CONNECT!ONS Med!aLit moments

| Consortium for Media Literacy | Volume No. 53 | August 2013 |

In This Issue…

Theme: The Importance of Frameworks for Inquiry

We live in a world defined by frameworks. They provide criteria for judgment and decision making in our every day lives. Examples of durable frameworks of this type include the Benjamin Graham Portfolio as a framework for stock market investing, the Twelve Steps as a framework for recovery, the Ten Commandments as a framework for moral behavior. The Bill of Rights clearly functions as a framework for judgment and decision making.   Using these frameworks can be a simple task, or intricately complex.

CML's framework of Key Questions and Core Concepts of media literacy is a tool for structuring exploration of any content through questioning (Shields and Tajalli, "Intermediate Theory"). It helps users extend and sharpen their thinking and provides guiding principles for decision making. The Empowerment Spiral of Awareness, Analysis, Reflection and Action is also a part of CML's framework for media literacy. In applying these ideas, for example, a film goer who had never seen the framework might ask, "Why was the movie so gory?" With the aid of the CML framework, that same audience member might ask, "Were the producers using the gory scenes to target a particular audience, and, upon reflection, is this what I want to watch?"

In this issue of *Connections*, we justify the use of a framework for media literacy education by defining and describing what conceptual frameworks are; by providing examples of frameworks which are indispensable to us, and by highlighting their advantages and demonstrating their versatility. In our first research essay, we focus on the use of frameworks as tools for judgment and decision making, and show how they embody key principles of media literacy education. In our second essay, we discuss the traditional use of a conceptual framework as a powerful tool for scientific research. In our resources section, we present a brief report by a guest author on the current status and prospects for media literacy education in an unnamed European State, and invite you to guess the State which the report describes. And in our MediaLit Moment, your middle school students will have a chance to 'lift the veil' on the construction of media by examining how magazine covers are customized for audiences in different locations.

Frameworks for Judgment and Decision Making

One way to illuminate the flexibility of conceptual frameworks is to classify them along a continuum of research purposes:

- Working Hypothesis – A statement of expected outcomes which can be used for wide-ranging exploration of a topic.
- Categories – When confronted with an entirely new problem or question, provisional classification can be essential for understanding.
- Formal Hypothesis – Used to explain phenomena or predict outcomes.
- Practical Ideal Type – Used to develop criteria for judgment. A typical research question might be phrased, "How close is this process/policy to an ideal standard?"
- Models of Operations Research – Used for high stakes decision making. A typical research question might be phrased, "Which project should be built?"

(Adapted from Shields and Tajalli, "Intermediate Theory" 317 ff.).

The CML framework, Questions/QTIPS, can easily be used across most of the purposes listed above. At least one research study has approached the framework as a theoretical model for instruction, and utilized a formal hypothesis to determine its effectiveness. Students and teachers using the framework tend to use a working hypothesis to extend their examination of specific media texts. The December 2012 issue of *Connections* used the framework to explicate our "criteria for media literacy instruction," and our Media Literacy Trilogy demonstrates how the framework can be used to make curriculum choices, especially for media construction and de-construction.

Regardless of whether frameworks are used for research or for classroom practice, their use always entails some sort of risk. Contradictory evidence can upend the most carefully constructed theoretical framework. But, of course, research is an iterative process in which the researcher revises her theory in an attempt to arrive at a successively more accurate approximation of reality. In discussing student research projects utilizing a classificatory framework, Shields observes, "the explicit challenge of inventing a descriptive framework requires a degree of intellectual independence that can make students uncomfortable" (323). In the field of media literacy education, critical autonomy is a primary goal. Careful evaluation can lead to media choices which are still inappropriate or disappointing (for students, teachers and parents alike!), but the practice and development of reasoned judgment holds a greater value. It's something that a well-constructed conceptual framework implicitly encourages.

The use of conceptual frameworks to develop reasoned judgment also explains the importance of the term "process skills." At several points in *Reason and Rigor*, Ravitch and Riggan stress that a conceptual framework is not a product, but a process. For example, a literature review should not simply summarize the literature, or simply propose a theory, but

create a dialogue between the researcher--with all his motivations and purposes--and other authors who have addressed the topic--who have interests and commitments of their own. Project-based learning frameworks in K-12 schools are designed to enhance this dialogue. While projects begin with student interests, students are given opportunities to understand and consider the interests and perspectives of community members and other researchers in the field.

Finally, it's worth noting how a framework used as a tool for inquiry can transform the inquirer. In an academic setting Shields and Tajalli, both professors of public administration, were highly satisfied with the outcomes for graduate students who learned how to construct conceptual frameworks for research: "They see things differently, and ask different questions during meetings. . .Their colleagues say, 'You have changed.' The transformation of inquiry goes beyond the immediate task at hand and helps to create different, more capable professionals" (331).

Frameworks for Research

In several issues of *Connections*, we've noted the distinction between information and knowledge. Information online may be plentiful, but schools rarely teach the intellectual strategies needed to analyze and evaluate that information against acceptable criteria.

In a similar vein, information should be distinguished from data. Frederick Erickson, a distinguished social science researcher, explains this way: "For some years now, as I teach participant observation research. . .I've been saying that field notes, your stack of field notes aren't data; they're an information source, and you discover data in them by linking pieces of a research question, or an assertion you want to make" (Ravitch and Riggan, *Reason and Rigor*, 157).

A theory is needed to create data from all the information which is gathered. Drawing from John Dewey's philosophy of science, Patricia Shields and Hassan Tajalli focus attention on the role of the researcher in constructing a theory, and argue that a theory is not so much a statement of truth as a *tool* which the researcher uses to *structure inquiry* about a question or problem ("Intermediate Theory," 314, emphasis added).

In *Reason and Rigor: How Conceptual Frameworks Guide Research,* Sharon Ravitch and Matthew Riggan define a conceptual framework as "an argument about why the topic one wishes to study matters, and why the means proposed to study it are appropriate and rigorous. By *argument*, we mean that a conceptual framework is a series of sequenced, logical propositions the purpose of which is to convince the reader of the study's importance and rigor. . .by *appropriate and rigorous*, we mean that a conceptual framework should argue convincingly that 1) the research questions are an outgrowth of the argument for relevance; 2) the information to be collected provide the researcher with the raw material needed to

explore the research question; and 3) the analytic approach allows the researcher to effectively respond to (if not always answer) those questions" (7).

The CML framework meets these criteria. The argument of the framework might be phrased this way: "All media are constructed, and recognizing the way in which media are constructed is a key literacy skill." The Core Concepts are a series of sequenced, logical propositions which argue how the construction of media texts can be recognized. Because they are framed as a series of sequenced, inter-related and logical propositions, their validity can be measured--as opposed to other theories of literacy which lack such a framework. Validation requires evidence that teachers and students who have practiced with the framework have demonstrated an increased awareness of the constructed nature of media. Fortunately, peer-reviewed research is showing that this is the case, particularly with violent media texts. Finally, because the framework can be used to standardize methods of instruction, the validity of the framework can be reliably tested among different populations. A unique facet of the CML framework is that teachers and students may be considered researchers in their own right. In their second chapter, Ravitch and Riggan assert that researchers who examine their own motivations, expectations and biases heighten the effectiveness of a conceptual framework. The Empowerment Spiral, which focuses attention on the inquirer, encourages teachers and students to ask the same kinds of questions of themselves. And when analysis is complete, they're encouraged to ask, why does it matter? Asking that question is likely to spur more nuanced research. Furthermore, the framework serves as a theory which structures inquiry for the students and teachers who use it, and implicitly defines the methods to be used, namely, an exploration of the relationships between producers, texts and audiences. Of course, *Literacy for the 21st Century* and other CML texts also elucidate the connections between theory and method in detail.

One of the greatest advantages of a conceptual framework is its flexibility. For a formal research proposal, a conceptual framework is used to organize the ocean of information available in the literature on the topic, ensuring that discussion of the existing literature is directly relevant to the questions for research. From there, the framework is used to structure the methods by which data will be collected and measured. On a "local" level, the framework can be applied to specific cases, or used to make specific policy recommendations. The CML framework exhibits the same flexibility of scale. Critical media literacy and other sub-fields of media studies would be impossible without the theory of media construction. In the classroom, the theory of media construction lies behind individual practices such as close analysis. As students learn the difference between description and interpretation, they learn how they are actively re-constructing the text.

Media literacy education is a promising approach to mitigating negative effects of media use…

Longitudinal Study Published in *Injury Prevention* supports media literacy education for adolescents

Evaluation of a school-based violence prevention media literacy curriculum was published by Kathryn R. Fingar and Tessa Jolls in *Injury Prevention*, online August 2013. The purpose of the study was to evaluate whether *Beyond Blame*, a violence prevention media literacy curriculum, is associated with improved knowledge, beliefs and behaviors related to media use and aggression and to determine the effectiveness of CML's approach and framework for media literacy education.

The study, conducted by the Southern California Injury Prevention Research Center at UCLA, assessed the effectiveness of CML's curriculum *Beyond Blame: Challenging Violence in the Media* throughout schools in Southern California from 2007-2008. The study followed middle school students from one academic year to the next assessing their ability to recognize and evaluate violence in media along with changes in their behavior towards violent media. Read the study here.

CONSORTIUM for MEDIA LITERACY

Uniting for Development

www.consortiumformedialiteracy.org

About Us...
The Consortium for Media Literacy addresses the role of global media through the advocacy, research and design of media literacy education for youth, educators and parents. The Consortium focuses on K-12 grade youth and their parents and communities. The research efforts include nutrition and health education, body image/sexuality, safety and responsibility in media by consumers and creators of products.
The Consortium is building a body of research, interventions and communication that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth.

Resources for Media Literacy

Study on Media Literacy in Country X

CML recently received this report which expresses, from a policy perspective, the current state of media literacy education in a different country. Our observation is that this report – while an important undertaking in its own context – reflects the state of media literacy education in MANY places. This report is set in a European country, we have put in blanks to see if our idea about interchangeability holds true. What do you think?

On 8th September, the United Nations' International Literacy Day, a study on media literacy will be presented in a major city in our country. Media literacy is becoming an increasingly important topic in our region of Europe, and this is the first publication dealing with media literacy here.

The publication provides insight into the modern concept of media literacy, analyzes environmental factors that influence its development in [country X], and identifies actors who, with proposed measures, can help improve the media literacy skills of its citizens.

The author starts with the presumption that media literacy competency of individuals is greatly affected by surrounding environmental factors, such as media education, how media literacy is represented in media policy, how the media industry and civil society promote media literacy, and accessibility to media. This study suggests that the environment in [country X] provides some stimuli for the development of media literacy, but also dampens its development, especially in the fields of media education and media accessibility. Media literacy is not given adequate attention, neither in public nor in media education or media policy. The concept of media literacy itself is interpreted differently here, even among media professionals and NGO activists who actively promote it. Academic articles and publications on the subject are rare, and comprehensive research on media literacy does not exist.

Media education as education *about* media can be found as Media Culture in elementary and secondary educational curricula, under the subjects of native language and literature in primary schools, and democracy and human rights in secondary schools. However, the overall presence of media education in our educational system is unsatisfactory in both quality and quantity. This study shows that media education in [country X] focuses on traditional media and does not reflect the development of new media and ICTs. Training in media education is not mandatory for teachers, and teaching tools for media education/literacy are either unavailable or unknown to teachers. Media education is not a priority, nor is it given sufficient attention in education strategies. Given its importance for the development of media literacy, this study suggests that media education needs to be thoroughly adjusted to the modern needs of both students and teachers in [country X].

Analysis of media policy as a factor which influences media literacy shows that currently media

literacy is explicitly mentioned in only one legal document, the *Broadcast Sector Policy*, and it is not set as a strategic objective in the field of information, media and communications. Nevertheless, within our laws and subordinate regulations, a solid foundation for media literacy development has been already laid, primarily through the establishment of a modern regulatory authority - Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA) - as well as through a modern regulatory framework harmonized with European standards. The CRA is continuously active in media literacy development and collaborates with other actors in the field. The Press Council in [country X], a self-regulatory body for print and online media, has also contributed to a positive environment for the development of media literacy. However, in order to achieve long-lasting results and to be able to assess media literacy levels of [country X] citizens, media literacy needs to play a more substantial role in media policy. Competencies of all the actors, including the ministries, regulators, public broadcast service, etc., need to be clearly defined.

Analysis of media industry activities as factors that influence media literacy development in [country X] shows that the environment provides some incentives for development, primarily through the activities of the Press Council, as well as through a very active film industry that offers different educational programs within numerous film festivals. Traditional media outlets such as daily newspapers, TV and radio tend not to undertake activities that would help transform their audiences into competent media consumers. It is also evident that telecommunication companies and Internet service providers do not invest enough effort to introduce their clients to new technologies and the possible risks associated with them.

This study identifies ten NGOs in [country X] as key players in media literacy development. These organizations have offered educational seminars and workshops, established web portals, organized conferences, and conducted campaigns. The focus of their activities has been on the development of citizens' abilities to critically analyze and evaluate media content. The activities are aimed towards different age groups, although senior citizens are completely excluded from this process. It has also been acknowledged that better collaboration and better coordination of activities among different NGOs is necessary in order to integrate all aspects of media literacy and to include all target groups. The weakest point of these activities, as identified in the analysis, is the financial aspect, as there is a lack of public funds to support such activities.

Media accessibility is also a factor in the development of media literacy. In comparing the accessibility of TV, radio, print, cinema, mobile phones and Internet in [country X] and elsewhere in Europe, statistical data shows that [country X] is significantly behind the European average. The exception is accessibility of TV, which is 99% of the EU average. Accessibility of radio and mobile phones in [country X] is over 60% of the European average, which is satisfactory. A significant deficit is shown in daily print and internet access, which is slightly over 40% of the European average. Access to cinema is the lowest of all of these, just 17% of the European average.

In its last chapter, this publication tries to answer the question *How to improve media literacy in [country X]?* In European practice, improvement of media literacy is considered an obligation of the state, as well as that of other actors, such as the media industry and NGOs. A better environment also lends itself to better individual competencies in media literacy. Bearing in mind the European concept of media literacy and the state of its development in [country X], this study suggests 20 concrete measures to enhance media literacy of [country X] citizens. These include promoting discussion among all relevant actors on the status and development of media literacy; qualitative and quantitative integration of media education into curricula; development of teaching tools for media literacy; and securing financial support for increasing media literacy activities.

Publication of "Media Literacy in [country X]" was printed with the support of Internews [country X] and represents a part of Internews' efforts to contribute to the enhancement of media literacy in [country X].

COUNTRY X = Bosnia and Herzegovina, abbreviated as BH or BiH.

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CML's thanks go to Lea for sharing this report and for inadvertently reporting on the state of media literacy education throughout most of the world. For those who have contrary information, please let us know!

Sources Cited in this Issue

Ravitch, Sharon M., and Riggan, Matthew. *Reason and Rigor: How Conceptual Frameworks Guide Research.* Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2012.

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Med!aLit Moments

Why Don't I See What You See?

Today, online advertisements are tailor-made for individual recipients, but it can be difficult to discern that fact unless someone else shows you the ads that have been targeted to them. In this MediaLit Moment, your middle school students will have the opportunity to 'lift the veil' on the customization of media content by examining domestic and international covers for the same magazine. In the process, they'll imaginatively take the position of media producers as they attempt to track the inferences producers made about different audiences.

Ask students to offer possible reasons why producers would print different covers for domestic and international editions of the same magazine.

AHA!: Everybody in the U.S. sees the same cover for *Time* magazine, but somebody in Europe or Asia might see something totally different!

Key Question #3: How might different people understand this message differently?
Core Concept #3: Different people experience the same media message differently.
Key Question #3 for Construction: Is my message engaging and compelling for my target audience?

Grade Level: 6-8

Materials: computer with high speed internet access, LCD projector and screen; or print outs of selected website pages

An internet search for "Time magazine cover" will bring you to a page on the Time website which (usually) displays covers for all four regions in which the magazine is distributed. Occasionally you will need to do some additional searching to view international covers. The page should also allow you to search for past covers by date. Here are some dates for issues of *Time* whose domestic and international covers differ significantly: July 1st, 2013 (v.182, n. 1), December 5th, 2011 (v. 178, n. 22), October 3rd, 2011 (v. 178, n. 13), November 29th, 2010 (v. 176, n. 22).

Activity: Have fun "talking up" the fact that media usually seem to be made the same way for everyone—but not always. Discuss examples aside from magazine covers, if you can find any. Next, display or pass out a printout of one of the *Time* magazine covers. You may need to briefly explain the social or political context for international covers. Why would *Time* magazine print different covers in the U.S. and abroad? Introduce Key Question/Core Concept #3. How do these domestic and international covers differ? Why would the producers create these particular covers for these audiences? Ask them to take the point of view of the producers, and introduce them to Key Question #3 for Producers: Is my message

engaging and compelling for my target audience?

The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy's MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, © 2002-2013, Center for Media Literacy, http://www.medialit.com