, I tell them, you have messages telling you all the time you are less than, you need this, you're not cool enough, you're not skinny enough, you're not pretty enough." Teaching at an all-girls school, Paul was concerned about how media influences young-ladies' self-image: "I think it's just as bad for my body image to walk by *Men's Health*, as it is for girls to walk by *Vogue*." Paul taught his students to be critical of images of feminine beauty on media by asking questions like "Did anyone play with the pixels of the picture?" and "Was the image in the mirror helped by a makeup artist?" He wanted his students to ask these types of questions before comparing themselves with the beauty images they encounter in the media: "They need to ask themselves these questions, rather than looking at it and going, 'Oh, they're beautiful and I'm not.'" Reflecting on how media shaped worldview, Paul thought it was important to ask his students 'How is this media message impacting my emotions?' He said emotions were important to consider because if media messages impact one's emotions they are likely to directly affect the way a person thinks about something, and their perception of that from that point on.

Paul used the media mindfulness wheel as a starting point to dismantling media messages in class. He tailored the discussion questions around that, because he wanted his students to know them by heart. He said the wheel functions as common ground from which to proceed. He usually started showing a movie clip for 10 to 15 minutes: “So, every single movie we stop—and out come the wheels, and out come the questions, and we discuss. It's a process.” His students engaged that process by taking notes, then posing and answering questions. Paul sought to find a balance between informing students about the plot—in case of film and television shows—while at the same time having them answer who made the message and how, and how those factors influenced what students were seeing on the screen, Paul explained:

The first few times you do it, it feels very wooden, very weird, but then it becomes a habit...hopefully what they're doing is they're going home, and when they're listening to Fox News or Bill Maher, realize those communicators approach things from a bias.

Paul challenged his students to seek multiple news media sources prior to forming an opinion, and discouraged them from taking media personalities at face value and automatically agreeing with their arguments because they like what they hear, but rather to think critically: “Well, how do you handle it when you don't agree? So, that wheel is the starting point. And we've used it a lot in the contemporary issues and world religions classes.” Paul appreciated how the questions from the media mindfulness wheel were designed in a way that facilitated his students' critical thinking: “The wheel is great because we can use it to evaluate advertising, we can evaluate newsprint media, we can even evaluate stuff on the web, so it's really cool.” Paul tried to educate his students about how one was conditioned to see things through their lenses, their own reality, and how their way of thinking, including the media that they consume, was

counterproductive to becoming objectively informed. In an attempt to help his students to realize how the news media was not objective, he challenged them to hear three different radio stations talk about the same event, and discover how they portrayed it in three completely different ways. He used the case of the slaughter of a black teenager by a Latino man, widely discussed in the national mainstream media, to point out to his students how media honed in on racial differences, showing them how the portrayal of this case changed depending on the intended audience. He said his students were fascinated with how media can be such a powerful tool for unity, but it so-often divided people, and generally agreed that one cannot get a fair reading of a news event from one single news media source, especially regarding the portrayal of different religious or ethnic groups. He said, “The media does a lousy job of portraying these groups as they are. When we start talking about things like this, my girls realize that there is a lot of Catholic Social Teaching that is extremely countercultural.” Catholic Social Teaching was a recurring topic in Paul’s classroom.

The previous year, a greater emphasis was given to the issues of right to clean water, equal access to healthcare, and immigration reform, “There's this huge intersection between Catholic Social Teaching and the media.” Paul had his students analyze the source of the media they are consuming on a regular basis: “They start looking at things that the Catholic Church considers rights and how the media portrays it as simply a matter of personal responsibilities and privileges.” Paul said that although 70% of his students were Latinas, they were very diverse in their political stands, adding, “I've got some kids who sound like Bill Maher, and then I've got some kids who sound like Rush Limbaugh.” Because some of his students came from a privileged upbringing, he often pushed the envelope to get them to consider different sides of the

same issue. He was concerned about how someone who was a citizen of the country they live in, who had always had access to clean water and quality healthcare can become open to consider and support those who do not enjoy the same benefits. “We have very convenient blinders. I think one of the things about Catholic Social Teaching is that it waves a red flag and says we have to pay attention. Students have to be aware of this.” Further, Paul challenged his students to ask themselves whether the media they consume upheld the values they held. In one instance, Paul brought up the issues of immigration and farm workers to the forefront of the media discussions with sophomore students. Teaching about the Catholic Social Teaching concepts of preference for the poor and vulnerable, and dignity of work and rights of workers, Paul conducted a lecture about how to help immigrants through the United Farm Workers, as he described:

One of the things that I have them do is to analyze how immigrants are portrayed in the media they consume. I ask them ‘Are there any immigrants in the media you consume?’, ‘When you watch the news, what’s the message?’, ‘What’s the dominant message?’, ‘Is there a difference between the message you’re hearing on a Spanish language channel?’ The difference is usually night and day, and I think that’s important for them to understand. It’s also important for them to also realize where their biases come from, because I don’t think all my biases came strictly from my family.

Paul said that their focus on immigration reform in particular yielded discussions about how that intersected with Catholic Social Teaching in a state where agribusiness was an immigrant industry. He was at first surprised about how most of his students had never before made this connection. So he assigned them an Internet research project. They had to find out

where their food came from, who picked it, and what the working conditions were like for those workers. He cautioned his students that the Internet, while it relayed all kinds of information at their fingertips, it did not offer reliable filters. So they had to scrutinize their sources: “What I’m trying to teach the girls is that ‘I found it on the Internet!’ is not good enough.” He demanded that his students cross-reference their findings: “I ask them ‘Did you cross-reference it against some other people?’, ‘If you got it from the *Huffington Post* did you run it up the flag with FOX?’” He wanted his students to learn about the different views on any given topic: “Everybody’s got a bias, and if students are only listening to one source, they don’t have the whole story.” After their online news research on immigration reform, students were expected to form their own opinion, and write a letter to their district’s congressman either supporting or opposing the issue, and evidentiating their position with facts that emerged from their research. He detailed, “The assignment was to find out first of all what the media is saying, and ultimately too what is the Catholic teaching on this, ‘Can you understand why the Church says what it says?’” Paul as a teacher and the school administration as a whole sought to provide students with a safe place to express themselves freely, and there have been students with antagonistic views against social justice issues such as immigration reform at completion of the assignment: “There are always going to be those kids that we as teachers express Catholic teaching to, but they will disagree, and they are always free to express whatever views they want.”

As a teacher, Paul was ever more interested in making sure his students are able to reflect on different issues on their own. For him theology required of students to be connected to contemporary issues in light of Catholic Social Teaching. He purposefully asked questions to help students realize that topics discussed were not some sort of abstract reality, although the

issues might be removed from their daily lives. Paul aimed to have his students versed in the intersection of politics and faith, which for him is important in the U.S., he wanted his students to be aware of the connection between the two, and the effects they have on their own lives. Media literacy, for him, is a powerful tool to achieve that.

He used news media analysis with his students to question social marginalization by the media, in his words: “The idea of the groups that are in, and the groups that are out, and the way that media portrays different groups of people by stereotyping them.” When he assigned students with news media analysis projects, they were expected to research what different media types—print, broadcast, digital—and different sources within the same media type say about a given topic. He had them flip through radio stations, TV stations, and report, for instance, on how NBC’s coverage compares with BBC’s and Telemundo’s. His goal was for students to recognize that “journalists will often sound like they are not even from the same planet even though they are reporting on the same things. They are talking about the same thing, but they are not talking about it in the same way.” In order to conduct a critical discussion, Paul posed questions to students like “Are most of us used to getting our news from the same place?”, “What are the blinders that we have put on?” and “How are people marginalized in the media?”, “Have you learned to listen to different news sources on the same story?”, and “Can you notice where things are different?” Paul had his student use an app on their smart phones to easily access a vast variety of news sources: “The kids like it because it has a little bit of everything. They literally can do five minutes of news flipping, and actually get all the headlines down, with pictures.” The app also allowed students to read the full story by tapping on the headline. In Paul’s view one of the upsides of media literacy was allowing educators to grasp a better insight

into how children learn from popular media. Paul explained:

Media literacy is great because we are beginning to understand what our kids are doing. We have begun to acknowledge that classroom learning is not the only place they are learning stuff, they are bringing it in from other sources, and chances are it is from the media, and if it is from the media, are we taking the responsibility to teach them what to do with it?

In his practice, Paul often assigned students with video projects, and had noticed that his students do not have the same savvy about how to create a film as they do about how to write an essay. In his opinion these were different kinds of literacy, and moviemaking was a skill he wanted his students to have: “When these kids go to college they are going to be asked to make videos. Ever more, it will not be uncommon for a professor to say ‘Make me a film’ because anyone can make a film in their camera-phones now. So why wouldn't I ask my kids?” Paul was surprised at his students’ creativity every time they presented in class the videos they created. Paul made clear his students were allowed to engage any media type or genre they preferred, and sometimes he pushed the envelope in combining media production with faith values. He had, for instance, asked his students to create a rap song about the journeys of Saint Paul as described in the Bible, and on another occasion to write a pop song about what it is like to be a Jew celebrating Hanukkah in the 21st century, noting that they were not allowed to “steal” from Adam Sandler. He said, “When I give my kids the license to be creative they do amazing stuff and often tell me the project was way more interesting than writing an essay. I think it is a win-win situation.”

Paul was not an Internet geek, he said he can get around using the most popular programs, but that his teaching practice made him engage social media, because of its popularity among his students. He was willing to learn what was necessary to keep up with the new trends of teenager media consumption, “I’m willing to learn because this is how they connect. And the kids are so eager to try it, why wouldn’t I want to give that to them?” He assigned his class with a Facebook profile for God, they had also tried tweeting God: “This year, we are going to do God’s Instagram, because guess what? Facebook isn’t cool anymore. Now I gotta move to the next big trend. Well, let’s Instagram! Things are moving, so I have to move with them.”

Paul said that to integrate media literacy in his practice required creativity, and some research. He told me he recently learned about Ask.fm, an online site popular among teenagers, where users post anonymous questions to one another, which led to bullying questions that resulted in the suicide of several kids all over Europe: “That’s the new hot thing,” and he wanted his students to be aware. He was also concerned with FOMO—the fear of missing out—and planned addressing that with his students in the upcoming classes. As a classroom teacher, he avoided social media for his personal use; he did not think it was appropriate for him to share his personal life in a public forum accessible to his students, but he did engage with social media and multimedia heavily for his classes. When Paul attended the media literacy certification program, he was teaching a class in contemporary issues in Catholicism, and he started to almost immediately tailor his lesson plans to incorporate elements of media literacy in that class. Paul explained:

Sr. Mary had us do some really amazing activities. So, I started to incorporate that. We would talk about social teaching, about Catholic sexual morality. We started doing some

of the exercises to identify the gender bias in the news. I remember she had us go through and find all the references to men and all the references to women, and the girls are just floored by this.

Paul also, replicated with his own students the exercise to keep a journal of their favorite television show. At first he assigned students with watching it for at least one whole season, but for some of the students watching an entire season was too big of a commitment, so he agreed to have them watch seven episodes—they did not even have to be consecutives—and gave them specific questions: Do you see yourself on the show? Do you share an ethnic background with any of characters? How is this ethnic group being portrayed? “It was interesting listening to my Asian kids going ‘There are no Asians on television, and when there are, they are nerdy.’ That’s what my girls tell me!” Paul’s goal was to help his students challenge their own perceptions of the media, to question how come they did not see themselves on their favorite show. He said, “I do not tell them what to watch, but to question how the media portrays them and others, I even challenge the girls saying ‘Is there’s a preponderance of certain groups on TV?’, ‘Why is that?’” Paul said his students really like to learn about the intersection of religion and media. Another assignment he replicated from his media literacy training was having students write movie reviews. He said, “This was one thing Sr. Mary was really good at and I started to do it as well. In my world religions class, I pull in media, because the kids like to see that intersection.” Paul selected a film to accompany every major world religion: “So, when we talk about Islam we look at a movie like *Persepolis* (Paronnaud & Satrapi, 2007), or I show them parts of the movie *Little Buddha* (Bertolucci, 1993) when we’re talking about certain aspects of looking at Buddhism.” In one particular assignment, Paul explored different film genres with his students. He had his

students consider first who made the film—director, studio, moviemakers—and their likely biases. Then, they analyzed the film’s genre, and were asked to point the characteristics of that genre and how it differed from other genres, Paul described:

The girls actually get it. I tell them ‘Hey, what is a memoir?’ Look it up. Find out what a memoir is. After we have seen some parts of the film, ‘How is a memoir different from a documentary?’, ‘You know they are both agenda driven films, but how are these different?’, ‘How is that different from something out of Hollywood?’, ‘If I am looking at a memoir do I take it as seriously as a documentary?’, ‘Can documentaries be biased?’. A student once said, ‘Why are they putting the term ‘born again’ in quotes? That would be like putting the word Eucharist in quotes. Isn't that biased?’ I think media literacy helps, it really does. It is a good critical thinking tool.

Media literacy in advertising was another topic Paul included in his religion teaching practice since his media literacy training. Starting with the questions from the media mindfulness wheel (See Figure 9). Paul introduced students to popular advertising techniques (See Figure 10), and challenged them to identify these techniques in different ads. He concluded with examples of how advertising can also be used to advanced faith values embedded in Catholic Social Teaching like human dignity, peace, and charity.



Figure 9. Example of Media Mindfulness Inquiry. Adapted from PowerPoint presentation, 2013, by participant teacher. Used by permission.

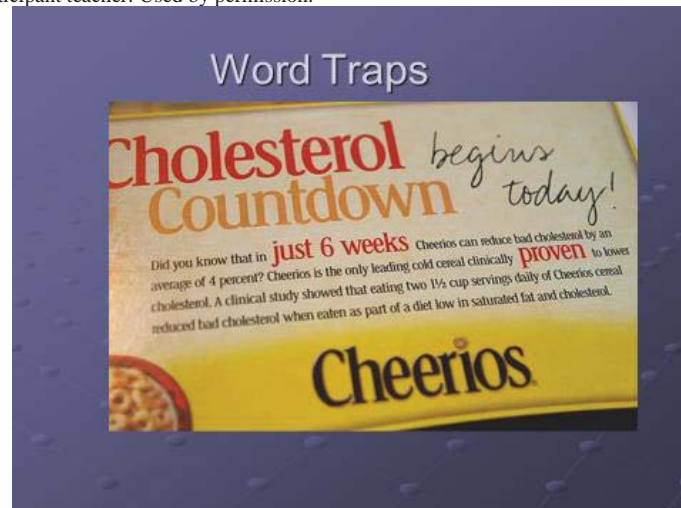


Figure 10. Example of Advertising Technique. Adapted from PowerPoint presentation, 2013, by participant teacher. Copyright 2013 by General Mills. Used by permission

Media literacy training made Paul's teaching practice easier when it comes to talking about polemic subjects because the media provided him with a frame of reference that could be a common ground to start a discussion. "When we are talking about, healthcare, immigration reform, or about any of these social justice issues, we watch the news, and discuss it." Paul said that when discussing these topics in class he made the point to his students that these were not abstract ideas, but social issues at the heart of the political debate of the day, which it was also why Catholic Social Teaching was a useful framework for him, given that it touched on global

issues with which students of all walks of life could identify, as Paul explained:

Catholic Social Teaching is way bigger than the Church. We talk about the rights and responsibilities of human beings to one another: the social contract. Social justice issues are responsibilities we have human to human. These are human issues. Immigration is not a one culture issue, neither is access to healthcare, or retirement. These are universal issues.

So, pairing media literacy training and Catholic Social Teaching was a useful method to foster in his students both faith values and critical thinking skills, so much that he saw media literacy as a crucial component on 21st century education. He said, “I think we are going to have to start bringing the media literacy people in to the curriculum discussion in a formal way.” He told me that in his opinion kindergarten is the best time to introduce kids to learning critical thinking skills. He said formally integrating media literacy into curricula in the U.S. as early as possible was crucial, “because we are becoming this media consuming and also a media driven society, and if we are not teaching our kids how to evaluate this stuff, we are going to raise a generation of kids who will not question,” he defended. Perceiving the human society as a media driven society was an idea that resonated with Paul since his media literacy training, as an educator he was increasingly concerned with how pervasive the media were. He said, “We are saturated in it. We're surrounded by media all the time.” He said media literacy was a very broad set of skills that could be used to teach students how to filter media messages to their advantage, adding, “Students can be taught how to, for lack of a better word, ‘read’ an advertisement the way you read Shakespeare to analyze it.” He defended that if a student could learn how to pull apart a Shakespearean play, or Chaucer—a kind of literacy students already

traditionally learn—she should be taught the necessary skills to pull apart multimedia messages as well. Paul stated that some progress had been made about integrating media literacy into formal curricula with the Common Core, which in his opinion placed a greater emphasis on students being stronger critical thinkers by reorganizing the entire curriculum around cognitive skills. He added, “The focus cannot be what we are expecting students to learn but how we are expecting them to apply knowledge, basically, what we are expecting them to do with what they learn.”

Paul enjoyed his experience at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute thoroughly: “I loved it! It was very different.” He was most impressed about how different it was from the other archdiocesan training he had experienced before. It was engaging and he was resolved to provide his students with the same opportunity to be excited about learning in a democratic space. He said, “They learn a little from me; I can learn a little from them.” Paul wished more teachers were open to taking on the challenge to incorporate media literacy into their practice by “overcoming the fear and realizing they’re not gonna be a *Times* film critic at the end of this process, but they can engage a critical eye. They can be taught.” He attested that media mindfulness was a handy strategy that to help teachers wanting to integrate media literacy in their practice: “The way Sr. Mary explained it to us, these are skills. You watch skills. You model skills. You learn skills. You practice skills. So, I think the big thing here is teacher training.” He illustrated his point by saying that a literature teacher could take a *Romeo and Juliet* movie apart the way she takes a play apart: “The teacher may not be a Shakespeare expert but she can teach a kid how to read a sonnet. The same applies to media literacy.” Based on his own experience, Paul hoped that more training would result in teachers practicing media literacy

in greater numbers, yielding better outcomes in student learning, as he explained:

The more I let kids use media on their learning, on their assessments, the report back from them is that they are learning more. And I'm looking at other more traditional assessments—where I want them to perform well—and they are getting it a lot better without me having to beat it into their heads.

Over the years, Paul came up with original content and assignments, but at-large most of what he used in his media literacy practice echoes what he learned from Sr. Mary and her assistant: “They pointed me in the direction of, or did it with me. It was such an epiphany for me. And every year, I tweak and play around with it. So it is not that hard, you just have to try it.”

Pierre: Media Mindfulness in Campus Ministry

There were classic cooking books on the shelves, finely decorated gourmet hors d'oeuvre were laid out. The chef let me know that “[the] Caprese salad is made with tomatoes from the yard, and herbs from the garden. Figs are from our tree.” He animatedly told me about how his French mother taught him to tell whether a fruit is ripe, and lamented the limited fruit variety in the U.S., adding, “In Normandy we have hundreds of varieties of apples. In the United States, in the market, maybe you have five at most.” Pierre was born in Germany in Landstuhl, at an American military base in 1965. His Sicilian father served the American Air Force, and though he moved to the U.S. at the young age of four years old, he considered himself to be French. The amalgamation of French, Italian and American cultures in his life was determinant in him becoming a self-described foodie. The small kitchen and yard are big enough for the tastiest creations by a joyful, vivacious, and health-minded chef whose greatest passion was to feed

people's soul. Although baptized, Pierre didn't grow up as a practicing Catholic, and attended public school. He was a member at an Episcopal church for a while, and eventually felt called to become a Catholic priest because he wanted to help people. He entered the seminary to become a diocesan priest, but was then released to join a French congregation that was mainly dedicated to Catholic education. Then, he attended theological college at one of the most renowned Catholic universities in the United States, but months before ordination decided priestly life wasn't for him. Holding a bachelor's degree in English, with a minor in philosophy, he decided to go into Catholic education instead, and accepted a position teaching at a Catholic elementary school, and later at a Catholic high school at the same archdiocese. Pierre described his Catholic faith socially progressive:

I'm very liberal as a Catholic. I'm not a conservative at all, and I really feel that the church has to have its stances, but I don't always agree with them, necessarily. I think, as a Catholic, I have a right to inform my conscious. I'll stand before God at the end.

Pierre had been teaching at the same school for the past twelve years. During this time he had been a faith and life coordinator—a type of campus minister—and theology teacher at an all-girls high school that sits at a 19-acre campus built in 1889. It is the oldest school in his archdiocese, but the school aims to be on the cutting edge of Catholic education and for Pierre media literacy fit well into a modern day perspective in literacy. He said, "I really feel that media literacy is the literacy of the contemporary milieu." He said the pervasive nature of media made it pressing for educators to form media literate students, adding, "Media is in our face constantly. We have these gigantic screens in our homes. We have radios. We have computers. We're bombarded by media. We have to learn how to filter it out," urged Pierre, adding what it

meant for him to be media literate, “Being media literate means having a workable knowledge of media to intelligently interpret the media one consumes.” For Pierre, being media literate required awareness, because “it means having the tools necessary, and the ability to really observe and think critically about what’s coming at you as you experience media,” he asserted.

The concept of media mindfulness was thought-provoking to Pierre. He was so captivated by the idea that he attended a seminar on the topic of mindfulness while he was still attending the media literacy training at the Saint Gabriel Media literacy Institute: “Being media mindful is having an awareness of the media that really impacts your life, and media really does have an impact.” Pierre said that media mindfulness was about empowering his students to objectively evaluate the media they consume through the lenses of their Catholic faith, “Whether kids are looking at the news, listening to the radio, or accessing it in their media telephone, they have to know how to make sense of all of that and how to react.” Pierre attested that media mindfulness had been an invaluable tool for him and other teachers at his school. Two in particular had also received formal training in media literacy and often collaborated in projects that involved media literacy following the media mindfulness wheel. Pierre described how useful the media mindfulness wheel was in his practice:

I use the chart all the time. I use it every time I show any kind of media, or use media in my classroom. Plus, it comes handy when I teach freshmen how to do research. Also, the media mindfulness wheel is a tool that I can use in my classroom that was already done for me. It’s a time saver. I have to educate myself about the media that is out there, but I don’t have to reinvent the wheel, so to speak...Literally, a wheel. [Laughs].

Pierre told me that because “as Catholics, we have a responsibility to take care of the

poor and the marginalized” Catholic Social Teaching was an integral part of his school’s curricula and that media literacy had helped him promote Catholic Social Teaching in his practice. He said, “I always ask for some kind of media when somebody does a presentation to my class. I always incorporate it—if not every day, every other day—into my classroom teaching methodology.” Pierre affirmed that the media mindful strategy had been helpful in his practice: “I really feel that it helps me as a teacher. It helps me do my job better.” He said the media mindfulness wheel was particularly useful, adding, “It helps me. It makes my job easier. The wheel frees up my time to look into more media, or to look into more things that I can bring my children.” While the media mindfulness wheel was a resource Pierre often used to guide in-class discussions, saving him the time to plan for questions, looking for media messages to integrate with his lessons, on the other hand, he acknowledged that integrating media literacy into his practice was a time-consuming task, in which he employed his own media literacy skills. He detailed, “Media literacy helps me to evaluate media, to look at it critically, and to say, ‘Is this useful? Is there any way I can turn it around?’ I look for something that’s really pertinent.” The main sources of media content for Pierre were music, video clips, and specially the news. He explained, “I’m a news junkie. I listen to BBC. I watch from CNN to FOX because you should know what the other side is thinking. Media can either pull people together or alienate us.” In Pierre’s opinion analyzing the media was a perfect fit for exploring and further understanding Catholic Social Teaching, for instance, studying how the media alienated the poor. Pierre taught theology, and earlier had also taught contemporary issues in Catholicism, and media literacy had helped him greatly in conveying Catholic Social Teaching in both classes. Pierre explained:

Media literacy fits perfectly, so both classes are heavy on media analysis. The classes taught how to utilize media for discussing Catholic Social Teaching, and how to sort of unpack the Church's stance on issues, because the students are skeptics, which comes with being teenagers, they're exerting their independence.

The congregation of Sisters that runs Pierre's school was heavily involved in advancing access to clean water, women's rights, and women's education. Pierre himself volunteered to help a union of farm workers and got his students involved in the process. Whether be discussing women's rights, access to clean water, or the workers' movement Pierre found that each issue was directly linked to Catholic Social Teaching and the media served as a prolific tool to arise in his students the desire to act in solidarity. "It's the fundamental option for the poor, because who do they have to speak for them? The poor don't have the opportunities for education. They don't have the opportunities to build themselves up" Pierre said adding that media can be effective in highlighting social justice issues, and media mindfulness could help educate students about their responsibility to serve as a voice for oppressed people: "So, for example, the water rights issue. I showed the documentary *Flow* and organized a whole media presentation. It got the kids to be aware." Because lack of access to clean water was not an issue Pierre's students faced, he decided to have a collaborative media presentation to help sensitize his pupils, "There were charts, and it was very visual." Beyond producing media, students actually went into needy areas to help. "As a campus minister, I told them 'Hey, now we're gonna clean up the town's river as part of our water project.' Faith in action." In all the one-day retreats Pierre ministered in campus he required his students to come up with a community service project, and later to present their experience through media production. He said, "They

come in with a whole media presentation, along with visuals.” Presentations were followed by in-class discussions. Pierre used a similar method to address other social issues like the plight of immigrant workers in the United States, and had obtained a positive outcome. He explained why:

I think the media literacy really helps. It’s simple. It’s getting these girls to be aware. I ask them ‘Did you know the grapes you paid a fortune for were picked by a worker who gets paid lousy pay? Is it fair? Is it fair that those workers are exposed to harmful poisons and pesticides all day long, but don’t get healthcare? What about the children of these workers? What are they doing? That’s what I try to bring in our discussions.

Following on the school’s tradition to engage on social service, Pierre’s students once decided to make care packages for the farm workers. They put together personal hygiene items into personalized bags with handwritten notes of appreciation for them, which for Pierre came into full-circle with what he expected his students to learn about Catholic Social Teaching, and to practice it to the best of their ability. He thought utilizing media literacy had been crucial in this process: “The media helps them visualize the issue, and the discussions help them understand that the poor is not a faceless person.” Pierre said media literacy was critical to help his students make the necessary connections to realize that food did not just magically come off the tree or out of the ground and into a package and landed in their supermarket. “It was another human being, just like them, who brought that to them at a really great, great cost, and I’m not talking about necessarily a monetary cost, but human cost. The cost of their own human dignity,” he added.

Pierre told me that as a campus minister he always integrated media literacy into the planned activities for the students: “I do utilize media literacy in the retreats. It’s a constant. I also make sure to always have some kind of music to greet them, or some kind of media to get the ball rolling.” The in-school retreats Pierre directed were often attended by students who did not currently take his theology class. He used these opportunities to “reinforce media literacy skills in other students,” He said “reinforce” because three other teachers in the school are heavily media literacy practitioners, with one of them specializing in Catholic Social Teaching as well, adding, “I have a very talented group of people that I work with. There’re four of us altogether and we each use media literacy in different ways, so the students get different perspectives.” During the retreats he often worked in collaboration with other teachers who did not use media literacy in their practice, “I like to get them involved as well,” Pierre confided. One such example was partnering with the school’s drama teacher to organize a Stations of the Cross celebration, which reenacts the Passion of Christ and is often celebrated during the Lent season. Pierre and the drama teacher planned a theatrical play to be performed at the school and he told her he had just the icons, music, and reflection to match. He made sure to use a song students are familiar with, and chose “Stay” interpreted by Rhianna to be part of the musical repertoire following with a reflection on the lyrics “It’s not much of a life you’re living,” challenging the audience to reflect whether they were living a Christ and service centered life, tying it to the selflessness required to achieve the common good. Pierre recalled: “Nobody moved at the end. I turned around and I just saw tears streaming down the students’ face and most the faculty’s. They’re just crying, and I was like, ‘Okay. Well, I guess this works.’” Pierre said popular songs were powerful for media literacy instruction. He explained the reflection he

offered in this particular case: “The reflection was on ‘How do you to continue Jesus’ work? How are you gonna continue Jesus’ work with the poor? How do you continue it? Can you be Jesus’ hands, Jesus’ ears, Jesus’ eyes?’” Pierre said that the song brought his pastoral message into full focus for his audience, “And I don’t think the people that were there to experience that will ever listen to that song in the same way,” he added.

It was crucial for Pierre to use media his students consumed on their own. He said, “Catholic media is so boring for the most part, plus I need to meet them where they are.” Pierre also aimed to use media messages that reflected current events, “If I show them documentaries about Saint Joan of Arc, or Saint Francis of Assisi, there is no tangible connection to their reality, so I look for popular stuff that I’m sure they’ve come across.” It was important for Pierre to “not be judgmental,” when selecting media students consume. He said, “I’m not saying it’s good media or bad media. It’s what they chose. I use it to help them see their Catholic values in that, to teach how to interpret that.” The news media was a favorite genre, in contrast with documentaries, because it provided timely relevant and discussion-compelling content for analysis of social justice issues. He said, “News is instantaneous, now. There it is. I tell them ‘Oh, look at these people dying. What can we do?’” In his quest for appropriate media messages to share with students Pierre was very particular about vetoing explicit words, graphic violence, and over the top sex exploitation, in addition to looking for media messages that would help enhance the academic content, these criteria added to his need for keeping up with latest teen trends made his media gathering task time-consuming, but worth it, as he described:

I don’t ever play explicit versions in school. I’m really aware of that because if I were a parent, putting my trust in an educator—or an institution—that educator should have

enough media education and literacy to understand what kind of impact that's gonna have on these young minds, and I need to be even more tactful because I'm teaching ladies. So here is what I do with music—always using the wheel—I like to ask the students to really reflect on the lyrics 'How do they pertain to the topic?' On a faith in action lesson, I have used U2's song "One," and asked 'What are they talking about? There's one love, one life. What does it say about God? Any similarities there?' I also use rap songs and ask 'What are they saying about society? What do they say about the poor? All of you've gotta think about that.' So, I think the kids learn to think critically over the years. For me, it's really a question of reflection, which is why I worry about the words.

Pierre was also concerned with information his students found and circulated on the Internet through social networks, he cited the online video *Kony 2012*, which went viral, as an example. He told me that he came in one day, and every other locker read 'free the children.' "It was everywhere. The girls were coming up to me and going 'What can we do? What can we do about the children in the Congo?'" Pierre came to find out most of his students learned through social networks about a campaign a non-profit foundation led trying to rescue children supposedly kidnapped by a warlord in Africa—the same campaign Clara's students were considering joining. Pierre researched the topic and found out through news media outlets that "apparently there was some impropriety, or journalists found misleading information. Well, it helped me to tell my girls, 'No, we're not gonna do a fundraiser for this group.'" Next, Pierre's challenge was to teach his students to use their media literacy skills when navigating the web: "I was glad that I could do the research, but with our busy world, we're bombarded with information. The lesson was 'How do you filter it out?' Again, I know that media literacy helps

them to understand it better.” Pierre also found social media tools helpful to communicate in real-time with his students when the planning of school activities required him to call them: “When I need volunteers, how do I get everybody to join? Do I call everybody up, now? No, no, no. I tweet it! I say, ‘Everybody, meet us at the river.’” Pierre did not only adopt social media but technology altogether, and liked to maintain an open disposition for new tools, as he described:

I tell other teachers ‘Do not compete with media embrace it. Use technology!’

Everything I do is using technology for the most part. I have projection units, smart boards, etc. So, as a teacher, I have to compete with the entertainment industry today to get kids’ attention. I have to be part entertainer as well, because I’m competing with television, rap songs on the radio, the Internet. So, I’ve gotta have these charts, and these visuals, videos, music. I gotta keep up.

Pierre embraced the new, but still used teaching techniques he learned in the seminary to enhance his media literacy instruction. He detailed, “When I was in seminary I was taught that a homily can be no longer than seven to ten minutes, otherwise you lose your audience. I’m always conscious of that, especially with kids.” He also designed dynamic classes encompassing various activities: “I mix it up, a little lecture, a little group work. We look at a video clip, talk about it using the media literacy chart. Using those questions and saying, ‘How does this apply to our faith?’” Media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching went hand in hand for Pierre “I really feel that media can speak for those who can’t. It can be the voice for the voiceless, and media literacy helps us to interpret those messages, and create our own messages.” Pierre was proactive in teaching his students about how mainstream news is produced, and challenged them

to replicate the process in a way that promotes their Catholic values. One of his class exams, for instance, asked students to use their creative abilities to create a news release for Jesus. Students were evaluated on how well they designed a Gospel news pitch appealing to today's media landscape. They were instructed to first, look over the media mindfulness chart, then review the session's objectives in order to inform their approach. Students were judged by clarity of message and attractive design.

Pierre said students need a Catholic framework to analyze mainstream media messages, which the Catholic media at-large was not providing, "The Catholic Church has its media, and yet I don't believe that it's utilizing that media to its full advantage. I think the Catholic media has really failed in many ways the Catholic faithful." Pierre disliked the diocesan papers' focus on Church officials and longed for Catholic media outlets that offered the Catholic viewpoint on issues of the day, "Informing on the issues that are brought up in the media like the abortion pill. Give us a framework to respond to those things!" In his opinion, Catholic school teachers need to step in to fill the gap because "media literacy helps highlight issues," he added. Pierre also regretted that often in times teachers did not integrate media literacy to their practice because of fear. He added, "I don't feel threatened by media, but I know a lot of teachers do. I really feel that media is a necessary tool in the modern age." Pierre said fellow teachers would over and over again sell themselves short when it came to their grasp of the media, "Unless you live in a cave, you are surrounded by media, and you're constantly judging and interpreting it based upon, hopefully, some critical thinking skills that you've learned over the years as an educator. Well, start from there." In Pierre's opinion, most teachers who shun away from media literacy has

probably been practicing some level of media literacy, and did not even realize it. “I don’t think they believe they have the right tools and vocabulary,” Pierre lamented.

Pierre hoped that teachers could be widely trained in media literacy and thinks that parents could benefit from it as well. According to Pierre, “Some parents are really hyper vigilant, and they’re afraid, ‘cause they don’t know how to react to the media.” Pierre said that parents were frequently at a loss on how to handle their children’s media choices: “They don’t have the tools necessary. So, I think that if parents could take a course in media literacy it would help them a lot.” Keeping with the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute’s tradition of training the trainers, Pierre envisioned an archdiocese-wide media literacy training program that would go into the schools and teach media literacy skills to whoever would be willing to learn: “I think that we need to go out there as educators and people that have been educated in media literacy. I really feel that this program from Sr. Mary needs to go into the schools throughout the entire archdiocese.” Pierre thought it was important for an outsider to go into the school site to coax teachers into undergoing media literacy training, “Have the people who are media literate just say, ‘Okay, this is the language. Here is the book, and then introduce teachers to that lovely chart. It would be very helpful.’” In Pierre’s opinion, the upside of the media mindfulness strategy was that it was both simple and useful, “Just even looking at the wheel is enough. It’s so simple, and I’m a big fan of simplicity.” Pierre defended that if Catholic school educators did not want to miss out and more importantly wanted to remain relevant, and wanted their students to be admitted into the best schools, and to be among the best and the brightest once they got there, then media literacy had “to be promoted throughout, not just by a few select group of people who decided to invest their time on it,” he defends. On Pierre’s experience it was

important that his own training was paid for in full by his school. Encouragement from his Principal and a colleague were also crucial in his decision to attend media literacy training in 2006. He was part of the inaugural class of the advanced media literacy certification program at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute. He did not know what to expect in the beginning, but was glad he went through with it, and attested that his teaching has changed significantly because of it.

I didn't know really what it was about until I got the book. I didn't know that there was an entire workbook with a wheel about 'What am I seeing? What am I really seeing?' And so on. I thought the media literacy training really helped me to break-through, 'cause I get a lot of religious literature, and I think, 'Oh, dear. How am I gonna apply this, it's so dogmatic, it's so heavy, it's kinda preachy.' But the thing I liked about Sr. Mary's approach is how it was taught. It was not preachy. It was Sr. Mary's take. It just seemed so refreshing, that a Sr. could look at a movie filled with violence, or sex, and get something out of it. So that was how it changed my perspective on how I would look at media. I was just really impressed with the way she approached the whole subject matter. She talks about these movies, and tell us to watch movies you never thought a nun would ever show up to. So, I just found her really non-judgmental, very open, and so I just wanted to bring that into my teaching. Yes, there are things on the media that make me or others feel uncomfortable, but I can say, 'Well, what is the teachable element?'

Pierre forecasted that the future of education is online, which made media literacy even more relevant in his opinion: "I don't think traditional classrooms with desks and a teacher standing up there is always gonna be there. I really feel that more and more people are gonna be

educated online. They're gonna be Skyping in classrooms.” Within his conjecture, critical thinking would be essential in the virtual classroom because the student would be required to make more decisions on her own, since teachers won't be readily available to guide each step, which was why Pierre advocated for critical thinking centered school curricula, and hoped Catholic educators would soon follow suit with the Common Core Standards. He said, “I think that we're moving into a different world of education, and anybody who's not ready for it is gonna be left behind. I think that the Common Core is an important milestone.” Critical thinking centered school curricula was important for Pierre because it was, in his assessment, a skill everyone needed in their daily lives, especially when it came to discerning and responding to the media they consumed. He saw the inclusion of media literacy in formal curricula as essential. “I think it's important that media literacy become part of the curriculum. I also think that anything that will promote media literacy is good,” Pierre defended.

Dr. Agatha: Media Mindfulness in College

The ocean view was breathtaking. From the living room sofa, the different shades of blue of the Pacific Ocean colored the wall-to-wall window reaching as far as the eyes could see. There were books everywhere, if you were to just walk in without knowing whose home it was, you would probably get a feeling that a scholar lived there. A little white poodle naps on my lap while Dr. Agatha goes through her computer in an attempt to figure it out the year that she graduated from the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute's media literacy advanced certification program. It was 2008. She was just around 40 years-old when she embarked in a journey that decisively changed her teaching practice at one of the most renowned Christian universities in the West Coast. But the story of this successful American college professor, started all the way

across the Pacific in Vietnam, where she was born in 1967.

At the age of eight, Dr. Agatha and her family arrived in the U.S. as refugees. They lived in Washington State for three years, and later relocated to California, where she attended an internationally recognized state university in 1985, majoring in psychology five years later. She eventually graduated with a PhD in social psychology and a minor in statistics at the same university. In 1997, she accepted a tenure track position at the university she teaches now. She spent the first 10 years teaching undergraduate students, and eventually became a full professor teaching psychology students who were psychology majors to whom she taught statistics, social psychology, and psychology of women, and she did so at-large through media literacy, even the statistics course. The university was not the only place where Dr. Agatha taught. She was also a catechist of adults at her parish, she described her faith:

I am a cradle Catholic. Both my parents and my grandparents are Catholic, and Catholicism was a minority religion in Vietnam. Often when a group is a minority they feel very strongly about their faith, and that's the case with my parents. In fact, they left Vietnam because they thought the communist Vietnam would not allow them to practice their faith. So, I have been raised, and I continue to practice as a Roman Catholic.

Dr. Agatha thought that there are some conservative camps within Catholicism that wrongfully denigrate media. Her parents, for example, she said, did not go to the movies, and in general held the view that movies are just degenerative, and do not reflect Catholic values, a point of view that is not in accordance with official Church teaching (Paul VI, 1963, para. 1-2). She credited the Saint Gabriel Media Institute's sisters for her realization that "Media is not only worth studying, but it is also a means through which you can really communicate God's

message.” Her interest in media emerged when she was a student. She longed for having professors use it in the classroom. Then as a professor, she wanted to make sure to include it in her practice: “As a professor, or as a teacher, we have to be versed in media, because our students are exposed to different forms of media.” She told me her students already expect her to not just lecture, but also share relevant media in the classroom, such as, video clips from movies, television shows, or audio clips from radio, or even clips from songs. She said, “Part of the appeal of doing that is bringing in material that the students are very familiar with, then relating it to the context of the content I am teaching.”

For Dr. Agatha, being media literate meant “being versed in media.” More specifically, it meant having the necessary skills to understand the basic formats of the different media types, such as newspapers, radio, film, television, music, and magazine. In addition to recognizing the strengths and drawbacks of each format, “Having a basic understanding of the different formats, and the advantages and disadvantages of each format,” adding that “Teachers should know how to use the different media formats for their own academic purpose, to achieve their goals in the classroom.” Further, Dr. Agatha pointed out that an important part of media literacy was being trained in how one could be manipulated by each of the media forms. She recalls that a danger she faced as a high school student was thinking that the print headlines must be true. Later, as someone who consulted multiple news sources, when she read something she was often compelled to challenge it. Dr. Agatha described:

I can say, ‘Oh my goodness, this is wrong, what they’re writing is incorrect,’ or I can say ‘Where is their empirical evidence for the claim that they make?’, or I can compare what different authorities tell the media about any given subject. So, students ought to be

trained on the different ways media can manipulate the way they think, feel, and behave. The camera zooms a certain way to elicit certain feelings, I think it can work to the benefit of arousing empathy for the poor and vulnerable just as easily as the camera can manipulate viewers to be dismissive of those individuals. We need to train our students to be critical media consumers.

Media messages are tools Dr. Agatha said she used to promote classroom engagement often touching on social justice issues. She said, “Students can read about individuals in the world who lack basic human rights, and about governments who don’t fulfill their responsibilities to individuals, but when students actually see, for example, a documentary, that brings the issue to life.” She added that media messages like documentaries, film, or news clips help her students more easily grasp subjects. She said, “Media has the potential to move individuals,” she reflected Dr. Agatha explained that her students often watched video and news clips of current social justice issues that were later discussed in class. In her women’s psychology class, they discussed different women’s issues featured on popular media outlets like *60 Minutes* (Fager, 2014), for example. One of such issues is the women in India who were burned to death by their own husbands who committed the crime in order to be freed to re-marry for dowry. She said, “My students understand that there is a difference between what the law says and what happens. Bride burning is illegal, but it happens, and there’s not so much prosecution of it either.” As shown in Chapter 2, human’s rights were addressed in the Catholic Social Teaching concept of rights and responsibilities, and so was the very notorious topic of abortion, which Dr. Agatha’s women’s psychology class discussed as well (See Figure 11).



Figure 11. Intrauterine Life and Gender Differences. Adapted from PowerPoint presentation, 2014, by participant teacher. Used by permission.

Dr. Agatha said that in China, it was not legal for doctors to tell parents the sex of a fetus because most would want to abort their daughters. She said, “Doctors still do it, and if they can’t get the info through legal means, senseless parents will go through illegal means to find out.” Social issues like this, motivated Dr. Agatha to create social psychology lessons that challenged her students to compare reality depicted on television versus reality in the social world. Dr. Agatha explained:

Most characters on television are men, most people in the real world are women. People on television tend to be middle class or upper class. You don’t see the poor depicted. You don’t hear about the 90 % or so that live in poverty, and kids of single mothers who live in poverty. That’s not generally depicted in media, because that doesn’t sell. Instead, there’s an over emphasis on sex, and sex in media is often occurring between people who are unmarried, when in reality more sex occurs among people who are married. So, I want my students to be critical consumer of what they see and question it, ‘Does that depict reality?’

Dr. Agatha enjoyed the appeal of “teaching God’s message through media,” and thought that Catholic Social Teaching was a perspective that dovetailed nicely with her training as a professor, and her wanting to engage students in the realization that media was worth examining. In social psychology, one of the big topics she covered was prejudice, including stereotyping, and aggression towards different groups of people, often minorities. In psychology of women, her class discussed experiences of women around the world—often women outside of the U.S.—who lacked basic human rights over their health, over their bodies, “areas in which we don’t see justice.” Dr. Agatha found the media mindfulness strategy helpful in addressing social justice issues in the classroom: “I rely heavily on incorporating video clips of recent news to bring home the point that these problems are not imaginary, they’re real. They’re out there. They’re current. They affect people.” She said media mindfulness helped to sensitize her students to social issues they themselves may never have experienced. She added, “My students themselves may not experience these forms of social injustice but, through discussion of media messages, I bring it to their attention that there are others who do experience social injustice.” The institutional mission of the university where Dr. Agatha teaches stated that educators must work to strengthen service, purpose, and leadership in the lives of their students. She said that Catholic Social Teaching comes in handy to help her achieve that. She added, “Catholic Social Teaching, although it has the name Catholic, it has a broader teaching. It’s more about social justice in general independent of being Catholic.”

Dr. Agatha recalled showing her students a news report about Pakistan’s honor killings of women suspected of dishonoring their family names in any way by dating someone they did not approve of, or committing adultery—an issue pertinent to the Catholic social concept of rights

and responsibilities regarding the dignity of the human person. According to the news report showed, the murder was usually carried out by a male family member father, brother, or uncle. She explained, “When you bring those media examples, it hits homes to your students, because it is on the news, and it is actually happening.” She said her American students were often moved by reflecting on the reality of women who are not allowed to go to school, but rather were told to dress in a certain way and devote themselves to babysitting and housework: “It does make it very visceral for the students to see this; real human beings suffering. Media has the potential to educate.” Yet about gender issues and the dignity of the human person, in her statistics class, Dr. Agatha said she used, for instance, data from the FBI about murders within families, and asks her students “Who is more likely to be murdered by their spouse the husband or the wife?” She said students usually think the husband is more likely to be murdered, but stats actually showed that wives were much more likely to be fatal victims in the hands of their husbands. She said, “I ask my students whether the media plays a role in their thinking that husbands are more likely to be victims of homicide,” Dr. Agatha added that this lesson allowed her to explore with her students issues of gender bias and violence in the media by asking them questions like “Is it sensational when women kill? Is a man killing his wife something to be expected? Should we expect the same level of news coverage for both cases?” Dr. Agatha’s social justice lessons were not only about gender issues, she used media to discuss with her students current topics relating them with the content of the class. Immigration reform was a hot topic and one that overlapped the Catholic social concepts of rights and responsibilities, preference for the poor and vulnerable, and the dignity of work and rights of workers. She said that after showing a clip from *A Day without Mexican* (Arau, 2004)—a film depicting what a day in California would be like if all the

Mexican workers disappeared—she poses questions to her students about the value of low-wage workers:

‘What if Mexican workers were to just for one day stop working?’, ‘What would it do to our economy?’, ‘Would just bring it to its knees?’, ‘How about the babysitters?’, ‘The housekeepers?’, ‘The landscapers?’, ‘The cooks?’ I ask my students to consider these workers, the poor, and those who are working backbreaking jobs, who are not appreciated, and the work that they do that is not valued, but it is so essential. We eat fruits and vegetables from the grocery store, well, ‘Who is going to pick them?’

Dr. Agatha sought to include video clips of news reports and documentaries that are relevant to the topics that she covered in class. She said she would often be watching something and realize how helpful it can be for her content. She recalled watching *Les Misérables* (Hooper, 2012), in the film an ex-convict on parole had a hard time finding shelter at night, but a priest took him in, and he wound up stealing silverware from the priest. When caught by the police, the thief lied saying that the silver was actually a gift. When the police officer relies the story to the priest, he—against odds—confirmed that it was indeed a gift, adding that he had also given him silver candlesticks, and telling the ex-con not to leave the best behind. She said, “I thought, bang! That’s a perfect example of altruism, which is one of the topics in social psychology, and the idea of helping someone that no one else would help, up to that point in the movie,” said Dr. Agatha. This film plot was not only an excellent example of altruism, but it is also considered a popular movie, which made it ideal for classroom use in Dr. Agatha’s opinion. She said, “A number of my students have probably seen it, so I can bring it into the classroom, and we can elaborate on it.”

Using media literacy to aid in-class discussions about social justice issues required preparing ahead because integrating mainstream media messages into her lesson plans meant that Dr. Agatha had extra research to do. She was happy to do it, and it came as second nature to her on her daily life, adding, “As I go through ordinary things in my life—whether it is watching a musical, or going to a conference—I find myself wondering ‘How can I incorporate this into my teaching?’” News reports—be it from magazine or broadcast—were also a recurring source of media content for Dr. Agatha’s classes. She said, “When I read a news magazine, I often cut clips, and think of how I can use it in my class. Then, I include a splice, bits of it into my classroom.” Dr. Agatha stated it was important for her to comply by copyright laws, especially when showing videos in class: “Because I use it for educational purposes, as long as the video clip is five minutes or fewer—and they always are—I can do that, and it is effective.” As she talked about the news clips, Dr. Agatha pulled out a big folder with hundreds of print news clips about social justice issues and started flipping through them, adding, “I just cut things that resonate with me, and scan them,” she said showing one she liked in particular about a Pakistani teenager, and explaining that she was shot in the head by members of Al Qaeda, because she wanted girls to go to school, and the terrorist group does not want girls to be educated. She survived and went to school in Europe.

This is something recent happening, and so I scan this, and show a picture, and tell her story. I think she is pretty amazing, and of course once she had her surgery, her first words are back on the message, ‘education for girls.

She proceeded to show news items she had reserved for her psychology of women class. A news report that showed the main causes of fatality among women in the U.S. and abroad; a

story titled *Wear Your Beauty Brilliantly* showed the health dangers of tanning salons; a news profile on a Senator from Maryland who was fighting sexual assaults against women in the military; statistics of domestic violence from *Time Magazine*. “Not much is talked about domestic violence, even in the Catholic Church, which is unfortunate. It might be the number one type of violence, especially in developing countries where Catholicism is the number one religion,” she commented, as she continues to flip through her oversized folder. It was important for Dr. Agatha that her students were in tune with current social justice issues around the world. Since incorporating media mindfulness into her practice, she sought to pull messages from different mainstream media outlets as a way to validate the issues presented in class. Dr. Agatha explained:

I purposely choose *Time Magazine* for my psych of women class, because students won't think I'm choosing a topic from some feminist magazine. I'm using mainstreaming media. I do this intentionally, because I understand the source can set up barriers to receptivity. So, they know the issues we discuss in class are actually happening in the world today.

Dr. Agatha often used video clips, PowerPoint presentations with hyperlinks and embedded media in her lessons. The media mindfulness strategy functioned as a guide to help students evaluate the media messages, a starting point. She replicated the open ended inquiry method as a way to empower students to voice their opinions about media techniques and social issues. She often paired students and had them start the discussion with each other, “I tell my students ‘Turn to the person sitting next to you, and tell them what struck you about the video.’” For Dr. Agatha, using open ended questions helped students to engage in discussion, “It's open

ended, and they don't have to be afraid of getting anything wrong, because what struck me is what struck me." At first a student talked with her partner, and then the class talked in-group. "It allows them time to think it through. Then, I get a few answers from students, about the media format and about their perceptions," Dr. Agatha describes. Examples from a class presentation illustrated how Dr. Agatha built lectures on the intersection of media and Christian values. One of the ways in which Dr. Agatha incorporated the Catholic social concepts of rights and responsibilities, and preference for the poor and vulnerable in her psychology of women class, for instance, was by exploring the topic of gender-based abortion (Figure 11). On her statistics class, she used the staggering numbers of female victims of abortion to illustrate different exercises (See Figure 12).

When teaching about happiness—still on the Catholic Social Teaching concept of rights and responsibilities—Dr. Agatha used advertising examples of how the female beauty is explored in the media to sell even health hazardous products. Similarly, she showed how advertisers marketed even products that are harmful to people's health as a source of happiness.



Figure 12. Statistics on Female Fetus Aborted. Adapted from PowerPoint presentation, 2014, by participant teacher. Used by permission

Dr. Agatha then compared the mainstream media messages about happiness with Jesus' teaching on the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–11) advocating for the poor and vulnerable, and those who seek justice, which led to a discussion of how media values clash with Christian values. Lastly, an example of an exercise Dr. Agatha learned in her media literacy training at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute (See Figure 5), which she used in her own teaching practice. She challenged her students to recognize logos that are popular in mainstream media and then invited them to a reflection of how pervasive and persuasive advertising was in their own lives, and whether the values put forth by the mainstream media clashed with or reinforce Christian values, and students' own values. Ever since joining her current university, Dr. Agatha's students were mostly psychology majors, but her students could be of any major taking her statistics class as a general education course to fulfill a mathematics requirement. She said her teaching has evolved thanks to her students' expectations that they will discuss media messages in her class. Dr. Agatha described:

Even in my stat class I show video clips. For example, I showed them a video clip of how Domino's pizza markets thick crust, or thin crust pizza, and how they tested several different recipes, had customers eat them, rate them, and then decide from there what kind of commercial they want to do to advertise the new pan crust pizza. The statistics they put together to make that decision. So even in a class like statistics I can use a video clip, and it engages the student.

Pondering on how her media literacy training has influenced her teaching practice, Dr. Agatha attested that she fully embraced what she learned from Sr. Mary "I do remember walking away wanting to incorporate more media in my teaching, and I do." While enthusiastic about

media literacy instruction, she was also realistic about the extra effort required from teachers seeking to integrate media literacy in their classroom, and how that may play a role in preventing them from doing so. She said, “I do know media literacy is effective, but I can see why some of the teachers who don’t use media literacy are hesitant, because it is more work. I have to screen media.” Dr. Agatha said lesson planning for media literacy was arduous, time-consuming work: “Media literacy is very helpful, but there’s a lot of junk out there. Sometimes I sit through thirty minutes of watching YouTube junk to find a video that is viable, so it does take work.” Dr. Agatha applied several criteria for selecting suitable videos to integrate to her lesson. She said, “It has to be short, or I can cut it short, and make it to five minutes, or shorter; no profanity; no sex; nothing illegal; no dirty jokes. I still get videos that the students find very effective.” Dr. Agatha said that, in general, her colleagues were skeptical about the benefits of implementing media literacy in their teaching practice, and told me about older colleagues who were against adopting technology in the classroom altogether, and have banned things like PowerPoint and e-mail. She told me she understood those who are old school and afraid to incorporate media literacy into their teaching practice. Dr. Agatha recalled one day thinking that PowerPoint was just bells and whistles, but she came to use it extensively, as she described:

You still have to teach them the material, but PowerPoint facilitates. Teachers worry about compromising the content, until we realize we can use media appropriately to be effective, to engage our students’ attention, and they learn the content, and acquire useful skills—being able to maybe produce a media message, being able to critique the media out there. So, I can understand some faculty who wouldn’t train with the media, many are suspicious of it. I don’t know how to help them get over that, but once they start

using it, they usually realize how efficient, productive, and useful it is, and they tend to be more zealous and fervent than the early adopters.

Dr. Agatha's teaching practice was heavily media informed. She was active in searching media messages that would help her illustrate her academic content in the classroom. Integrating media messages to lesson plans was an effective way to teach. She told me inclusion of media definitely helped her to get her point across, because it engaged students: "It sparks interest, and they see the relevance of it." She purposely researched current videos to use in class. She was always on the lookout for media messages to include in her classroom in lieu of something that has already been used. She kept the media messages she used from up to three years, nothing older: "I want recent news clips for each topic." In her opinion using fresh media messages made the instruction more effective. She said, "They want to discuss; they want to do. There is value to media, and it does make teaching effective." Dr. Agatha was also keen on using media messages that her students were likely to have consumed. She said, "Students love it when I bring in clips from, I would say, their culture." When teaching about how men and women differ in the way they talk, Dr. Agatha had used, for instance, a clip from the popular sitcom *Friends* (Place, 1995). She explained that generally men do not say much when they mingle with their male friends, but women are very robust in their speech. In this particular clip, the character Rachel said to Phoebe and Monica that Ross kissed her, and then her friends were very excited and wanted to hear all about it. The next scene showed the male characters standing having pizza, and Ross told the same to his friends Chandler and Joey, and both replied, '-Tongue?', Ross answered '-Yeah,' and the clip ended there. "This is from the students' culture, and this is something they've watched, and it hits home for them. They recognize this," Dr. Agatha

explained. Another positive was that students found it funny and memorable, “So they quickly learned that men and women differ in how they talk with their peers, and how they become close. Women become close through talking. Men become close by doing,” added Dr. Agatha.

Dr. Agatha recalled attending an archdiocesan religious education congress, an event dedicated to Catholics who are involved in education at the Parish level, catechists, teachers, and administrators. Her parish sends catechists every year. She was one of them in 2008, when she first learned about the media literacy training program at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute. She stopped by the Sisters’ booth and was handed a brochure, she expressed interest in enrolling, and was months later awarded a grant to attend the training at no cost. In 2014, the fee to attend the training is of \$225.00 (two hundred and twenty five dollars). Dr. Agatha recalled:

It was definitely worth it going through this training, it made such a positive impact in my teaching. It gave me a more positive view of media, and more excitement about teaching. I remember after training with Sr. Mary thinking ‘How can I liven up my PowerPoint lectures?’, ‘What else can I do?’ I wanted to incorporate what I’d learned from the Sisters, and wanted to include media in what I do. As a professor, my interest in media literacy continues to this day, and I am so grateful that I was able to attend the training for free.

Looking back, one thing Dr. Agatha would like changed about the training was having a greater emphasis on video production, because when people said something that stroke her she pulled out her camera phone, and recorded them to use in class later. She said, “This is something I commonly do, sometimes they come out fine, but most of the time they don’t.” She would have liked more technical training, “more training on things like how to angle people,

video editing, how to edit audio clips, and what else I can do as someone on a small budget to make it work.” She said it is common for professors to have an interest in knowing at least how to work with the basic media tools that they use in teaching. “We need those basics skills. We had some training on that, but I would’ve liked more,” she added.

Data Analysis

The majority of this chapter has been dedicated to the presentation of the collected data from interviews, observations, and documents. This section presents categories and themes that emerged when comparing and contrasting the data gathered. Participants’ statements and all collected documents, such as didactic materials and artifacts, along with field notes, and research journals have been triangulated to find common patterns as I attempt to answer the two main research questions:

- 1) How does a faith based media literacy training program promote Catholic Social Teaching?
- 2) How does a faith based media literacy training program influence participants' understanding of media literacy and its link to Catholic Social Teaching?

Data coding and analysis yielded 17 themes organized under five categories, which were ordered as follows: the category of Rights and Responsibilities encompassing the themes of Humanity, Social Justice Issues; and Informed Consciousness; the category of Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable composed of the themes Who Pains?, Who Gains?, and Diversity; the category of the Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers which contains the themes of Absence of Workers, Working Conditions, and Consumerism; then, the Common Good category with the themes Link, Community, and Universality; lastly, the Media Mindfulness

Strategy category holding the themes of Character Education, Student Empowerment, Solidarity, Values, and Media Literacy Teaching Aid (See Table 15). Appendix G shows example of how data was coded into Themes. Appendix G shows example of how data was coded into Themes.

Table 15
Categories and Themes

Category	Themes
Rights and Responsibilities	Humanity Social Justice Issues Informed Consciousness
Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable	Who Pains? Who Gains? Diversity
Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers	Absence of Workers Working Conditions Consumerism
Common Good	Link Community Universality
Media Mindfulness Strategy	Character Education Student Empowerment Solidarity Values Media Literacy Teaching Aid

Rights and Responsibilities

Humanity. The concept of Rights and Responsibilities was first introduced to trainees by Sr. Mary when she discussed Catholic Social Teaching as framework for media literacy instruction. She highlighted that the sacredness of human life is in the core of the Catholic Social Teaching concept of Rights and Responsibilities as all other rights derive from the understanding that human life reflects the image and likeness of God and is therefore priceless (Genesis 1:27). Our shared humanity confers us all sorts of human rights and civil responsibilities to see that those rights are enjoyed by all (CCC, 1997, para. 1905-1912).

Therefore, for Sr. Mary, the human person is central to all teachings about justice; and the very reason for justice. (Psalm 8:6-8; Genesis 1:26). This central idea of humanity was noted by teachers as well. Clara said that rights and responsibilities in the Catholic Social Teaching perspective recognizes one's personal obligation to promote other peoples' rights, and the responsibility to also convey one's Christian values. One of the ways in which Dr. Agatha incorporated the Catholic social concept of Rights and Responsibilities in her psychology of women class is by exploring the topic of gender-based abortion (See Figure 12). On her statistics class, Dr. Agatha used the staggering numbers of female victims of abortion to illustrate different class assignments. In her psychology of women class, Dr. Agatha exposed the experiences of women around the globe who lack basic human rights as shown in the news media. She relied heavily on incorporating video clips of recent news to sensitize her students to human rights violations worldwide. Pierre and Paul reported implementing the media mindfulness strategy to encourage students to analyze and respond to media depictions of human rights issues like women's rights and education, access to clean water, universal healthcare, gender and racial stereotypes, and immigration. Paul, in particular, was concerned with his students taking a critical stand about their personal responsibility to continuously discern how well media in general—and the media they consumed especially—uphold Catholic Social Teaching, “They start looking at things that the Catholic Church considers rights and how the media portrays it as simply a matter of personal responsibilities and privileges,” said Paul.

Social Justice Issues. Participants have consistently reported equipping students to identify social justice issues in the media they consume as crucial for successful Catholic Social Teaching instruction. After training, Clara found media literacy valuable to help students

identifying social justice issues within their media messages of choice, which was a blind spot for her before attending the training. In Clara's view, media literacy skills are key for teachers who aim to educate their students in Catholic Social Teaching and effectively addressing social justice issues. "A teacher can use the media—that powerful tool—to reflect on ways of reaching out to the poor. We have an obligation to see that through," Clara said. Elizabeth agreed, reaffirming that media literacy training is necessary in order to successfully teach students to identify social justice issues. "You can't just name the Catholic Social Teachings. You can't just give them a definition of what social justice is in the Catholic Church, and expect it to resonate with them," Elizabeth said, adding that when teachers use relevant media messages to exemplify social justice issues students are more likely to absorb the content. As a junior high teacher, Elizabeth brought the Catholic Social Teaching into the social studies lesson plans, she talked with her students about the media they consume, and how justice was depicted in those messages. Debunking media's depicted reality is also a strategy Dr. Agatha used to raise awareness of her students to social justice issues. She started by challenging students to compare reality depicted on television versus reality in the real world. "I want my students to be critical consumer of what they see and question it, 'Does that depict reality?'" she remarked. Paul had his students keep a seven-episode journey of their favorite television show, and then analyze how preeminently and accurately it depicted minorities and underprivileged populations. Clara and Pierre cited the *Kony 2012* online viral campaign as an important teaching opportunity to equip students with the ability to apply their media literacy skills when navigating the web in order to identify legit social justice initiatives online.

Informed Consciousness. This theme is about the moral rights and responsibilities of those creating media. Participants noted that today’s teachers hold the responsibility in forming the media professionals of tomorrow to be well-versed in common good values. Trainees were asked “What will storytellers of tomorrow produce if they are not equipped to rethink the current media?” The reflection incited assumptions about how well the next generation of mainstream media-makers will uphold common good values or whether they will perpetuate social justice injustices observed in the media today such as underrepresentation of women, perpetuation of stereotypes, and exploitation of violence and sex. After the training, Clara planned to address the topic of workers in the media industry with her students. She wanted to encourage students to think about their professional aspirations as media-makers, their work ethics, and their responsibilities towards the common good. Sr. Mary in fact alerted teachers to the fact that they are educating today the media-makers of tomorrow. In her view, informing students’ conscious on their responsibilities as media consumers is paramount when teaching about the Catholic Social Teaching concept of rights and responsibilities. “Rights and responsibilities come into play when students start to reflect on what their responsibilities are as media consumers,” explained Sr. Mary. For her media literate students ought to take responsibility for the productions they create and consume.

Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Who Pains? Participants reported often seeking depictions of the poor and vulnerable during media literacy instruction, and using the media mindfulness wheel to encourage students to think about oppressed groups in their media analysis. Sr. Mary defended that “when people’s needs are satisfied it becomes really hard for them to be sensitive to the needs of others. They

need to be mentored.” Concomitantly, all the teachers, participants of this study, reported concern about sensitizing their students to social issues they do not face and seeking to highlight students’ Christian values as a constant reminder that they ought to fight social injustices everywhere. “The media helped them [students] visualize the issue,” Pierre remarked, adding that Catholics have a responsibility to take care of the poor and the marginalized, and that media literacy helped him promote that in his practice. In Pierre’s opinion media literacy helped exploring and further understanding how the media alienates the poor: “I really feel that media can speak for those who can’t. It can be the voice for the voiceless, and media literacy helps us to interpret those messages, and create our own messages.” When teaching about social issues like water rights, Pierre helped his students to unpack the Church’s stance on social issues through media literacy. Likewise, Clara recognized that the media literacy can be helpful for Catholic educators to address different social issues of the poor: “A teacher can use the media—that powerful tool—to reflect on ways of reaching out to the poor. We have an obligation to see that through.” Clara highlighted that Catholics are “called to be stewards of the poor.” Both Pierre and Elizabeth wanted their students to realize that the poor is not a faceless person or unfaced human, they deemed media literacy instruction useful for archiving this goal. Elizabeth introduced the topic of hunger to her students by showing documentaries exposing hunger around the world. This lesson prepared her students to take part on the school-wide hunger banquet exercise. Paul brought the issues of immigration to the forefront of the media discussions with sophomore students to highlight how media portrayed vulnerable groups: “I ask them ‘Are there any immigrants in the media you consume?’, ‘When you watch the news, what’s the message?’, ‘What’s the dominant message?’” Dr. Agatha said that students ought to be

trained on the different ways media can manipulate the way they think, feel, and behave. Using television as an example, she cited how the camera zooms a certain way to elicit certain feelings, working to the benefit of arousing empathy for the poor and vulnerable just as easily as the camera can manipulate viewers to be dismissive of those individuals. “We need to train our students to be critical media consumers I want my students to be critical consumers of what they see and question it,” concluded Dr. Agatha.

Who Gains? Only after her training at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute, Elizabeth was able to understand that the reality the media portrays is intended to grab audiences for-profit. She said, “Media conglomerates are for-profit organizations. Kids need to understand that the reason why there are commercials during their favorite show is because the media wants them to buy the stuff.” Clara likewise said that an important component of media literacy is one’s understanding of how media is produced and its business model in order to better discern hidden agendas within media messages. She knew that before the training, but she was missing the insight to ask the questions regarding who is gaining with the products advertised and at what human cost, which she now realizes. Her updated class assignments post-training instructed pupils to investigate media’s deeper message, or hidden agenda by seeking to identify hidden/subliminal messages. Paul alerted his students to hidden agendas when lecturing about film genre, he reported asking questions like ‘How is a memoir different from a documentary?’, ‘You know they are both agenda driven films, but how are these different?’ Elizabeth recognized that media messages as a norm have a hidden agenda, “Whether it is a commercial, or a program, or a movie, or the news. Even the news is manipulated to a certain point,” she stated, adding that her training at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute helped her understand the dynamics of

hidden-agendas in media messages, which changed her teaching. “It, in fact, made me want to disseminate that to the kids,” Elizabeth affirmed. Because she worked with younger kids, Elizabeth focused on the simplest and easiest ways to understand hidden-agendas: the television commercials. She often told her students that the media needs their money to continue on, and used the examples from cartoons, a format her students are familiar with. Clara also cited commercials as a great example of how students can critically analyze and question the media they consume. She hoped that once her students cultivated critical thinking skills they would be empowered to more easily identify deception in the media “They will be able to go like ‘Oh, this commercial is fake.’ Or ‘This product can’t be this good’,” Elizabeth exemplified. Both Dr. Agatha and Elizabeth replicated in-class assignments they learned in their training at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute, which taught about media persuasive techniques and raise awareness to media pervasiveness. Elizabeth showed the *House hippo* video to fourth through the sixth graders who determined together the veracity of the claims presented and why they were inclined to believe it or refute it. Dr. Agatha challenged her students to recognize logos that were popular in mainstream media and then invited them to reflect about the pervasiveness and persuasiveness nature of advertising is in their own lives, more particularly how it influenced students’ own values.

Diversity. Paul, Pierre, and Dr. Agatha highlighted the importance of teaching their students to consult multiple news sources before forming their opinion on issues, because the news media is often biased in their assessment. All participants expressed the desire to make sure their students understood that media representations often do not reflect social reality. Participants gave examples of media messages that misrepresent racial, social, and religious

minorities like people of color, the immigrant, and the Christian community. Paul instructed his Asian and Latina students to take note of how their race and cultural traditions were represented in their favorite television shows, and assigned his students with writing a pop song about what it was like to be a Jewish person celebrating Hanukkah in the 21st century. Dr. Agatha used media literacy to talk about experiences of women around the world, who lack basic human rights. Clara helped to carve the path for her students from socially challenged background to build a career for themselves in the media industry. Elizabeth sought to convey to her students that their spirituality was everywhere within the media. Sexism in media was one of the social justice issues Sr. Mary more emphatically addressed during the training program. The class assignments were to a) count male versus female depictions in different media outlets; b) identify female sex appeal exploitation in ads; c) and analyze the implications of male voice dominance in media messages. Every alumnus of the program reported replicating these assignments, or a combination of them in their classrooms. In Sr. Mary's view the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable played out on media literacy from how stories were told, whether media messages addressed issues of the poor or marginalized the poor even more, for her a practical example of how the option for the poor and vulnerable could influence media literacy is in the encouragement of female students to become media storytellers as a way to counterbalance female underrepresentation on the mainstream media. Sr. Mary defended that media literacy informs democracy. In her opinion, voters equipped to assume a critical perspective of political messages would strengthen democracy. Through media literacy, Paul aimed to form his students in the intersection of politics and faith, and increase their political participation.

Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers

Absence of Workers. During the media literacy training program, the dignity of work and rights of workers were discussed mainly through consideration of child labor, living wages, and social economic inequalities supported by the mainstream media. Sr. Mary was quick to point out that media often demonizes work and devalues workers. Trainees had to look through ads to analyze persuasive techniques adopted, Sr. Mary asked “Did you see any workers in the ads we looked at today?”, then a discussion about how media in general treats work as dull and something to be avoided ensued. Following training, one of Clara’s new found perspectives on understanding media was considering the workforce of this industry. She became concerned with helping her students to recognize that media production requires collaboration of diverse professionals. Clara thought that the realization that media production is a group effort delved nicely into Catholic Social Teaching by promoting a culture of interdependence. This approach allowed her to convey to her students ideas like different but equal; and equitable and equality. Paul used media resources from the United Farm Workers to conduct media literacy instruction. His focus on immigration reform yielded class discussions about the role of immigrant work in the agribusiness industry. He assigned students with an Internet research project to find out where their food came from, who the farm workers were, and what their working conditions were like. Pierre had similar experience with his students. His goal was to have his students realize who produces the food they consume and at what cost. Dr. Agatha also used media literacy to tackle immigration with her college students, highlighting the contributions of underappreciated and often anonymous or even invisible immigrant workers. ““What if Mexican workers were to just for one day stop working?”, ‘What would it do to our economy?’, ‘Would

just bring it to its knees?’, ‘How about the babysitters?’, ‘The housekeepers?’, ‘The landscapers?’, ‘The cooks?’” Dr. Agatha asked.

Working Conditions. The training offered an overview of the Church teachings on work, citing Pope John Paul II (1991) on work as a good thing because it expresses and increases the worker's dignity. Through work we not only transform the world, we are transformed ourselves, becoming humanlike (*Centesimus Annus*, 1991, para. 32). He further states that the obligation to earn one's bread presumes the right to do so. A society that denies this right cannot be justified, nor can it attain social peace. (*Centesimus Annus*, 1991, para. 43). Trainees were also exposed to hundreds of mainstream media workers on the job, and got to see firsthand what some of their work entailed and to speak with a few of those workers, and acquire a better understanding of the work they do behind cameras. In addition, for Sr. Mary, another aspect of dignity of workers and rights of workers that media literacy instructors could tap on was the context within which media production took place, more specifically the media industry's workforce. She explained that there are deep ethical issues that media producers need to grapple with. Clara said that work inherently carries dignity, and she saw dignity in media workers specially, despite all her media criticism. After training, was poised to carry discussions about workers in the media industry with her students. Her media literacy teaching also changed, she started to encourage students to think about the workers who produce products advertised in the media ““What about these impoverished kids who are factory workers?’ It’s about that extra step of saying . . . ‘Who made this product? . . . Are these the diamonds that have been harvested from these terrible working environments in Africa?’” Clara asked. Pierre also found media literacy helpful when analyzing the predicaments of immigrant workers in the United States, “I think the

media literacy really helps. It's simple. It's getting these girls to be aware." He posed thought-provoking questions like "Did you know the grapes you paid a fortune for were picked by a worker who gets paid lousy pay? Is it fair?" In addition, he brought into the discussion workers' benefits and workplace safety by asking of his students "Is it fair that those workers are exposed to harmful poisons and pesticides all day long, but don't get healthcare? What about the children of these workers?" Dr. Agatha recounted engaging her students in discussions about the working conditions of the poorest of the poor, the immigrant worker: "I ask my students to consider these workers, the poor, and those who are working backbreaking jobs, who are not appreciated, and the work that they do that is not valued, but it is so essential. We eat fruits and vegetables from the grocery store, well, 'Who is going to pick them?'" Dr. Agatha questioned.

Consumerism. At first, trainees were introduced to the idea of differentiating between needs and wants as a way to combat consumerism. Next, trainees looked at advertising through the perspective of consumerism, along with the moral dilemma surrounding needs and wants, such as the influence that consumerism has over low-wage workers and on the ecology. "I think the conversation about the dignity of work and consumerism needs to take place in media literacy instruction, so our humanity is also enhanced," said Sr. Mary. Elizabeth stated she cannot get into liberation theology with her middle school students, but she touches on the rights of workers with eighth graders when she showed them *The Story of Stuff*, a short documentary used by the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute as an intro to discuss consumerism. Her students were reportedly excited about what they learned from the documentary. Elizabeth used the momentum to ask them "Do you need that five-dollar radio, which you know it costs more than five dollars to make?" And "What's happening to the people that actually made that

radio?” Then, she bridged the discussion to students’ personal experiences by asking “Do you realize those shoes you really want might be made by a five-year old kid?” Elizabeth said media literacy training made her more aware about using media in order to teach social justice. Dr. Agatha shared with her students how media sells happiness. Accordingly, Paul stated that most of the consumerism in America was driven by the media, which keeps telling people what they supposedly need. “We’re constantly being sold this bill of goods,” because he is concerned about how these messages affect his students’ sense of self-worth and body image, he uses media literacy instruction to raise their awareness to advertising techniques. Similarly, before, the training Clara was focused on the art and then the implications of the immediate people consuming the media, hence, she asked her students questions like, “How do these movies affect your body image, young ladies?” But the training allowed her to make connection beyond the art form going on to ask “How is it influencing you, as a community, right here?” Then, bringing her to raise students’ awareness about “larger, global issues that are involved in this big commercial sphere.” Through the lenses of Catholic Social Teaching students can analyze the media by asking important questions like, “How much of it is worth integrating into my being?” She exemplifies, and “How much of it is the commercialism that I can kind of put aside?” And yet, “How media and values interact together?”

Common Good

Link. Trainees were exposed to scriptures and Church documents highlighting the importance to advocate for the poor, such as “You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his. For what has been given in common for the use of all, you have arrogated to yourself” (*Populorum Progressio*, 1967, para. 23). Clara

said that the link between media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching lays on using media literacy to promote social responsibility through getting students to be concerned about the people suffering with social injustices. Undergoing media literacy training changed Elizabeth's perception of both media literacy and social justice, as she realized the major role media plays in the human condition of modern society, "It brought to the forefront of my perspective how important Catholic Social Teaching is for understanding media, because media is so pervasive and Catholic Social Teaching is about what it means to be a human being." Dr. Agatha enjoyed the appeal of "teaching God's message through media." In Dr. Agatha's assessment, Catholic Social Teaching is a perspective that dovetails nicely with her training as a professor, and her wanting to engage students in the realization that media is worth examining. In social psychology, she used media literacy to help convey prejudice, one of the big topics she covers, including stereotyping, and aggression towards different groups of people, often minorities. Paul pointed to an important intersection between Catholic Social Teaching and the media. Paul had his students analyze the source of the media they were consuming on a regular basis. "They start looking at things that the Catholic Church considers rights and how the media portrays it as simply a matter of personal responsibilities and privileges," he exemplified. Pierre affirmed that students needed a Catholic framework to analyze mainstream media messages, and "media literacy helps highlight issues," Pierre explained, and attested that media literacy helped him promote Catholic Social Teaching in his practice. In Pierre's opinion, analyzing the media is a perfect fit for exploring and further understanding Catholic Social Teaching. Sr. Mary summarized it best by stating that the common good is the link between media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching, which can be evident when students dismantle media messages by

asking questions prescribed by the media mindfulness wheel like, what is the message about? What is really going on? Who is gaining and who is paining? Does it make a difference? How can I make a difference? (See Figure 4).

Community. The common good is focused on human dignity. It is accomplished beyond one's own intellectual formation, it brings upon the individual responsibilities with the community at-large. Sr. Mary said that media mindfulness is effective in educating students to critically engage the conversation about social justice issues, which in itself creates community. In her view, media literacy was about promoting the human person, helping to create participative citizens who were critical media consumers, and who sought the betterment of their community. Further, Sr. Mary stated that media mindfulness was concerned with what happens beyond the media consumer, how media messages impact communities, and the implications of the media consumers' response to the common good, "The common good enhances the human community." Clara decided to integrate in her practice, a macro sphere social justice line of inquiring that promoted the common good during media literacy instruction. She said, "It's fine for students to be aware of how songs and television shows are influencing them, but they need to also ask 'Is there a greater issue that I'm called to address in the bigger sphere?'" Clara questioned. Elizabeth reported a combination of media literacy and community service activities to help convey to students a deeper understanding of charity, "not a one-time handout, but truly loving our neighbors, which is more demanding." Paul showed concern in teaching his students to be aware of the social implications of stereotypes in media by asking, "What does the Latino community look like?", "What does the Asian community look like in a movie?", "Can you even find them?", "Is there's a preponderance of certain groups on TV?", "Why is that?" Likewise,

Pierre reported using media literacy instruction to make his students aware of how mainstream media messages portrayed marginalized groups, “I also use rap songs and ask ‘What are they saying about society? What do they say about the poor?’” Dr. Agatha showed how media literacy instruction supported teaching the common good in several occasions, in of them she said “My students themselves may not experience these forms of social injustice but, through discussion of media messages, I bring it to their attention that there are others who do experience social injustice.”

Universality. Participants articulated that Catholic Social Teaching had a broader outreach appeal than the Church itself because it addresses basic social justice issues that people of all religious persuasion and those who do not have a religion share in common. Hence, using Catholic Social Teaching as a framework for media literacy instruction was seen by participants as a productive method. Paul said “Social justice issues are responsibilities we have human to human. These are human issues. Immigration is not a one culture issue, neither is access to healthcare, or retirement. These are universal issues.” Clara likewise asserted that “Catholic Social Teaching transcends religion and is chiefly concerned with human wellbeing.” Dissecting media messages through Catholic Social Teaching has helped Clara make connections with human social conditions beyond a religious label, which was significant given that the majority of her students were not Catholic. She said, “Media literacy can be a powerful tool for anybody to just stay focused on the dignity of humanity; and then, once you understand that, it naturally trickles down into a greater awareness of wanting to help and serve people,” Clara explained. Dr. Agatha said that Catholic Social Teaching came in handy helping her strengthen service, purpose, and leadership in the lives of their students. “Catholic Social Teaching, although it has

the name Catholic, it has a broader teaching. It's more about social justice in general independent of being Catholic," Dr. Agatha attested. Elizabeth often brought the social justice concepts when teaching social studies to junior high students, "It's really easy to bring in the Catholic Social Teachings into the social studies lesson plans because we're talking about human cultures." Sr. Teresa voiced concern about teachers who showed religious themed films in class hoping to teach students about Catholic Social Teaching: "They decide to show students a religious movie, and that's it. No, that's not it at all! Because it turns kids off." Sr. Teresa also added that teachers should look for the media students consume and find the social issues within it, or as Clara says, "You can get the next blockbuster and apply Jesus to it." Sr. Mary warned teachers to look at the overall meaning of the story, "Maybe it has a redemption element. It doesn't necessarily have to be a religious experience."

Media Mindfulness Strategy

Character Education. During the training Sr. Mary introduced character education as the process of building spiritual values on human values. She said, "Character education is the epitome of human values, of those human traits that we hope that our children are developing as they grow up but are greatly challenged by the media that's out there." Sr. Mary said that the lens of Catholic Social Teaching is a prolific one for educators seeking to put forward character education. The Character Education lecture invited trainees to reflect on how character education and media mindfulness might call for each other. Trainees expressed their values and reflect how popular culture represented in the media they consume supported or contrasted with such values. Sr. Teresa said that media often depicts issues in a way that demises Catholic Social Teaching, but dismantling those messages through media literacy techniques actually

helped students' character formation. Elizabeth agreed with this assertion and explained how it played out in her classroom "Even if it's a bad movie, I want my kids to realize there's still something good about it." She posed questions to help her students identify ethical dilemmas within the media message and how their own values are portrayed "Even if the ethics aren't right, or the violence, they gotta look for God in it, and they can find it." Elizabeth explained. Clara cited the music and pop culture class we had during training saying that she would consider the lyrics of most songs objectionable, but was impressed with how redeemable messages were easily brought out through class discussions, which can be helpful to form students' character. "It exists—not putting our heads in the sand—and recognizing that this is what our students are listening to. This is what's being played in our cultural milieu," Clara said.

Student Empowerment. The training focused on student empowerment echoing Paulo Freire's ideal of students as active agents, which means that students and teachers are peers in the learning process (Freire, 1970). "Media education can help free people from the shackles of oppression. Because people start asking questions, and if you ask questions, then what's the action that follows from the answers?" Sr. Mary argued. Similarly, Sr. Teresa attributed the use of Catholic Social Teaching as a framework to deconstructing media messages as an empowering process for both teachers and students. Likewise, Clara stated that media literacy teaches students to raise the questions, and that the Catholic Social Teaching framework helps them to evaluate that message against their faith values. Further, participants highlighted the importance of using media students already consumed for analyzing messages through the Catholic Social Teaching framework, this likewise empowered students, as it rejected the idea that the teacher's choice of media message is in anyway more valuable than the students'. Sr.

Teresa stressed that teachers should talk the students' language: "Some of their rap songs and rock songs really tap into some of the different issues, and they have great values in them," she explained. Pierre said, "I'm not saying it's good media or bad media. It's what they chose. I use it to help them see their Catholic values in that, to teach how to interpret that." Citing the use of popular sitcom, Dr. Agatha attested that "Students love it when I bring in clips from, I would say, from their culture...this is something they've watched, and it hits home for them. They recognize this." Participants who were high school teachers reported teaching their students media production skills and being amazed at the student's creativity. They allowed their students to engage any media type or genre they preferred, and sometimes pushed the envelope in combining media production with faith values. The training emphasized how those who are the storytellers of the culture hold the power to shape public opinion, hence the emphasis on fostering media production skills in students. In addition, participants report interest in educating students to think critically about the media on their own, Pierre said, "Whether kids are looking at the news, listening to the radio, or accessing it in their media telephone, they have to know how to make sense of all of that and how to react." Although participants commonly used a Catholic framework to analyze media messages, students' diversity of opinions were respected. He said, "There are always going to be those kids that we as teachers express Catholic teaching to, but they will disagree, and they are always free to express whatever views they want," Paul stated. Dr. Agatha remarked that questions were open-ended and that students were encouraged to express themselves, "They don't have to be afraid of getting anything wrong, because what struck me is what struck me," she explained.

Solidarity. Trainees were taught that media literacy invited students to respond to the

media messages they consume, and the media mindfulness strategy added providing feedback to mainstream media producers, political engagement, social activism, and community service as valid ways of responding to media messages. It did not confine the answer to necessarily another media message. Sr. Mary explained, “Beyond equipping students with media literacy skills the media mindfulness strategy provokes students to do something about social justice issues.” Participants cited using the Catholic Social Teaching framework to deconstruct media as a prolific method to succinct such responses. Clara explained that because solidarity “is central for Catholic Social Teaching and the promotion of the common good,” solidarity was a key response in the media mindfulness strategy. “Media mindfulness teaches students to be sensitive to people who are less fortunate. . . to consider the dignity of human life and how that’s being treated in the media, not just in our own communities, but in the world,” Clara pondered. For Elizabeth justice is love, and she directed the focus of her students to community service, such as fighting hunger, as it was, in her opinion, the best way to express fraternal love. Participants gave examples of how their students engaged in acts of solidarity following media literacy instruction on social justice issues. Pierre, for instance, cited his students making care packages for farm workers, with handwritten notes of appreciation for them; going in a field trip to help clean up a city’s river; bringing into full-circle his students learning about Catholic Social Teaching. Pierre attested that utilizing media literacy was crucial in this process. Participants reported concern with making sure their students were sensitive to social issues that did not affect them directly. Paul explained, for instance, how he coaxed students to consider different sides of the same issue. Likewise, Dr. Agatha said “Students can read about individuals in the world who lack basic human rights, and about governments who don’t fulfill their

responsibilities to individuals, but when students actually see, for example, a documentary, that brings the issue to life.”

Values. The media mindfulness model proposes seeking redemptive values in media messages. It does not prescribe that religion based media messages, or theologically sound media messages be used. “All of the values of Catholic Social Teaching are human values. They are drawn from the scriptures and rearticulated in Church teaching. These are basic fundamental human values,” said Sr. Mary. “There’s so much potential for carrying pop culture as a vehicle for social change, and as a vehicle for identity and for the passing on our values—the Church has a responsibility to be inherently involved in that,” Clara remarked. After training completion, Clara recognized that the media mindfulness model offered her a new insight, the integrating of faith values to media literacy instruction, which she could apply by having students asking themselves, “How does this piece of media dovetail with my values?” Then going from there with their own decision-making.” After her training, Elizabeth became increasingly interested in teaching her students to discern, whether a media message was entertainment, what values it taught or dismissed, and how it stacked up to the students’ own personal values. Pierre taught his students how mainstream news was produced, and challenged them to replicate the process in a way that promoted their Catholic values, in one instance, students had to create a news release for Jesus. Paul similarly had his students create a rap song about the journeys of Saint Paul as described in the Bible. In addition, he used the media mindfulness wheel to introduce students to popular advertising techniques, concluding with examples of how advertising can also be used to advance faith values embedded in Catholic Social Teaching like human dignity, peace, and charity. Likewise, Dr. Agatha reproduced an in-

class activity she learned in her media literacy training having students identify major company's logos, and reflect on how advertising values contrasted with their own values. In addition, she used the media mindfulness strategy to deconstruct mainstream media representations of the value of happiness and contrasted it with the Beatitudes.

Media literacy teaching aid. Participants shared insights on how integrating media literacy played out in their teaching practice and schools. First of all, they expressed appreciation for having their training costs subsidized. Dr. Agatha stated "I am so grateful that I was able to attend the training for free." They talked about how their school community responded to their attempt to share the media mindfulness model with them. Elizabeth's administrative role allowed her to promote media literacy among the faculty, but it had been an uphill battle to coax more teachers in her school to integrate media literacy in their practice. In Pierre's department four teachers integrated media literacy instruction in their practice, but he hoped parents could be educated as well. "They don't have the tools necessary. So, I think that if parents could take a course in media literacy it would help them a lot," Pierre explained. Participants reported that some of their colleagues responded with reservation about adopting the media literacy. Sr. Teresa said, "So many times, I've heard teachers—and even principals—say that teachers are so afraid 'cause they don't know how to use the media." Paul wished teachers would overcome the fear of integrating media literacy into their practice. Pierre said "I don't feel threatened by media, but I know a lot of teachers do. I really feel that media is a necessary tool in the modern age." Dr. Agatha affirmed that some of her colleagues worried about compromising the content, and many were suspicious of media. She hoped they would realize adopting media literacy can be effective "They (students) learn the content, and acquire useful

skills—being able to maybe produce a media message, being able to critique the media out there.” Dr. Agatha defended. Participants noticed a generational gap. Younger teachers were more readily willing to try integrating media literacy to their practice, while older teachers were generally resistant to the idea. Elizabeth said that while younger teachers were eager to try media literacy, older teachers seemed afraid, which caused her to focus her message on telling teachers they had nothing to fear: “Don’t be afraid of teaching students the ability to discern what they are watching.” Participant teachers spoke about how media mindfulness empowered them, but also about how selecting the appropriate media messages to be use in the classroom required greater time commitment and planning. They found the media mindfulness wheel to be a timesaver. Paul used the media mindfulness wheel as a starting point to dismantling media messages in class. “So, every single movie we stop—and out come the wheels, and out come the questions, and we discuss. It’s a process,” Paul explained. Pierre said that the media mindfulness strategy helped his teaching practice, “It helps me do my job better. It helps me. It makes my job easier. The wheel frees up my time to look into more media, or to look into more things that I can bring my children.”

Elizabeth was always on the lookout for fresh media content to support her instruction. She explained that it was a time consuming task to find appropriate content for younger, 11 to 13 years old, students in a Catholic school. Dr. Agatha purposely researched current videos to use in class. She was always on the lookout for media messages to include in her classroom to lieu of something that had already being used. They also shared considerations on how the media mindfulness strategy shaped their teaching practice. Elizabeth said “media literacy has helped me a lot in understanding that a story is there to convey what the storyteller wants me to hear.”

Paul attested “The more I let kids use media on their learning, on their assessments, the report back from them is that they are learning more.” Pierre reflected, “I thought the media literacy training really helped me to break-through...the thing I liked about Sr. Mary’s approach is how it was taught. It was not preachy.” Dr. Agatha summarized it by saying “It made such a positive impact in my teaching.” Participants also shared considerations on how they thought media mindfulness should be part of the formal school curricula. Although Elizabeth was not primarily an English or communications teacher, she found ways to include media literacy as an integral part of the curriculum. Clara suggested that teachers of all disciplines should include media education in their curriculum. “Students can take creative writing, but even if they don’t take creative writing, they still know what a poem is, what a novel is. We could do the same with media,” she explained. Pierre shared a holistic view and advocated for critical thinking centered school curricula. All teacher-participants voiced their approval of ways to formalize critical thinking skills through curricula, such as what the Common Core State Standards propose.

Considerations on Overlapping

Catholic Social Teaching concepts somewhat overlap but they are here coded by the subject that most clearly characterizes the social issue. Hence, while immigrant workers can be seen as an issue of rights and responsibilities, option for the poor, and workers’ rights, it is the working that most clearly qualifies this group when Pierre and Paul referred to how their students got involved with the farm workers union. Likewise, right to clean water can be seen as both rights and responsibilities, and option for the poor and vulnerable, but here it is categorized as an issue of rights and responsibilities as it is referred to as the right to access water.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the study. Initially, research questions are answered, then a discussion of the findings placing them within the larger scholarship of media literacy follows. Next, implications of the findings are analyzed. Finally, recommendations for future academic research and for Church leaders are offered. The purpose of this case study is to explore how a faith based media literacy training program promotes Catholic Social Teaching, and how attending such program has influenced participants' understanding of media literacy and its link to Catholic Social Teaching. Case study was deemed the most appropriate research method to answer the research questions. I conducted a case study analysis of the program itself, including interviews with five teachers at faith based schools ranging from the middle school to the college level: one Catholic middle school teacher; three Catholic high school teachers; and one professor at a Christian university. I took field notes and recorded in-class instructions through participant observation, as I myself enrolled in the program as a trainee. I further kept a journal and conducted multiple open-ended interviews with instructors, fellow trainees, alumni of the program and their peers. In addition, I analyzed documents such as syllabi, class plans, media messages, presentations, and other artifacts. Over 10 hours of interviews and four hours of in-class recordings were transcribed and analyzed. Data was cross-analyzed, common patterns emerged, and were recoded to exhaustion, then grouped together by commonalities until 17 themes were defined, and then organized under five categories, which are as follows: Rights and Responsibilities encompassing the themes of Humanity, Social Justice Issues; and Informed Consciousness; Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable composed of the themes Who

Pains?, Who Gains?, and Diversity; Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers which contains the themes of Absence of Workers, Working Conditions, and Consumerism; then, the Common Good category with the themes: Link, Community, and Universality; lastly, the Media Mindfulness Strategy category holding the themed of Character Education, Student Empowerment, Solidarity, Values, and Media Literacy Teaching Aid.

Research Question 1 Addressed:

How does a faith based media literacy training program promote Catholic Social Teaching? The program syllabus stated that students were set to discover the teachings of the Church about media literacy and to identify its connection with Catholic Social Teaching. During training, these goals were most clearly noticed in the segment dedicated to Globalization, Catholic Social Teaching and media literacy, which introduced scholarly literature on Globalization; presented a succinct literature review of Catholic Social Teaching; and introduced notions of common good and solidarity. Media education was pointed out as a suitable response to address social justice issues; basic notions of media literacy theory are shared, and a theology of media education is also offered through Church documents on the topic. Finally, core principles of media literacy education and Catholic Social Teaching were shown side-by-side, and a class discussion of how Catholic Social Teaching could be taught through media literacy instruction ensued. “There is an ideology in every piece of media that is created. What is the dominant ideology of American television today?” Sr. Mary asked. The class discussed it, and Sr. Mary used blockbuster movies to exemplify how film can help students dialogue with the Gospels to discover social values and Catholic teaching. The training approach to deconstructing media messages through a Catholic Social Teaching framework was supported by the use of the

media mindfulness wheel (See Figure 4), and it can be summarized as: 1) exploring with students whether values are reinforced or downplayed in the media message; 2) articulating these values to students as a way to deepen their view of how the values cited parallels the Gospel; 3) engaging students in dialogue, and suggesting a reflection; and finally, 4) answering the prescribed question “What difference can I make?” Students were encouraged to respond. Their response varied from producing their own media message, to providing feedback to media producers, writing to authorities in government about issues, volunteering in community service, and/or engaging in any other actions students find appropriate.

When Catholic Social Teaching was presented to trainees as framework for media literacy instruction, specific concepts were discussed, and the whole of the data in this study suggested that such concepts were carried on by alumni of the program in their own teaching practice. In regards to the concept of rights and responsibilities, the instructor used the Catechism of the Catholic Church (para. 2258-2330) to bring up human rights and civil responsibilities of each person. Scriptures were cited to support the idea that the human person is central to all teachings about justice; and the very reason for justice (Psalm 8:6-8; Genesis 1:26). Participant teachers consistently reported equipping students to identify social justice issues—such as, right to life, access to clean water, hunger, immigration, ethnic diversity—in the media they consumed as crucial for successful Catholic Social Teaching instruction, which was in accordance to directives they received during their training at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute. Whereas students’ intellectual freedom was upheld by all participants, they also held that students had the right to Informed Consciousness, in other words, the right to be educated about the moral rights and responsibilities of those creating media. Students were seen by

participants as the media producers of tomorrow. For Sr. Mary, a media literate person actually had the right to media consumption and media production, and also should take responsibility for the productions they created, or were part of, as well as for what they consumed.

In regards to the Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, the media mindfulness wheel was used to during training to help students identify “Who pains?” and “Who gains?” with each media message they consume. Participants reported often seeking depictions of the poor and vulnerable during media literacy instruction to encourage students to think about oppressed groups in their media analysis, while also being mindful that the reality the media portrays is intended to grab audiences for-profit. “Media conglomerates are for-profit organizations. Kids need to understand that the reason why there are commercials during their favorite show is because the media wants them to buy the stuff,” said Elizabeth. Beyond exposing the profit goals of the media, alumni replicated in their practice the habit of deconstructing media messages to uncover dominant ideologies that may or not reflect students’ own Values. Participant teachers work to make sure their pupils kept a watchful eye on the mainstream media portrayal of gender, race, political views, the poor, and religious minorities, they report replicating assignments received during their own training to achieve that. In Sr. Mary’s words “Who tells the stories owns the culture,” likewise participant teachers were mindful of alerting their students to habitually deconstruct dominant ideologies that played out in detriment of the poor and vulnerable.

During the media literacy training program, the Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers were discussed mainly through consideration of child labor, living wages, and social economic inequalities supported by the mainstream media. The training revealed through content analysis

how the mainstream media often demonized work and devalues workers who were generally downplayed or absent. Participant teachers reported—since their training at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute—having developed a concern to conquer the Absence of Workers by making sure the working class is taken into consideration when their students deconstruct media messages by having students ponder about workers from the staff working behind the cameras to how undocumented workers were depicted. Working Conditions were frequently cited as an angle participant teachers encouraged their students to use when analyzing media messages, a strategy suggested during the training at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute. Clara reported that after her training she encouraged students to think about the workers who produce products advertised in the media: “What about these impoverished kids who are factory workers?” Pierre asked his students questions like, “Is it fair that those workers are exposed to harmful poisons and pesticides all day long, but don’t get healthcare?”

Likewise, Dr. Agatha stated “I ask my students to consider these workers, the poor, and those who are working backbreaking jobs, who are not appreciated, and the work that they do that is not valued, but it is so essential. We eat fruits and vegetables from the grocery store, well, ‘Who is going to pick them?’” Alumni also reported addressing with their students how Consumerism was reinforced by the media, and how mass production of goods affected low-wage workers and the ecology. They all report showing the short documentary *The Story of Stuff* to their students, and conducting class discussion about needs versus wants, and about charity, which is an activity trainees go through at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute.

Trainees were exposed to scriptures and Church documents highlighting the importance of advocating for the poor and for redistribution of goods. “You are not making a gift of your

possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his. For what has been given in common for the use of all, you have arrogated to yourself” (*Populorum Progressio*, 1967, para. 23). Sr. Mary said that the Common Good is the Link between media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching, which can be evident when students dismantle media messages by asking questions prescribed by the media mindfulness model like: what is the message about? What is really going on? Who is gaining and who is paining? Does it make a difference? How can I make a difference? The Common Good is focused on human dignity. It is accomplished beyond one’s own intellectual formation, it brings upon the individual responsibilities with the Community at-large. For Sr. Mary, media literacy creates participative citizens who are critical media consumers, and who seek the betterment of their Community. Further, Sr. Mary stated that media mindfulness is concerned with what happens beyond the media consumer, how media messages impact communities, and the moral implications of the media consumers’ response to the Common Good, “The common good enhances the human community.” In addition, participant teachers emphasized how the Common Good offers a broader approach—beyond the Catholic label—to reinforce the dignity of humanity through media literacy. The Universality attributed to the Common Good reflected how it addressed basic social justice issues that people of all religious persuasion and those who do not have a religion share in common. Clara asserted that “Catholic Social Teaching transcends religion and is chiefly concerned with human wellbeing.” Accordingly, Dr. Agatha said, “Catholic Social Teaching, although it has the name Catholic, it has a broader teaching. It’s more about social justice in general independent of being Catholic.”

During the training, Sr. Mary introduced Character Education as the process of building spiritual values on human values, a nuance among the expected results of the media mindfulness model: “Character education is the epitome of human values, of those human traits that we hope that our children are developing as they grow up but are greatly challenged by the media that’s out there.” The training was focused on Student Empowerment. For Sr. Mary, “Media education can help free people from the shackles of oppression. Because people start asking questions.” Similarly, Sr. Teresa attributed the use of Catholic Social Teaching as a framework to deconstructing media messages, an empowering process for both teachers and students. Media literacy generally invites students to respond to the media messages they consume by producing their own messages, and the media mindfulness method adds to that other possibilities the student may come up with, such as, providing feedback to mainstream media producers, political engagement, social activism, and community service, all valid ways of responding to media messages as well. This played out in participant teachers’ practice as their students chose to act in Solidarity with people facing the social justice issues they have learned about through media literacy. “Beyond equipping students with media literacy skills the media mindfulness strategy provokes students to do something about social justice issues,” explained Sr. Mary.

Further, the media mindfulness model proposes seeking redemptive Values in media messages. It does not prescribe that only religion-based media messages, or theologically-sound media messages should be used. “All of the values of Catholic Social Teaching are human values. They are drawn from the scriptures and rearticulated in Church teaching. These are basic fundamental human values,” said Sr. Mary. Participants expressed that the media mindfulness method served as a Media Literacy Teaching Aid facilitating their work to integrate

media education in their teaching practice and schools. The media mindfulness wheel was cited as particularly helpful.

Research Question 2 Addressed:

How does a faith based media literacy training program influence participants' understanding of media literacy and its link to Catholic Social Teaching? When asked to explain media literacy, alumni of the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute focused on expected student learning outcome. Clara defined media literacy as “the process of recognizing, analyzing, and interpreting media messages, then creating your own in the way that you want.” Elizabeth said media literacy is about giving her students the skills to understand that media messages are not always right, or truthful, and that they often in times challenge students’ values. For Paul, media literacy is the ability to evaluate media. Pierre called media literacy the literacy of the contemporary milieu. Dr. Agatha said that being media literate means “being versed in media.” When asked to describe how media literacy played out in their practice, however, participants focused on how social justice issues are brought out through media education, which they often refer to as Media Mindfulness. Although, participants often used media literacy and Media Mindfulness interchangeably, the whole of the data pointed to a clear distinction. Media Mindfulness while inheriting the traits commonly associated with media literacy is further shaped by the concern with the moral implications of how media messages influence communities according to the response of media consumers, which can promote the Common Good in varying degrees.

The faith based media literacy training taught that Media Mindfulness is, simply put, media literacy education in the context of faith formation. This study yielded a deeper

understanding of how Media Mindfulness is taught. The faith aspect was informed by the Judeo-Christian tradition and it was chiefly concerned with promoting the Common Good. Some of the desired outcomes of Media Mindfulness were—beyond the media literacy skills traditionally associated with media education—character education, student empowerment, student engagement in solidarity, students’ awareness to how their values were depicted in the media. Further, Media Mindfulness was meant as a teaching aid, its media mindfulness wheel (See Figure 4) functioned as a road map to facilitate in-class discussions and student learning of critical media literacy skills. Participants from the middle school to the university level reported finding the media mindfulness wheel helpful and using it consistently. Finally, Media Mindfulness prescribed a grassroots movement, which aims to share this teaching strategy with as many educators as possible, instructors used the motto “training the trainers,” as they invited program graduates to share their new found knowledge with other teachers, catechists, and parents, something that participants reported doing also.

When asked to explain Media Mindfulness participants’ answers pointed to the promotion of the Common Good. Clara said that through Media Mindfulness students can understand how the media affected their decision-making, and further “how it influences their thoughts; how it influences their culture; and societies; other people; and other media. So, instead of being a passive media consumer, students become an active participant in it.” Clara asserted. In every lesson plan Elizabeth used the media mindfulness wheel to guide in-class discussions with her middle school students who were prompt to answer questions like “Who gains?” “Who pains?” and “What difference can I make?” Media Mindfulness for Paul was not just about understanding the content, but understanding hidden agendas within media. It was

about going deeper from a faith perspective, he likewise used the media mindfulness model to put forth class discussions. “Looking at it through the lenses of my Catholic faith: How do I evaluate that media? How do I see that intersection? What’s the media doing to me and how does it affect how I act in the world?” Paul questioned. Pierre said that Media Mindfulness was about empowering his students to objectively evaluate the media they consume—in any medium, format, or device—through the lenses of their Catholic faith. “Whether kids are looking at the news, listening to the radio, or accessing it in their media telephone, they have to know how to make sense of all of that and how to react,” Paul said. Dr. Agatha also used the media mindfulness wheel in her classes, for her it helped build students’ awareness and empathy for people suffering from social justice issues. “My students themselves may not experience these forms of social injustice but, through discussion of media messages, I bring it to their attention that there are others who do experience social injustice,” Dr. Agatha described. Media Mindfulness takes place beyond the media consumer as it begs a Common Good informed response from media consumers—students—to the media messages they consume and produce.

After attending training at the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute, Clara’s understanding of media education changed and so did her practice. She became more mindful of social justice issues. She also decided to create a Media Mindfulness course which with the goal to serve as a pre-requisite to all the electives at the media arts program she led. She further integrated into her practice, a macro sphere social justice line of inquiring that promoted the Common Good when adopting media literacy in class, although most of her students came from a challenging socioeconomic background, she wanted them to be informed and sensitive about social issues that victimized people around the world. After the training, Clara was also more

aware about the need to encourage her students to be selective of the media they consume: “You can’t expect kids to fall in hook, line, and sinker and be able to even recognize trash from the good.” She said, also adding that in her assessment even adults have a hard time selecting quality media and thinks that “kids would have an even tougher time.” So, Clara intended to help her students to develop a greater sense of responsibility over the media they choose.

Participant teachers attribute to the Common Good the quality of Link between media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching. They reported having used Media literacy instruction as an instrument to promote social responsibility, and sustained that critically analyzing media messages through the media mindfulness wheel allowed students to learn both media literacy skills and Catholic Social Teaching. Teachers reported that de-constructing media messages through the inquiry of issues like hunger, workers’ rights, and access to clean water resulted in students acting in Solidarity towards people suffering from such social justice issues as a response to the media messages studied. In regards to the particular Catholic Social Teaching concepts investigated in this study, this dynamic was observed in Rights and Responsibilities, for instance, when Paul attested that he sought to teach his students to be discerning of whether the media they consumed upheld their Christian values, such as Catholic Social Teaching. “Students start looking at things that the Catholic Church considers rights and how the media portrayals it as simply a matter of personal responsibilities and privileges,” Paul said. Also, when teaching about water rights, Pierre helped his students to unpack the Church’s stance on the Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable through media literacy instruction and then took the class in a field trip to clean the town’s river, as this was the students’ response to the last question on the media mindfulness wheel “What difference can I make?” Further, following training, one of

Clara's newfound perspectives on media was considering the workforce of this industry. She intended to teach the Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers in the context of the collaborative work of skilled media professionals. Media Mindfulness and the Common Good feed off each other. While the goal to achieve the Common Good shaped the line of inquiry suggested by the media mindfulness wheel, students' diverse responses to the media deconstructed in the classroom—varying from community services, to political engagement, and works of charity—helped solidify their theoretical knowledge of the Common Good by practicing it (Wolfe & Byrne, 1975; Dewey, 1915). Elizabeth described her Media Mindfulness approach as a combination of media literacy skills and community service activities to help convey to students a deeper understanding of charity, for instance, when teaching about hunger. Participants further voiced their contentment with using Catholic Social Teaching as a framework for educating students in media literacy skills because of the Universality of Catholic Social Teaching, which allowed them to address basic social justice issues faced by people of all religion persuasions. Teachers reported adopting the media mindfulness model—media literacy informed by the Common Good—to promote: a) Character Education, which invited students to reflect on their Values and to what extent the media they consume deconstructs, or reinforces such values; b) Student Empowerment, through open-ended inquiry model encouraging students to voice their opinion, respecting students' diverse opinions, deconstructing media messages students are familiar with—or prefer—allowing students to shape instruction by defining what messages will be studied, what their response to the media messages will be, not exclusively producing another media message, but also responding in community service, acts of charity, political engagement, public advocacy, prayer, etc.; c) Solidarity, participants reported using media mindfulness to

foster students' solidarity towards those who suffer; d) Values explored by the media mindfulness model are not tied to religion-based values, but rather to universal human values that students from diverse background could identify with, and Christian students could identify on different religious groups depicted in the media, often values that support the Common Good, such as human rights; e) Participants reported using the media mindfulness model as a Teaching Aid that could be applied to analyzing media in a myriad of disciplines—social studies, religious studies, theology studies, media studies, history, psychology, and even statistics—freeing them to spend more time researching the best fitting media messages to be used and planning field activities, such as, community engagement, should students desire to take that route when responding to media messages. Finally, a clear finding of the study is that teachers practice did change as result of media literacy training. All participant teachers reported actively and in a regular basis researching appropriate media messages to be integrated in their classroom instruction. In regards to Student Empowerment, teachers reported making sure to adopt media messages that students have likely already consumed. In addition, teachers reported using the media mindfulness wheel (See Figure 4) extensively, and assigning media production projects to their students—especially in the high school level—consistently. Notably, teachers reported that students are more engaged when they explore the intersection of media and their Values.

Discussion of Findings

The practice of Media Mindfulness strengthens democracy as it raises questions to lead students to consider the most poor and vulnerable. Masterman (1985) called media education an “education for democracy,” a tool to subvert the status quo of power in mainstream media consumption. Media literacy driven curriculum was deemed essential for preparing students to

participate in social activism and to become participative and citizens of tomorrow (Anderson, 2002). Kellner & Share (2005) linked media literacy to radical democracy. New media literacy helped students engage democracy (Couvering et al., 2005). A report from the United Nations, Alliance of Civilizations, UNESCO, European Commission, and Grupo Comunicar called policy-makers to promote media education as it empowers society as a whole (Frau-Meigs & Torrent, 2009, p. 20). Likewise, Sr. Mary stated that media mindfulness enhanced democracy, the training program explored the notion of media education as a tool to advance democracy in two of the sections that she led: Philosophy, ideology, and media Globalization; and the Catholic Social Teaching and Media Literacy. Alumni reported having their students engage in political education following media mindfulness instruction. Elizabeth's students held their own class elections after watching clips of a presidential election debate; Paul's high school students wrote letters to their district legislators in the State's capitol voicing their opinion on immigration, after learning about this social justice issue through media mindfulness instruction. Therefore, the media mindfulness model supports the idea that media education enhances democracy.

In addition, Media Mindfulness echoes Freire's concern with advancing Democracy (Freire, 1967). The Student Empowerment brought about by Media Mindfulness models Freire's strategy to connect literacy directly to the social context of the student (Freire, 1979) as it seeks to: a) use media messages with which students are familiar; b) empower students to choose the media messages they want to study; c) create a safe and supportive classroom environment for students share to their own values and worldview; and d) replicate Freire's participatory method in which students are seen as the teacher's peers in the learning process (Freire, 1967, 1970), rejecting the idea of "banking education" (Freire, 1970, p. 58). Through the proposed question

“What difference can I make?” the media mindfulness wheel (See Figure 4) offers a method to critically analyze the media that encourages students to be active agents of social transformation (Freire, 1967, 1970). The media mindfulness model is inquiry-based (See Figure 4), which reflects the teaching method proposed by Faundez and Freire (1985). Likewise, the media mindfulness model values students’ intellectual freedom and upholds Diversity (Freire, 1979), and moreover, through Informed Consciousness, it challenges dominant ideologies within mainstream media (Freire, 1996).

The themes of Who Pains? Who Gains? And Consumerism showed how Media Mindfulness induce students to question the socioeconomic context in which media messages were produced and the dominant ideologies at play (Torres & Mercado, 2006). The themes of Solidarity and Democracy demonstrated how Media Mindfulness supports that media literate people can respond to media literacy in different ways—e.g., social activism, charitable actions, political engagement—beyond producing media. These were in accordance with scholars Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994) who examined how meaning is socially established and shared beyond reader and text: “Media literacy certainly includes the ability to use and interpret media; but it also involves a much broader analytical understanding” (Buckingham, 2003, p. 38). Besides understanding what media messages are about and how they were produced, students must know why media messages are produced, by whom, and in which context (Buckingham, 2003; Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994; Goodman, 2013; Lewis & Jhally, 1998). The media mindfulness model speaks to this as it compels students to consider the ramifications of the media they are analyzing for the Common Good by asking “Who pains?” and “Who gains?”

Scholars have generally considered the ability to produce media the goal of media

literacy (Capello et al., 2011; Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Considine et al., 2009; Livingstone, 2004; Silverblatt et al., 1999; Tatusko, 2005; Willett, 2005, p. 143). Whereas there is not a media literacy canon (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 373), Media Mindfulness adds to the body of the scholarship in its focus on students' responses to the media message they produce going beyond producing their own media. While Media Mindfulness considers student media production a satisfactory response, and it advocates for teaching students skills to produce alternative media messages, it also invites students to ponder "What difference can I make?" which based on participants' account have incited students to respond in an array of activities from providing feedback to mainstream media outlets to political engagement. Willis (1990) sustained that there are "extraordinary symbolic creativity of the multitude of ways in which young people use, humanize, decorate, and invest meanings within their common and immediate life spaces and social practices" (Willis, 1990, p. 6), participants' accounts of how their students engaged in Solidarity as response to social justice issues they uncovered through media mindfulness exemplify creative ways in which students can make meaning of media literacy lessons.

Study findings suggest that Character Education is one of the desired outcomes of Media Mindfulness instruction, a response to scholars who defend that media education empower students, "Educators can't afford to ignore or trivialize the complex, social, intellectual, and emotional functions of media and popular culture in the lives of young people" (Hobbs, 2011d, p. 6). The theme of Student Empowerment show how Media Mindfulness seeks to empower students through valuing students' diverse views; studying media messages students commonly consume; viewing students as peers in the learning process; conducting student-centered instruction; validating their personal values over the media portrayal of such values; teaching

students how to produce their own media messages; empowering students to do something about the social justices issues they have learned through deconstructing media messages. These findings are in accordance with scholars who saw media education as means for Student Empowerment (Buckingham, 2003 & 2007; Morrell et al., 2013; Freire, 1979; Fuxa, 2012; Graveline, 1998; Hobbs, 2011a; Jones, 2002; Kellner, 1995; Masterman, 1985; Mihailidis, 2008; Morrell, 2002; Radford, 2003; Thayer, 2006).

The review of the literature pointed to the need of media literacy training of teachers (Al-Humaidan et al., 2011; Damico, 2004; DeAbreu, 2008; Gainer, 2010; Ian & Temur, 2012; Keller-Raber, 1995; Schmidt, 2012), scholars urged media literacy instruction for students to initiate as early as possible (Al-Humaidan et al., 2011; Flores-Koulis et al., 2011; Ian & Temur, 2012). Several media literacy scholars pointed to the university as the critical setting for the dissemination of media literacy programs to equip teachers (Al-Humaidan et al., 2011; Damico, 2004; DeAbreu, 2008; Gainer, 2010; Ian & Temur, 2012; Keller-Raber, 1995; Kellner & Share, 2005; Kubey, 1998; Schmidt, 2012; Silverblatt; 2001). Hobbs (2004) says that “by and large, schools of education have yet to discover media literacy” (Hobbs, 2004a, p. 56). Concomitantly, Kellner & Share (2005) attested that “teacher training programmes that specifically focus on media education in the USA are few and far between” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 379). Schmidt (2012) defended that “lack of media qualification” and “lack of time for planning and implementation” represent barriers for media literacy integration by faculty. (Schmidt, 2012, p. 16). Keller-Raber (1995) found that successful implementation of media literacy requires funding and administrative, and Hobbs (2004) confirmed that media literacy education in the U.S. still depended at-large on the efforts of individual educators. The media literacy teacher

training program, subject of this study, is an example of such private initiative that answers to the lack of media literacy training in universities. Its model that can be replicated in Catholic schools K-12 Catholic schools, and as Dr. Agatha's case reveal also successfully at the university level. Participants attest that implementing Media Mindfulness has saved them time for class planning, affording them more time for researching adequate media messages to be analyzed in the classroom. The media mindfulness model—beyond catechesis—has been adopted by participants in a variety of disciplines, such as, social studies, history, media studies, psychology, and statistics. Participants attest that administrators' support for them attending the 60-hours training program was a key factor in their decision to enroll, and receiving the grant that allowed them to attend training for free was also determinant.

Participants argued for the inclusion of media education in formal curriculum in order to prepare students to be fully functioning in a heavily media informed society, a perspective shared by Yildiz (2002). Scholars have defended that media literacy education should start early on, and that it should not be a separate discipline, but rather integrated into traditional disciplines (Flores-Koulish et al., 2011; Inan & Temur, 2012; Morrell et al., 2013). Elizabeth's case is such an example, her middle school students have learned about social studies, history, and religion through the Media Mindfulness strategy. Lastly, this study builds upon the work of Hailer & Pacatte (2007) as it explores the dynamics of Media Mindfulness put to practice, offering an open-ended yet structured model through the media mindfulness wheel to aid teachers wanting to implement media education in their practice independent of what subject they teach.

Implications

In regards to the effectiveness of the advanced media literacy training certification provided by the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute in promoting Catholic Social Teaching through media literacy education, this study's findings show the influence—a rather short training program of 60 hours—has over the alumni who were part of this research. All of them attended the training over five years ago, and their practice is still heavily informed by what they learned at the program. Their students use the media mindfulness wheel as a guide to analyze every single media message. Although the media messages themselves are constantly changing, some of the activities learned in the training are still replicated by alumni, such as having students perform content analysis to identify gender biased, and have students identify common company logos, discuss advertising techniques and produce their own ads. A couple pieces of media from the training itself are still used by participants in the classroom, like the short-documentary *Story of Stuff* and the public service announcement *House Hippo*. It is also remarkable to notice how teachers are motivated to implement Media Mindfulness in their practice because they see the influence media has over their students and want students to be critical of how media messages can shape culture. Participants particularly find Media Mindfulness to be useful for Catholic Social Teaching instruction because the media, as Dr. Agatha pointed out, brings to life issues that are otherwise removed from students' daily life, such as, bride burning, and gender-selective abortion.

Regarding the media literacy scholarship, this study registered a grass-roots answer to the lack of teacher training options at the university level, which is discussed by several scholars (Al-Humaidan et al., 2011; Damico, 2004; DeAbreu, 2008; Gainer, 2010; Hobbs, 2004b & 2011;

Ian & Temur, 2012; Keller-Raber, 1995; Kellner & Share, 2005; Kubey, 1998; Schmidt, 2012; Silverblatt, 2001). This movement is fueled by a shared mission among instructors and alumni to “train the trainers.” The program run by the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute is flexible regarding site, it takes place at the Institute as well as at remote locations, such as, Diocesan venues or at schools. It is a cost-effective model to equip teachers in media education, besides sharing basic notions of media education it points trainees to a wealth of resources for them to deepen their understanding of the discipline at their own pace. Study findings also support the successful integration of media literacy instruction with traditional disciplines, which is argued for by several scholars (Inan & Temur, 2012; Flores-Koulish, et al., 2011; Morrell et al., 2013). Accordingly, this study records how the participant teachers integrate media literacy in a variety of disciplines. Abreu (2008) found that integrating media literacy into high school teachers’ practice was a time-consuming task. Concomitantly, this study findings document how the media mindfulness model serves as Media Literacy Teaching Aid for teachers who are pressed for time to implement media education into their practice, the media mindfulness wheel is repeatedly cited by participants as most helpful.

Concerning faith-based education, participants attested that the media mindfulness model is a prolific way to both help form students’ faith and moral Values and equip them with media literacy skills. Teachers reported that Media Mindfulness instruction often leads to students seeking to share their time and talents in Solidarity towards those who are victimized by the social issues learned in class. Further Media Mindfulness offers a model to help theology, religion teachers, and catechists to make their class content more relatable to students, and therefore more relevant to them. It is my hope that by contributing to the body of faith based

media literacy research, this study will raise other researchers' awareness to the fact that every media literacy instruction is heavily shaped by the teacher's own worldview, as this study aims to illustrate by focusing on how faith based media literacy instruction can promote Catholic Social Teaching. Whereas proponents of faith based media literacy are upfront regarding their ideological perspective, media literacy researchers at-large have neglected to take into account the values teachers have reinforced during media literacy instruction as it relates to politics, religious beliefs, and morals, for example. Teachers are able to promote their personal worldview to students as they select the media message to be studied, what questions to be posed, what supporting arguments to be shared, this study registers this issue through the teachers' perspectives. Awareness to the ideological framework adopted during media literacy instruction is as important as media awareness itself as far as students' holistic education is concerned.

The main and unexpected discovery of this study is the realization of the major role the Common Good plays in linking media literacy education to Catholic Social Teaching. When teachers pose questions concerning the Common Good during media literacy instruction, they note students' willingness to not only think critically about the greater good, but also to engage in Solidarity, which reflects what Freire (1967) prescribes when he defends a pedagogy that empowers students to be active agents of social change. Further, teachers report that the media mindfulness model help students voice their personal Values, and promote Student Empowerment alongside with Character Education. Finally, participant teachers are also keen in emphasizing how the media mindfulness model—especially through the use of the media mindfulness wheel—functions as a Media Literacy Teaching Aid providing teachers with a

framework of inquiry that facilitates media literacy instruction through the lenses of Catholic principles. The Media Mindfulness Model (MMM) can be explained as the intersection of traditional media literacy instruction and Catholic values. Its framework for questions is not restricted to religious dogma, but it is Values based as scholars have found with traditional media literacy instruction (Abreu, 2008; Considine, 2004; Silverblatt, 2001), but in the MMM the Values are shaped by the ideal of the Common Good, hence it is a productive model for educating students in Catholic Social Teaching.

Participants attributed to the MMM their consistency in promoting social responsibility when teaching media literacy, because the media mindfulness wheel invites students to ponder: “What difference can I make?” This simple question allows teachers to help students go one step further, beyond asking “Why is this message being sent?” as proposed by Thoman (1997). Students are rather invited to take action. While Media Mindfulness prescribes that students learn how to produce their own media messages, it also empowers students to answer to the media they consume in different ways. Not everyone is a media producer at heart, even skilled media producers are not producing media at all times, certainly not in response to most of the media they consume. Other valid ways—and likely more often occurring—in which media literate students will generally respond to the media they consume may encompass: writing letters to elected officials; cleaning rivers; feeding the hungry; making care packages to undocumented workers. In sum, acting is Solidarity, or even simply engaging others to think more critically about the media they consume, or just praying about a social justice issue learned through media, as Elizabeth proposed. Students are, at the end, educated to be mindful of all the media they consume and produce. The fullness of the data collected reveal that Character

Education, Student Empowerment, Solidarity, and Values are promoted through the MMM, which in itself also serves as Media Literacy Teaching Aid as it facilitates the integration of media education with any discipline. Figure 13 summarizes the main study findings.

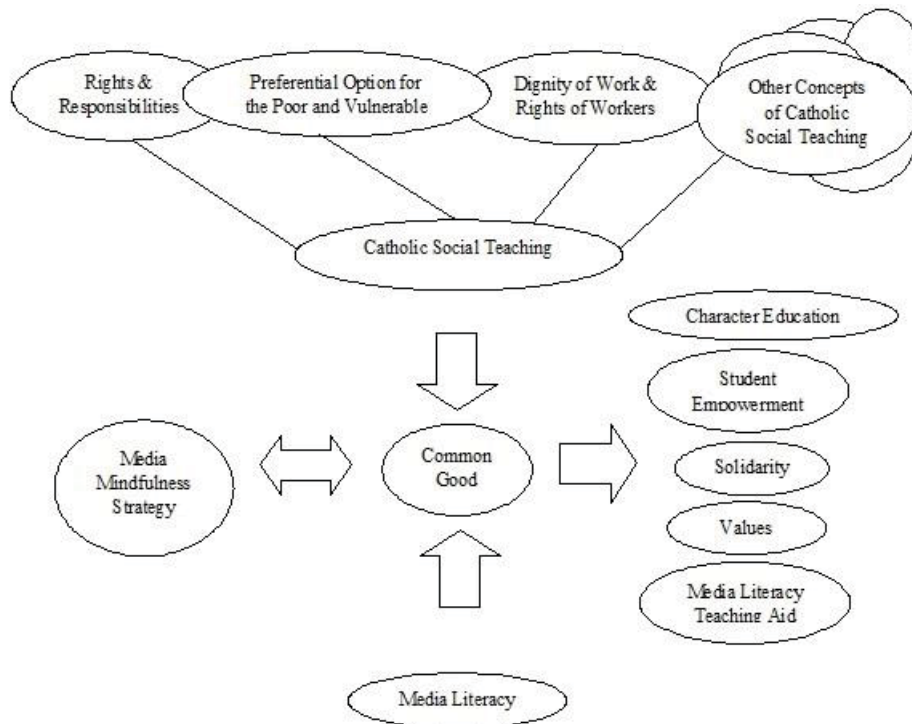


Figure 13. Media Mindfulness Model, 2014, by the researcher.

Recommendations

For the Field of Media Literacy

After analyzing the fullness of the data, my recommendations for the field of media literacy research fall in the categories: students' perceptions, teacher training, and university coursework. A high school case study exploring students' perceptions would be valuable to

better understand how effective the MMM is in learning about Catholic Social Teaching from the students' perspective. I suggest high school students because participants who teach high-school reported the most student-initiated Solidarity engagement, it could be interesting to uncover and record students' motivations. I also suggest an action research at a high school where teachers are trained in Media Mindfulness to find out: a) how the training influenced teachers' confidence in integrating media education into their practice? b) to what extent students' assimilation of Catholic Social Teaching concepts resulted of the teacher training program? c) how training teachers to use the MMM has influenced the school's culture in regards to addressing social justice issues? In addition, a content analysis comparing media produced by students educated through the MMM with media produced by students educated with the traditional five core concepts and five key questions of media literacy, as proposed by Thoman (1997), would be important to find out whether students who learned through the MMM produce media messages that more explicitly promote the Common Good.

All three high school teachers participants in this study taught at all-girls schools, a gender-based Media Mindfulness study would be helpful to understand whether boys and girls respond differently to the media they consume. Further, there are opportunities to conduct qualitative research to find out how useful the Media Mindfulness model is to promote other faith-based content, such as, the Beatitudes and the Commandments. Regarding training at the university level, considering the lack of formal media literacy training in the United States, and how much beneficial to their practice participants have reported media literacy training to be, it is paramount for schools of education to integrate media literacy training into their curricula. Whereas, specializations in media literacy can certainly be both beneficial to the scholarship and

teachers' practice, review of the literature and participants report that adopting media literacy as a strategy to teaching diverse subjects is more widely used and more practical when integrating media literacy in teaching practice, therefore, even offering one course in media literacy as part of a teacher formation program can be useful, and judging by this case study of the Saint Gabriel Media Literacy Institute, it is worth trying. Offering one media literacy course a graduate elective, and as part of an extension program will allow teachers who want to integrate media literacy into their practice, but lack formal training to get up-to-date.

For the Church

Catholic school teachers ought to respond to the Church's calling to Catholic educators' engagement in media education in order to promote the Gospel. As the findings of this study show, the MMM should help in this task. Those teachers who face the dilemma of making heavy Catholic doctrine content resonate with students may find in the MMM a prolific strategy for connecting the media students consume with Catholic teaching, therefore helping students to more easily identify with the class content and to make it all the more relevant in their lives. Participant teachers reported that their students are very fond of the intersection of God and media, and through Media Mindfulness have engaged in a meaning making process that culminated with their spontaneous service to the poor and vulnerable.

Catholic school administrators must make it their duty to promote media literacy training for teachers and parents alike. Teachers cannot be expected to efficiently integrate media literacy into their practice if they do not possess a technical understanding of the media industry, media formats, media production, media criticism, and how it all comes together in helping leverage the disciplines they teach. It is also paramount that the cost for this training be

subsidized. Parents may find a working knowledge of media literacy education helpful with children at home. Moreover, policymakers can play vital role in the promotion of the media education the Church envisions by making it an integral part of educational standards in Catholic schools, and making sure that the proper funding is secured for teacher training in media literacy education.

Recalling the words of John Paul II (1992), "Much that men and women know and think about life is conditioned by the media; to a considerable extent, human experience itself is an experience of media" (para. 2), therefore, dioceses and congregations must make media education an essential part of the formation of priests and religious women and men. These organizations can also benefit from training their members who already completed formation because in the media shaped world we live today, media literacy skills are needed for pastoral work. Ongoing media literacy education should also be present in parish life. Laypeople, catechist, and ministers in general need media literacy education in order to both respond with a Catholic perspective to mainstream media messages that consumed by the flock, and to produce media messages that advance the Gospel.

Final Considerations

Finally, I would like to share my take on my personal experience as the researcher in this case study, undergoing media literacy training, and learning from the program alumni how the training has influenced their practice. There is always something to be learned if one has the right disposition, but I must admit, while I thought that here and there during the training I could benefit and appreciate an ah-ha moment, or a new insight as media messages were deconstructed, I went into training not really expecting to learning anything new. I thought 'It will be a good

refresher.’ I was wrong. As the media mindfulness model unfold itself through lectures, interviews, and data cross-analysis, and as my own understanding was shaped to what it means to teachers, Catholic education, and more importantly for students, I was gladly surprised, and truly overjoyed by the whole experience. Participants shared with me that learning about media mindfulness was a life-changing experience for them, it certainly changed me as well. It has opened to me a world of possibilities as I think about how to use the MMM to disseminate media literacy education among teachers, educators, catechists, especially in my native Brazil and in my beloved Latin America. I am particularly intrigued by students reportedly fascination with the intersection of media and faith values, and I plan to investigate that further. Pierre said that media literacy cannot be reserved for a select group, I want to reiterate that and go further to state that it needs to be common knowledge, if students ought to have the necessary skills to engage media critically. If—as the literature says and as this study found—media literacy matters for students’ self-identity, for their health, for their consciousness, for their political and civil participation, for advancing the common good, then teachers need to be media literate.

APPENDIX A

Participant Invitation Letter

Date, 2013

From: Rosalia Tenorio - Researcher
Professor Mary McCullough, PhD – Research Director
Loyola Marymount University

Dear Educator,

I'm a doctoral student at Loyola Marymount University's School of Education and am conducting a dissertation research entitled: A Case Study on Perceptions of How Teacher Training in Media Literacy Influences Catholic Social Justice Teaching. The purpose of the research is to attain a better understanding of how media literacy training can promote Catholic Social Teaching, how trainees' perceptions of both media literacy and Catholic Social Teaching, and the link between the two, were influenced by a 60-hour training program designed for teachers and catechists. The findings of the study will hopefully shed light on the value of teacher training in media literacy so as to advance Catholic Social Teaching in the school setting.

Students and alumni of a Diocesan Certification in Media Literacy Education are being invited to serve as volunteer participants in this study. Please notice that participation is voluntary. Participants' identity, as well as the identity of any organization mentioned by participants will be kept confidential at all times. Participants will be interviewed about media literacy training, media literacy in their practice, and the link with Catholic Social Teaching. Participants are free to withdraw from the study at anytime without any prejudice. Participants will not receive any financial compensation for participating in the study. If you would like to speak with me about this inquiry please feel free to call me at anytime: (310) 909-6727. If you have any concerns regarding this study please feel free to contact Professor Mary McCullough, PhD (Mary.McCullough@lmu.edu), director of this research.

Rosalia Tenorio
Loyola Marymount University, Doctoral Student
310-909-6727
tenoriorose@yahoo.com

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent Form

Date of Preparation June 28, 2013

Loyola Marymount University

A Study on Perceptions of How Teacher Training in Media Literacy Influences Catholic Social Justice Teaching

- 1) I hereby authorize Maria Rosalia Tenorio de Azevedo, a doctoral student at the Loyola Marymount University, to include me in the following research study: A Study on Perceptions of How Teacher Training in Media Literacy Influences Catholic Social Justice Teaching.
- 2) I have been asked to participate on a research project which is designed to shed light on the value of teacher training in media literacy in order to advance Catholic Social Teaching in the school setting, and which will last for approximately three months.
- 3) It has been explained to me that the reason for my inclusion in this project is because of my training in media literacy.
- 4) I understand that if I am a subject, I will be interviewed.
- 5) The investigator(s) may include some of my answers in the study.
- 6) These procedures have been explained to me by Maria Rosalia Tenorio de Azevedo, a doctoral student at the Loyola Marymount University,
- 7) I understand that I will be audiotaped in the process of these research procedures. It has been explained to me that these tapes will be used for teaching and/or research purposes only and that my identity will not be disclosed. I have been assured that the tapes will be destroyed after their use in this research project is completed. I understand that I have the right to review the tapes made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or in part.

- 8) I understand that the study described above may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: nervousness to answering questions in the process of being interviewed.
- 9) I also understand that the possible benefit of the study is helping the student shed light on the value of teacher training in media literacy in order to advance Catholic Social Teaching through my answers,
- 10) I understand that Professor Mary McCullough, PhD, who can be reached at (310) 338-7312, or mmccullo@lmu.edu, will answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study.
- 11) If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.
- 12) I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time without prejudice to me.
- 13) I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study.
- 14) I understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent except as specifically required by law.
- 15) I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question that I may not wish to answer.
- 16) I understand that I will receive no financial compensation for my participation in this study;
- 17) I understand that in the event of research related injury, compensation and medical treatment are not provided by Loyola Marymount University.
- 18) I understand that if I have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact David Hardy, Ph.D. Chair, Institutional Review Board, 1 LMU Drive, Suite 3000, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA 90045-2659 (310) 258-5465, david.hardy@lmu.edu.
- 19) In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights".

Subject's Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C

Initial Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Educational Leader

- a) To what extent has Catholic Social Teaching informed the media literacy certification program you lead?
- b) How would media literacy instruction help promote the Catholic Social Teaching themes of: a) rights and responsibilities; b) option for the poor and vulnerable; and c) the dignity of work and the rights of workers?
- c) How would you describe the link between media literacy and the three Catholic Social Teaching themes cited?

Interview Questions for Teachers in Training

- a) How would you define media literacy?
- b) How would you define the Catholic Social Teaching themes of: a) rights and responsibilities; b) option for the poor and vulnerable; and c) the dignity of work and the rights of workers?
- c) How would you describe the link between media literacy and the three Catholic Social Teaching themes cited?

Interview Questions for Program Alumnus

- a) How would you describe the link between media literacy and the Catholic Social Teaching themes of: a) rights and responsibilities; b) option for the poor and vulnerable; and c) the dignity of work and the rights of workers?
- b) How has media literacy training influenced your practice?
- c) To what extent has media literacy training helped you promote Catholic Social Teaching in your practice?

APPENDIX D

Observation Protocol

Field Notes	Freirean Pedagogy	CST	Comments
<p>First: What are your values? (Keep these in mind...)</p> <p>The world is only 21 years old.</p> <p>In-class questions:</p> <p>-What is globalization and how has this process impacted world ecology and therefore social justice and culture?</p> <p>-What is culture, how is it transmitted and what does this have to do with social justice?</p> <p>-How has Hollywood contributed to globalization?</p> <p>-What commentary do the principles of Catholic Social Teaching offer and what response can media literacy provide</p>	<p>2-Student proposed topic of discussion</p> <p>First: What are your values?</p> <p>Class Discussion</p> <p>3-Direct connection to the social context</p> <p>2-Inquiry-based model</p> <p>The world is only 21 years old</p> <p>-What is culture, how is it transmitted and what does this have to do with globalization and social justice?</p> <p>-How has Hollywood contributed to globalization?</p> <p>-What commentary do the principles of Catholic Social Teaching offer about globalization?</p> <p>-What response can media literacy provide</p>	<p>Rights and responsibilities</p> <p>-The call to see charity and truth in the pursuit of justice, the common good, and authentic human development</p> <p>-Pope on out the responsibilities and limitations of government and the private market, challenges traditional ideologies of right and left, and calls all men and women to think and act anew.</p> <p>-Discussion about Christian anthropology</p> <p>Principles of CST</p> <p>-Films that question the negative aspects of globalization (and thus show the positive)</p>	<p>-Principles of ML</p> <p>-Principles of CST</p> <p>-The topic can direct the conversation (or the characters and their actions)</p> <p>Values:</p> <p>-Identify values</p> <p>-Articulate values</p> <p>-Deep viewing (Gospel parallels)</p> <p>-Dialogue</p> <p>Two levels for deep viewing:</p> <p>-What’s going on in the film?</p> <p>-What’s going on in my (our) life?</p>

<p>in a world that is “just ten years old”?</p> <p>-What can these issues mean as we look at film studies and the faith community?</p> <p>-The call to see charity and truth in the pursuit of justice, the common good, and authentic human development</p> <p>-Pope on out the responsibilities and limitations of government and the private market, challenges traditional ideologies of right and left, and calls us to think and act anew.</p>	<p>in a world that is “just ten years old”?</p> <p>-What is your view of the human person?</p> <p>-Do you trust people to use their abilities (as you are able to do?)</p> <p>1-Student as active agents</p> <p>-Do you want to take care of people or enable them to think for themselves and choose wisely?</p> <p>-What did Jesus do? What was Jesus’ view of the human person?</p> <p>- Everyone sees things through their own lenses (Empowerment)</p>	<p>- Saint Ambrose: "You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his. For what has been given in common for the use of all, you have arrogated to yourself. The world is given to all, and not only to the rich.”</p> <p>2-Option Poor</p> <p>Relationship with God and others</p> <p>How movies can help us dialogue with the Gospels to discover values.</p>	
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Freirean pedagogy:

- 1- Reflecting on students' ontological vocation to be active agents (Freire, 1967).
- 2- Student proposed topic of discussion and problem-solving dialogue practice (Freire, 1970).
- 3- Direct connection to the social context of the student (Freire, 1979).

Catholic Social Teaching theme:

- 1 - Rights and responsibilities
- 2 - Option for the poor and vulnerable
- 3 - The dignity of work and the rights of workers

APPENDIX E

Journal Entry

July 7 2013, Sunday, Day 1

The media literacy certification program started on a Sunday afternoon. I was at first put off by having to attend a class on a Sunday, I don't like to do nothing on Sundays. I do my best to make it my rest day, a religious observance. I'm Catholic. On my hour long drive to the training center I was asking myself "Why in the world would these nuns have anything on a Sunday, don't they know we are supposed to take the day off?" Well, I got there a few minutes early, people started arriving one by one. The class was small – 4 students total – the setting was very welcoming, lively, clean, peaceful, organized and functional, good lighting, , perfect room temperature. It's so hot out! Catholic icons everywhere, hanging from the walls, of the top of furniture. I felt home. The Sisters I already knew, and the students were very friendly. As the afternoon went on I came to learn that they were very interesting people too.

The classroom was setup for a media class big screen, sound system, on the floor under each desk there were two power outlets, which students use to keep their laptops powered all day. Free wi-Fi was also available. The point of the first day was to meet and greet, get acquainted with the location, the program, each other, and what lay ahead for the week long training. We were each given a flash drive with content to be used during the upcoming classes, we each also received a bag of goodies with two books on catechesis through media, a notebook, and pen, markers, a fridge magnets with a media literacy graph, a brochure for a faith based film production company. We had a quick tour of the building, getting to know facilities, the chapel, the conference room, the store, kitchen area, restrooms, patios, additional parking space, back entrance, password for locked doors, we were also shown fire exits.

Although we were having professional training on a Sunday, the program was started with a beautiful prayer. It reminded me that the Sunday is made for men and not men for the

Sunday (insert scripture here). We went on to briefly introduce ourselves. A lecture on an introduction to media literacy followed, then we went on and answered in the group a 14 questions questionnaire about our personal media consumption habits. It was emailed to us the week before we were supposed to answer and bring a hard copy in, which we all did, but the lecturer wanted also to comment the questionnaire, so we all answered it together questions like how much radio/tv/Internet we consume, preferred genres in different media types, and critical consumptions questions like whether the media impacts personal action, and have I questioned the media content I consume in light of my Catholic values.

We were given assignments: To journal logging in all media we consumed during the week of the training, outside of training activities, and to read one chapter of one of the books. An additional book was also given to us.

We wrapped out the day with a shared pizza dinner.

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APPENDIX F

Class Plans

Pre Kindergarten through Third Lesson Plans

Objective: Students will watch the opening sequence of “Toy Story” and determine what the message is and how it is relevant to their lives and the gospel message.

Application: Make sure each of your students have a Media Mindfulness Wheel or have one visible for the whole class. Ask your students questions from the Media Mindfulness Wheel. Have visible bible passages about friendship. After you have shown the clip ask the students the appropriate questions for their grade level from the wheel. Additional questions can be some of the following:

- PreK - K: What images did you see? Do you have a special toy like (the boy) Andy? Did the boy look like he was happy? Why?
- 1st – 3rd: What images did you see? What was Andy (the boy) doing? What was the family celebrating? Tell me about one of your birthdays. Did the boy look happy? What was he doing? What is a friend? Can you remember any of the lyrics from the song? What do they say about friendship? How can you relate this to the message from the gospels about friendship?

Fourth through Sixth Grade Lesson Plans

Objective: Students will watch a *YouTube* video called the “North American House Hippo” and determine what the message is and how it is relevant to their lives.

Application: Make sure your students have an individual Media Mindfulness Wheel or one is visible on the overhead. Ask the students questions from the wheel as well as other appropriate questions regarding the video they have just seen.

- 4th Grade: What images do you see? Is there really such an animal as the North American House Hippo? What is this message about?
- 5th-6th: What images do you see? What kind of effects does the video use to grab you attention? Who is this message for? It is trying to sell something? What is the real message?

Seventh & Eighth Grade Lesson Plans

Objective: Students will find ads from magazines that reflect on who these ads were meant.

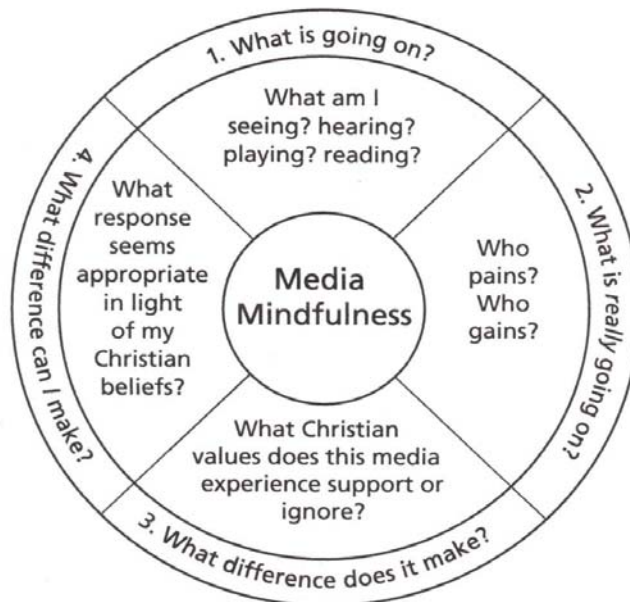
Application: Students cut out ads from magazines and share the ads with their peers pull to find out who the ads are really targeting.

- Using the Media Mindfulness Wheel: Ask the students the appropriate questions for their grade level
- 7th-8th: Students will look at an ad and circle points that the company is using to grab the attention of the viewer. Students will ask themselves the questions on the wheel. Students will then view the video “Story of Stuff.” A great video about where “stuff” comes from and where it goes when we through it away. Reviewing the video the students will look closer at our Christian values and determine our viable wants and needs.

This chart is taken from the book: *Media Mindfulness/Our Media World* Sr. Grethen Hailer and Sr. Rose Pacatte 2007/2010 Saint Mary’s Press/Pauline Press

MeDia MINDFULNESS

The following is a simple strategy for media awareness, called media mindfulness. Note that the strategy involves four questions that appear quite simple—but whose answers are sometimes (like life) complex.



APPENDIX G

Coding System

Node Excerpt: Poor

Reference 1 - 0.02% Coverage

to take care of the poor and the marginalized” Catholic social

Reference 2 - 0.02% Coverage

how the media alienates the poor. Pierre currently teaches Theology, and

Reference 3 - 0.01% Coverage

to be stewards of the poor.” She recognizes that the media

Reference 4 - 0.02% Coverage

to speak for them? The poor don’t have the opportunities for

Reference 5 - 0.02% Coverage

help them understand that the poor is not a faceless person

Reference 6 - 0.02% Coverage

continue Jesus’ work with the poor? How do you continue it

Reference 7 - 0.02% Coverage

do they say about the poor? All of you’ve gotta think

Reference 8 - 0.02% Coverage

Responsibilities, and Preference for the Poor and Vulnerable in her psychology

Reference 9 - 0.02% Coverage

of arousing empathy for the poor and vulnerable just as easily

Reference 10 - 0.02% Coverage

class. You don’t see the poor depicted. You don’t hear about

Reference 11 - 0.02% Coverage

advocating for the poor and vulnerable, and those who

Reference 12 - 0.01% Coverage

different social issues of the poor.” Nonetheless, she says teachers must

Reference 13 - 0.01% Coverage

of reaching out to the poor. We have an obligation to

APPENDIX H

Media Autobiography

Please complete this now and bring this with you on the first day of the Basic Certificate Course in Media Literacy.

- What is the first television show you remember?
- What is the first movie you saw in a theater? How old were you?
- What are the last three movies you saw in a theater? Why did you choose these three?
- What were the last three DVD's or movies you watched on television? Why did you choose these?
- List the TV shows (other than sports) you watch most often? Why do you watch these shows?
- Do you watch sports? Which ones? Why?
- How much time each week do you spend watching sports? How much time each week playing sports?
- What TV stations do you prefer and why?
- Do you listen to the radio? What shows/music do you listen to and why?

- How do you normally spend your leisure time?
- How do you spend leisure time as a family? When alone? Why?
- Do you feel guilty when you relax using the media? Why or why not?
- What are your sources for information? How frequently do you use them?
- List the last three books you read: note if they were fiction or non-fiction; for leisure or work.
- Take a tour of your house and vehicle in your head. How many TV's do you have? Where are they? How many radios/CD players do you have in the house? In the car?
- How many DVD/video players do you have in your home or car?
- List all the places in your house where there are reading materials.
- How many telephones are in the house? How many cell phones in the household? How many computers?
- List all the rooms that have a computer (include laptops and who owns them).

- How many CD/iPods/MP3 players do you have in your home? Car? Portables?

- Which of these do you do daily?
 - Watch TV
 - Listen to the radio
 - Listen to other devices
 - Watch movies on TV or DVD
 - Email
 - Online activity

- How much time do you spend weekly on...
 - Watching TV
 - Listening to radio
 - Listening to other devices
 - Watching movie on TV or DVD
 - Reading anything
 - Email
 - Online activity

- How old were you when you began thinking about your faith in relationship to the media?

- How do you approach media with your own children? Why?

- Do you think about God when you are watching a movie? Why or why not?

- What do you think the Church's official attitude is toward the media? Explain.

- Why did you sign up for this course?

Circle the Best Answer

1. The main goal of an advertisement or commercial is to
 - Entertain
 - Sell
 - Teach
 - Make you laugh

2. Photographs always show people and things just the way they are in real life:
 - True
 - False

3. The newspaper, TV and radio news tell us...
 - Only the truth
 - Only lies
 - Only some of the information
 - Everything we need to know

4. The music that might play behind fire scenes in videos
 - Gets my attention
 - Can play on my emotions
 - Adds another element to my experience of the fire depictions
 - All of the above.

5. It is important to ask questions about what advertising tells us because
 - Advertising makes us do things
 - Advertising is bad
 - Asking questions helps us make better choices
 - It seems like the right thing to say but I don't really know

6. Which is the best question to ask after seeing a message that dramatizes a fire incident?
 - Where can I find this fire?
 - Who caused this fire?
 - Why was this message sent?

7. Everyone likes the same ads that I like
 - True
 - False

8. Television programs might seem to be free but who ultimately pays for them?
 - Consumers
 - TV networks
 - Advertisers

9. It is important to consider who created the advertising message in order to...

Know who to blame

Find the bias that always exists

Find out who created the music on the commercial

10. Violent media stories and messages cause violent behavior

True

False

11. The media impact people and culture

True

False

12. The media always evoke an emotional response

True

False

13. The media are expressions of power

True

False

List five of your expectations of this course:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

APPENDIX I

Syllabus

Media Literacy Education Introduction, Theory & Praxis

Media Mindfulness Education develops an understanding of the power of media and how they influence our lives. This course will introduce you to the basic theory and practice of media literacy:

- You'll learn how to develop critical thinking through analysis of media messages – both print and electronic.
- You'll be introduced to the key questions and core concepts of media literacy, a strategy for media mindfulness, and a wide variety of media literacy resources.
- You'll learn practical media literacy exercises and basic skills for low-cost media productions.
- You'll draw up a practical plan for integrating media literacy into your school curriculum or parish religious education program.
- You'll explore how children and adult learn about media and the elements that contribute to our attitudes about information and entertainment media;
- You'll study/review/compare educational philosophy and theory;
- You'll deepen the content of media literacy education/media mindfulness and its pedagogy and praxis;
- You'll discover the teaching of the Church about media literacy/media mindfulness and see the connection with Catholic Social Teaching, culture, media and communications;
- You'll learn about and experience the emerging fields of theology and spirituality of communication.

Pre-requisite: catechetical certification or equivalent

COURSE GOALS:

- To explore the relationship between communication, media, and culture
- To understand visual and electronic information and entertainment media and their influence on our beliefs, values, and lifestyle
- To expand critical thinking skills in relation to all forms of media, including print and electronic media messages, from cinema to the Internet
- To introduce students to a wide range of media education resources
- To develop the skills necessary and to design a media literacy program for the student's own constituency (preferably other teachers and or parents). To consider how children, adolescents and adults learn from the media and how adults “think” children learn from the media and how we form our attitudes about information and entertainment media (popular culture)
- To survey educational philosophy and theory, and the Catholic philosophy of education in order to provide serving teachers and catechists with a rationale for incorporating media literacy into and across the curriculum;

- To examine the content of media literacy and media studies within a communications framework and how to integrate media literacy education into and across the curriculum
- To explore media literacy education pedagogy (teaching styles and methods) and praxis (skills) in order to further develop or design existing media literacy programs or projects that students will bring with them
- To identify the interface between the Church and communication, communication theology and spirituality and media literacy education.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Recognize the influence of entertainment and information media on children, teens, parents, and society
- Explain the key questions and core concepts of media literacy
- Provide a rationale for integrating media literacy across the curriculum (catechetical and/or general instruction)
- Learn and apply the strategy for media mindfulness
- Recognize, value, appreciate the language of media in a range of formats including both print and electronic media and be able to apply the language to creative projects
- Evaluate and critically analyze the form and content of advertising production and audience response as well as the function of advertising in the economy
- Assess popular culture and how it functions in society
- Develop ways to teach media mindfulness using low cost techniques
- Understand the role of media to influence attitudes and behavior
- Grasp how media representations of the human person (race, gender, age, social status, religion) influence and shape culture
- Articulate a rationale for media literacy/media mindfulness that reflects the student's ownership of these skills for 21st century living and believing
- Understand how to use various forms of media production to teach media literacy/media mindfulness
- Outline a plan for integrating media literacy into the courses they are currently teaching
- Create a presentation (with follow-up) to introduce other teachers to media literacy/media mindfulness
- Understand some dimensions of how we learn from information and entertainment media and how and why we form attitudes about them
- Articulate the theory and practice of media literacy that integrates a Catholic philosophy of education
- Further develop and apply critical thinking skills in relation to a variety of media forms (print, film, television, music, advertising, popular culture, Internet), messages and institutions
- Examine and incorporate media literacy pedagogy and praxis in and across the curriculum, with a focus on religious education
- Understand media literacy as content, process, pedagogy and praxis within the context of communication

- Recognize, value, appreciate and apply contemporary Church teaching and literature about media, media literacy, culture and the theology and spirituality of communication
- Evaluate, upgrade or design a media literacy project, program or syllabus, to train teachers and parents

STUDENT MUST COMPLETE ALL STUDENT EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER TEACHER CERTIFICATE

- Attendance at all classes
- Participation in class dialogue, conversation, and activities
- Demonstrate the integration and application of class material and activities to the individual's current teaching responsibilities (PowerPoint or other electronic presentation); to be submitted electronically or by mail
- Maintain a media diary throughout the week (journal provided)
- Completion of screening program (one program each day of the course; 1 film if possible; journal or oral analysis)

REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. **Media Mindfulness: Education Teens about Media and Faith** , St. Mary's Press, Winona, MN (provided)
2. **Ethics in Advertising; Ethics in Internet; Ethics in Communication; Film Makers and Film Viewers: their Challenges and Opportunities** Pauline Books & Media (provided)
3. **Course booklet with readings** (provided)Media, Boston (provided)
National Directory for Catechesis (2005): sections on media; (not provided)

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