TENSIONS OF TEACHING MEDIA LITERACY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

A Dissertation in
Curriculum and Instruction

by
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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the tensions a teacher educator faces in facilitating a media literacy teacher education course at the university level. Teaching tensions are conceptualized as a three-tier framework. At the first level, tensions may arise in the selection and application of pedagogies associated with critical and new/21st century literacies. At the second level, tensions exist within debates about the extent to which media literacy is conceptualized as a core subject itself in contrast to a process for learning core subjects. The third level of tensions involves diverse stakeholders including individuals who are connected to university teacher education programs, teacher professional organizations (e.g., NCATE, IRA, NBPTS), K-12 teachers, the media industry, media watchdog/activist organizations, and government/policies. Depending upon the specific issues involved, these stakeholders may either compete against each other, pushing media literacy education in opposing directions, or complement each other, exerting a unified influence on media literacy teacher education.

The study employs a case study methodology to research the teaching tensions facing a media literacy teacher educator in a Masters’ level literacy education course. The media literacy course that was examined in this study includes a teacher educator and in-service teachers and graduate education students (N=24) matriculating at a university on the East Coast. An exploratory triangulation design utilizes three pre-course data sources: the teacher educator’s published research, a course syllabus, and a survey administered by the researcher to gauge teacher student levels of media literacy knowledge. The design also incorporates the following data collected during the media literacy education course: interviews, class observations, and teacher student artifacts.
Findings of this study show that: (1) the media literacy teacher educator focuses more heavily on critical and socio-cultural practice-based media literacy pedagogy as opposed to new/21st century literacies and skills-based pedagogy, (2) the media literacy teacher educator focuses more on media literacy pedagogy as a process as opposed to content, particularly in the latter part of the course, and (3) the teacher educator draws pedagogical cues from media watchdog/activist organizations as opposed to the media industry, and responds to pressures from teacher professional organizations. Additional implications for teacher education pedagogical decisions are discussed.
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EPIGRAPH

R: I think it’s a really difficult question.
N: Okay.
R: I mean I’ll start out by saying that.
N: Right.
R: It’s, it’s one of those areas that I think I struggle probably most with to be honest with you because you know I’m certainly not an expert. And so I’ll you know give you the first two ways to couch this.
N: Okay.
R: And I tend not to be a behaviorist. So at the same time . . . or development, or harsh developmentalist . . . at the same time I think that, that at times you know behavioral ideas and developmental ideas can not be completely neglected or, or tossed aside within a sociocultural approach or . . . and framework. So I think it’s, I think it’s very difficult to be honest with you and I still don’t know how to kind of resolve that within myself you know...(Interview 2, p. 10)
CHAPTER 1. TEACHING TENSIONS AND MEDIA LITERACY

Media literacy education is increasingly part of the teacher education curriculum, but teacher educators face a host of pedagogical challenges in the classroom when attempting to prepare K–12 teachers to themselves teach media literacy. Some of these pedagogical challenges include the extent to which the teacher draws upon critical media literacy as opposed to new/21st century media literacies, teaching for content or process, and reflecting the interests, influence and knowledge of diverse stakeholders. I label these challenges “teaching tensions,” which are key sources of conflict or competition that are implicitly or explicitly addressed by pedagogical choices.

These tensions emerge from a variety of sources. The main source stems from the rise of a media-saturated society in the United States, which is challenging basic notions of what it means to be literate in the contemporary age. An explosion of diverse types of new media and uses of media have caused literacy educators to rethink the notions of literacy learning and teaching. The challenge, with the advent of the post-typographic word, is to develop pedagogy that speaks to learning needs of youth who are increasingly socialized in such a visual, e-culture. More than this, of those media literacy pedagogies identified, tensions exist with regard to how pedagogies can keep up with literacy needs in an ever-changing media landscape.

Rather than covering the entire field of media literacy education, my approach to the problem centers on the analysis of a narrow source of data: efforts of a single teacher of teachers, in the context of a single, semester-long course, to grapple with and, to the extent possible, resolve these tensions. In terms of research questions, the problems are complex, serious and compelling (as documented below), and warrant extended analysis of the sort I aim to provide.
This investigation of media literacy teaching tensions at the college level will add to important conversations that touch upon the modern realities confronting virtually any K-12 teacher to a greater or lesser extent. On the one hand, teachers of diverse content and grade levels find themselves teaching students who are bombarded by a host of messages from the media (e.g., television, radio, internet, etc…). These messages may communicate messages that are consistent with, or contradictory to, learning that takes place in K-12 schools. Moreover, many of these messages are communicated through a variety of technology platforms with which some K-12 teachers may not be familiar. On the other hand, some of the new media, such as Instant Messenger, offer students themselves opportunities to actively participate in the generation of content as media writers or producers. But, for teachers who have not become users of the same or similar new media technologies, the ability to forge genuine relationships and ultimately teach to the literacy realities of students can be difficult.

In this context, the approach I use goes to the core question of how teachers address these problems or tensions. I do so not by following the path of analyzing student outcomes or K-12 classroom practices (Martens, 2010), but instead by looking to the classroom experience with a teacher who strives to provide a group of K-12 teachers with the tools, insights, and methods and approaches to use in the creation of their own media literacy pedagogy. While this research obviously cannot shed light on K-12 student behavior or outcomes, it can and hopefully does inform our understanding of how these tensions play out and interact in the process of teaching the teachers about media literacy education.

The Problem: Three Tensions

A study of how a teacher educator negotiates media literacy pedagogy, learning, and competing and complementary stakeholders to enhance one’s teacher students’ responsiveness to
their own K-12 learners is of paramount importance to the fields of literacy education and media studies first and foremost because so little empirical research on the subject exists. Much of the empirical research on media literacy in teacher education accounts for teacher experiences at the K–12 classroom level, where researchers have measured media literacy learning skills and identified associated instructional practices (e.g., Hobbs, 2010; Hobbs & Frost, 1998, 2003; Martens, 2010). For example, a recent empirical study of media literacy in a higher education context looked at how a communications course may improve undergraduates’ level of media literacy understanding (Duran et al., 2008). Such studies are focused mainly on media literacy learning and not on teaching. Other studies address actual media literacy learning in teacher preparation by looking at pre-service learner’s beliefs, attitudes, and preparation for the K–12 school experience (e.g., Flores-Koulish, 2005; Karen-Kolb, 2010; Semali, 2000a, ch.s 2, 7). While these studies help to inform media literacy teaching strategies, they do not include information on the classroom experience of these teachers as they attempt to create their own media literacy pedagogy for later use in the K–12 curriculum. Accordingly, for purposes of this research, “teacher students” are defined as individuals who are post-baccalaureate students matriculating for graduate degrees in education while also serving as professional teachers in K-12 schools. This study looks at how a teacher educator, with substantial expertise, through the combination of her own doctoral training and secondary teaching and research experience regarding these issues, negotiates teaching media literacy to enhance teacher student professional development.

The Context of Teaching Tensions

Media literacy teacher education is at a unique place in that, despite the reality of teachers and students’ everyday mediated experiences (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006), and standards for
media literacy curricula in all fifty states (Baker, 2013), K–12 educators may question its relevance and utility in the age of accountability, with accountability tending to privilege the teaching and learning of traditional English language literacy. That is, despite gaining a foothold in the teacher education curriculum (e.g., see Kubey & Baker, 1999), media literacy teacher education faces a set of tensions that make teaching media literacy in teacher education hard. A major reason that media literacy is increasingly part of the English and literacy education equation is because of an increasingly accepted belief among educators that literacy education is no longer confined to the reading and writing of print media, but now demands that students be able to critically analyze and produce various media texts, tools, and technologies (Hobbs, 2007). Students enter classrooms with “literacies” as opposed to “literacy.” Even so, teachers who incorporate media literacy in their K–12 English language arts classrooms must deal with pressures from the local K–12 curriculum community, which are often spear-headed by parents, educational administrators, and, to an extent, education policymakers and government agencies. These stakeholders often wonder what media literacy is, what it actually looks like in the classroom, and how the teaching of media literacy can help children to read canonical English literature, write essays, develop critical thinking skills and creativity, and acquire literacy skills that optimize student achievement in ways that prepare them to be productive contributors to the economy later in life. For those charged with educating teachers of literacy and English, these concerns need to be addressed in developing and evaluating a teacher preparation curriculum.

**The Practical Realities of Teaching Media Literacy**

Given the context of tensions, this study addresses the practical realities of teaching media literacy in a teacher education course as part of a teacher education program at a
university. The crux of the study is grounded in how an experienced teacher educator assesses and evaluates the media literacy learning and pedagogy of her teacher students based on her own media literacy pedagogy. Such pedagogy, one may argue, is premised on the idea that negotiations in the classroom are likely to be as much grounded in the personal convictions of the teacher educator herself as they are influenced by social interactions between the teacher educator and her teacher students as well as among the teacher students themselves. As a corollary, the analysis of media literacy teaching tensions is grounded in the pedagogical decisions made by the teacher educator prior to a course on the topic of media literacy education, decisions reflected in her published works and class syllabus as well as those personal convictions voiced in a pre-course interview. Additionally, the teacher educator’s media literacy pedagogy is analyzed across a semester, both to help understand how those decisions occur in the context of a classroom, and to understand how the teacher students negotiate their learning with the teacher educator in the process of developing their own media literacy pedagogy. Such analysis of teacher student pedagogy allows for further insight into the learning and pedagogical negotiations that are likely to be embedded in the teacher educator’s performance in both conscious and unconscious ways.

The chief objective of the study is to inform our understanding of teaching tensions in a media literacy course by observing, and inquiring directly regarding, how a teacher educator operationalizes media literacy pedagogy in a university teacher preparation classroom with a cadre of in-service educators. Such an approach contributes to the conversation on the utility of media literacy education for developing a teaching workforce, and to our understanding of how a group of K-12 teachers are likely to approach media literacy in their own classrooms.
Tensions are central to this effort, including those which arise concerning which pedagogical approaches to take, which learning theories to draw from, and the stakeholder camp or camps a teacher educator may align him or herself to in order to teach media literacy to the teaching workforce. That workforce will, in turn, address adolescent literacy learner needs directly. In other words, the crux of this study centers on the ways in which a teacher educator’s own pedagogical, learning, and policy views alter her answers to specific questions, such as how to read the Washington Post, critique Super bowl commercials, or understand children’s writing from the vantage point of Twitter and Facebook. The realities of teaching in-service teachers to be aware of, and even to design, curricula in ways that speak to the hyper-mediated lives of their K-12 learners are complex and often conflicting. From a pedagogical perspective, a teacher educator may oscillate between critical media literacy, which asks learners to center the role of power, class, and other variables of social hierarchy, and new literacy studies, which asks learners to look at the ways in which hypertext communication creates distinct communities of practice. From a learning theory perspective, a teacher educator may vacillate between and among framing media literacy learning along more conventional conceptualizations of literacy (e.g., elements of literacy that include reading, writing, speaking, etc…) and conceptualizations from the sub-field of media literacy itself. From a stakeholder’s perspective, a teacher educator may align with big media (e.g., larger corporate media conglomerates) or with watchdog/activist organizations that seek to hold such corporate media companies accountable for the social realities they portray.

What is ultimately at stake for the teacher educator in the media literacy teacher education classroom is whether education empowers K-12 teachers or instead functions to inhibit empowerment. Taking a course in media literacy at the graduate level to become a reading
specialist or literacy coach formalizes the significance of media literacy for literacy learning. The teacher educator must, as a by-product, offer concrete, strategic instructional strategies and curriculum design that makes pragmatic sense for in-service teachers. A crucial question that informs and underlies this study is then: how do we as teacher educators know that our teacher students are learning what we want and need them to learn? It is my belief that research aimed at answering this question needs to address the tensions I focus on here.

**Historical Background**

This study is grounded in the broad question of why one would include media literacy in literacy and English education. The traditional answer is that rigorous study of media values, or ideology found in mediated texts, and languages of the media, have been part and parcel of English studies for decades, particularly in English-speaking countries outside of the United States, such as the United Kingdom (Sefton-Green, 1995). Domestically, teacher professional organizations like the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) have been at the forefront in lobbying for media literacy teaching and learning in this country (Federov, 2008), recognizing the importance of analyses of television shows, for example, to literacy development. We are immersed in the digital media age, which has severely altered literacy practices (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2010; Williams, 2008). Today’s students access information and news at their leisure in a rapidly changing world (NCTE, 2007), often from social networking sites instead of print newspapers or radio broadcasts (UNESCO, 2008). These contemporary literacy practices differ markedly from those prevailing in the teacher-centered learning community of formal schooling, which can lead students to see literacy classroom learning as having scant relevance to their lives. The relevance is particularly questionable given that social media use among eight- to eighteen-year-olds is at an all-time high (Kaiser Family Foundation,
2009) while, according to the National Assessment of Education Progress (2009), functionalist reading remains largely stagnant. This situation has invited new ways of theorizing and evaluating what theorists called “new literacies” (Kist, 2008; Kress, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Staples, 2012; Street, 1995). Educators, particularly in the field of English and literacy education, must contend not only with multi-varied, multimodal forms of media communications from a learning theory standpoint, but also from a pedagogical content perspective that challenges curriculum orthodoxy by acknowledging students as co-teachers and co-learners of literacy acquisition.

**Media Literacy Pedagogy: A Definition**

Despite a considerable body of research on media literacy pedagogy in literacy education and media studies circles, scholars continue to debate each of these terms. Media education is about developing young people's critical and creative abilities when it comes to the media. Media education should not be confused with educational technology or with educational media (Rideout, 2012). Education for media literacy often uses an inquiry-based pedagogic model that encourages people to ask questions about what they watch, hear, and read. Media literacy education provides tools to help people critically analyze messages; it offers opportunities for learners to broaden their experience of media, and helps them to develop creative skills in making their own media messages (European Charter, 2011). Any notion of “media” recalls Marshall McLuhan’s (1964) work that underscored media as an amalgam of conventions and codes that drive message construction. “Literacy” is a contested concept, often conveying several meanings. Nonetheless, for purposes of this study, literacy is seen as the lifelong, intellectual process of gaining meaning from a critical interpretation of the written or printed text, while pedagogy is conceptualized as problem-posing and constructivist instructional practices (Freire,
Together, media literacy pedagogy can be defined as problem-posing and constructivist teaching that nurtures learning to identify, evaluate, and analyze codes and conventions of typographic and post-typographic mediated texts. Such pedagogy also involves the production of, and additional practical work with, various media (Sefton-Green, 1995).

Media literacy education scholars rarely use the words “media,” “literacy,” and “pedagogy” as a single term. Flemming (1993) popularized “media teaching” at a time when educators were just beginning to acknowledge the role of digital media in media literacy education. “Media pedagogy” (Kellner, 1998) is a common term for practitioners, with a common emphasis on the social, contextual aspects of teaching media literacy. Perhaps the closest reference to media literacy pedagogy comes in the form of “media literacy instruction” (Hobbs & Frost, 1998, 2003), which emphasizes distinct instructional strategies over and above reflection on the instruction itself. The reasons for variation in the field stem in part from a school of thought in which media literacy is considered to be part of the broader field of media education in the same way that literacy is considered to be part of the broader field of literacy education. In other words, some scholars (Buckingham, 2003; Buckingham, 2007; Duncan & Tyner, 2003; French & Richards, 2012; Jenkins, 2009; Masterman, 1997) view media literacy as the product of media education. Indeed, the concept of media literacy education is arguably more the preserve of scholars in the United States, whereas media education is more commonly employed in circles in the external English-speaking world. Absent a single construct that merges media literacy and pedagogy, as opposed to media literacy and teaching or instruction, scholars may not explicitly connect the intimate relationship between media literacy learning and teaching, and to reflect on that relationship. The emphasis in this study on linking pedagogy with
media literacy is to foreground theory and practice, learning and teaching, and task and achievement, as part and parcel of a larger whole.

**Teaching Tensions: Critical and/or New/21st Century Literacies**

The conceptualization of media literacy pedagogy should take into account two distinct forms—critical media literacy instruction, with origins in the Frankfurt and cultural studies tradition, and new/21st century literacies education (New London Group, 1996), which is the result of a sociolinguistic and ethnographic tradition. It is paramount that media literacy educators have a nuanced awareness and understanding of certain approaches to literacy pedagogy, as these might prove valuable in relation to how youth are using technologies and engaging with media texts.

**Critical Media Literacy Pedagogy**

Critical media literacy centers on the relationship between media literacy and critical literacy (Semali, 2000b, 2003), which challenges canonical texts as well as privileged readings of all texts. Critical media literacy is aimed at cultivating skills in, “analyzing media codes and conventions, abilities to criticize stereotypes, dominant values, and ideologies, and competencies to interpret the multiple meanings and messages generated by media texts” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 372). The ethos of critical media literacy instruction is grounded in an analysis of textual power relations. Critical media literacy, then, draws heavily from a key tenant of media literacy as conveyed in my conceptual media literacy-learning framework (see Figure 1.2 below). This tenet is centered on the idea that all media contain ideological and value messages (Shannon, 2011), which is an ideological critique of media that can be traced to the work of the Frankfurt School.
The Frankfurt school arose as a result of exiled German Jews who fled Hitler’s totalitarianism and found themselves enmeshed in the rise of a Hollywood media that seemed to cloud consumer consciousness and create passive audiences. These audiences were largely unaware of the imposing influence of the culture industry (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1999), which aimed to maintain hegemonic control over media consumers. While Frankfurtian approaches are critical of the culture industry, ironically their approach to study of media tends to lead inadvertently to a critical media literacy that assumes an elitist position in which only a selected few consumers are aware of the “mass deception” generated by the corporate media industry. In addition, many media studies and media literacy education scholars trace the intellectual roots of critical media literacy instruction to cultural studies, a school of thought that addresses the ways in which popular texts are constructed to represent various subgroups, such as the working class or British Arabs.

Cultural studies scholars in turn use culture as the unit of analysis to engage in a form of analytical thinking that is commonly known as, “the politics of representation” (Hall, 1997). Kellner and Share (2005), citing Luke, maintain that critical media literacy involves, “unveiling the political and social construction of knowledge, as well as addressing principles of equity and social justice related to representation” (p. 370). In order to teach critical media literacy, teacher educators may encourage students to deploy cultural studies forms of analysis of media by asking questions such as the following. Who is represented in these texts? Who is representing these groups? For whom are the representations constructed? How are different (cultural) audiences likely to interpret these texts? Critical media literacy involves critiques of representation because media texts—and one might also argue tools and technologies—are sites of struggle over meaning (Giroux, 1997; Gotkowitz, 2007; McCarty, 2005; McLaren &
Kinzeloe, 2007; Verma, 2010). These sites of struggle ultimately have real-world implications for the ways in which cultural groups view themselves and others (Hoeveler, 2006; Netton, 2013; Said, 1979). Semali (2000a) states that,

> [T]eaching critical media literacy must aspire to teach the youth in our classrooms, particularly those impressionable groups of individuals in desperate search of identity and a place in the adult world ... critical media literacy [needs] ... to generate a strong commitment to developing a world free of oppression and exploitation. (p. 287)

In essence, critical media literacy pedagogy behooves media literacy educators to move beyond pure textualist forms (codes and conventions) of media analysis to reflect on content teaching that encourages democracy (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009; Jhally & Lewis, 1998; Kellner & Share, 2007a, 2007b; Kubey, 2004; Torres & Mercado, 2006).

Critical media literacy pedagogy is closely related to critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970). As a result, critical media literacy pedagogues aim to challenge hierarchies within and between media texts, and to identify the ways in which such media texts might be taught in order to empower (Shor, 1992) and transform (hooks, 1994) traditional teacher-centered classrooms into more student-centered sites of knowledge production. For example, in discussing the philosophy of critical media literacy pedagogy, Kellner and Share (2005) suggested that, “a student-centered, bottom up approach is necessary...with the student’s own culture, knowledge, and experiences... [forming the basis for] collaborative inquiry and video production… [that allow] students to voice their discoveries” (p. 371). Further, they stated that,

> [T]eaching critical media literacy should be a participatory, collaborative project. Watching television shows or films together could promote productive discussions between teachers and students (or parents and children), with an emphasis on eliciting student views, producing a variety of interpretations of media texts, and teaching basic principles of hermeneutics and criticism. (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 373)
Relatedly, Gainer (2010) found a failed experiment in the use of “counternarratives” as an element of critical media pedagogy precisely because it denied the active participation of students. From this standpoint, critical media literacy pedagogy embraces the idea of connected teaching in which students and teachers are both co-facilitators in instruction and analysis of media (Staples, 2008a). Beyond mere co-facilitation, critical pedagogy promotes deep inquiry and evolutionary consciousness in relation to issues of language, culture, society, and more (Staples, 2008b).

Critical media literacy applies a critical pedagogy approach to media education. However, this approach is not contradictory to the new/21st century literacies pedagogy discussed next; rather, the tension here involves a matter of emphasis.

**New/21st Century Literacies Pedagogy**

New/21st century literacies pedagogy is here contrasted with critical media literacy pedagogy to construct a conceptual framework for this study, a framing which is echoed in Hoechsmann and Poyntz’s (2012) distinction between media literacy models 1.0 (i.e., critical media literacy) and 2.0 (i.e., new/21st century literacies). New/21st century literacies pedagogy is not mutually exclusive from critical media literacy, but places a greater emphasis on the ways in which new media (e.g., social networking sites, iPods, VoIP) challenge, re-inscribe, and, in some instances, expand literacy. For example, viewing, writing, reading, and listening may be increasingly compromised or enhanced by Web 2.0 networks where end user writer access calls into question who ultimately is the author of a particular text (Kist, 2005). Citing Bryant and Thompson, the Communication for Governance & Accountability Program of the World Bank (2009) observed that we are in an age where audiences are also likely to be users. What is also particularly important to draw from the New Literacy Studies (NLS) tradition for my conceptual
framework is the view of literacy as inherently a product of social interaction (Street, 1995). Moreover, new/21st century literacy studies theorists charge that, instead of speaking about a single, abstract “literacy,” scholars should take into account the many social situations in which “literacies” are constructed and ultimately practiced by various populations. Figure 1.1 shows the relationship between critical media literacy and new/21st century literacies, with media literacy pedagogy as the umbrella term. According to this graphic, media literacy pedagogy needs to account for an educator’s beliefs, reflection, and praxis—that is, the constant interplay between media literacy theory and practice—in order to make the leap from mere media literacy instruction and teaching to media literacy pedagogy.

The contribution of new/21st century literacies to media literacy learning can be traced to a socio-linguistic and ethnographic approach that, like critical media literacy, aims to “investigate literacy and to place special emphasis on revealing, understanding, and addressing power relations” (Hull & Schultz, 2001, p. 585). As mentioned, new/21st century media literacies scholars theorize about the literacies adolescents and young adults use while in out-of-school contexts, and how such literacies—largely the result of media technology use within specific social situations—translate into the learning of multiple media literacies. For example, many K–12 learners engage in use of Instant Messenger (Kaiser, 2010) for intimate communication with friends (Hu et al., 2004). A new literacy pedagogue may encourage students to explore how use of this online, synchronous medium influences print literacy as well as other informal learning inside of what Gee (2004) calls “affinity spaces,” or a social organization involving participants with a shared endeavor or interest. The notion of affinity spaces helps to make sense of much new media which, in contrast to traditional print media, can involve active participation.
The notion of affinity spaces is central to new/21st century literacies education because it calls into question the ways in which use of new media in voluntary circumstances cultivates involuntary literacy learning. Learning may occur as a result of (online) participants formulating a set of informal rules for communication that become standard ways of communicating, such as with the use of acronyms (e.g., “LOL” for “laughing out loud”). Further, learning in these digital spaces may enhance students’ written and verbal communication in other media, depending on the make-up of the participatory community (Jenkins, 2006). What is important here is that students may not necessarily be aware of the literacies they use in relation to Instant Messenger or of how they adopt, transfer, or contest these forms of communication in terms of formal schooling literacies. For example, literacy educators may encounter work by students that increasingly includes the heavy use of acronyms from Instant Messenger use and texting via mobile devices. If this occurs, it should lead educators to ask students what media they are engaged with outside of school in the same way that teachers of English as a second language may inquire about the native language identities of their students who exhibit unconventional syntax structures in their expository writing. The ethnographic roots of such pedagogy entail observing—or at the very least acknowledging—and employing strategies such as scaffolding (Abram, 2008) for students to use these social mediated literacies to improve their overall communication skills (NCTE, 2007). From this standpoint, media literacy involves an inherently social process that is the product of social interaction via media. In short, new/21st century literacies pedagogy may demand drawing from students’ mediated literacy practices in informal, situated spaces to inform formal literacy acquisition.
Slight Difference between New and 21st Century Literacies

I have chosen to collapse new and 21st century literacies into a single pedagogical approach, but they are not identical. The subtle difference can be explained in part by the fact that 21st century literacies pedagogy emphasizes the media technology skills (Hubbard, 2012; Murray, 2003) that are needed to enhance employability (National Council of Teachers of English, 2007; United States Department of Education, 2010). One may often hear about 21st century problems-solvers, thinkers, and communicators in popular discourse (e.g., Bybee & Bruce, 2006; Collier, 2007; Jones & Flannigan, 2006; Thoman & Jolls, 2005). New literacy theorists, on the other hand, tend to look more at how the rise in use of these technology tools shapes and is shaped by the social and psycholinguistic contexts in which media literacy learning and teaching takes place. Both, in the end, have a technology focus, which is the reason for referring to new and 21st century literacies as one and the same.

This discussion of critical and new/21st century literacy pedagogies leads to the first research question addressed by this study:

R1a. Which media literacy pedagogical approach does a teacher educator employ (critical and/or new/21st century literacies), and why?

Teaching Tensions: Pedagogy for Skills or for Practices

As previously mentioned, within the new/21st century literacy framework of teaching media literacy, there is a tension based on the question of whether to employ pedagogy that recognizes media literacy as a skill or as a practice. On the one hand, the New London Group (1999) and National Council of Teachers of English (2007), for example, support a skills-based media literacy pedagogy that enhances learner employability (see also Fahser-Herro &
From this perspective, media literacy is a form of vocational education that should teach students the techniques that media professionals employ in media industry positions to produce media. “The challenge for our education system is to leverage technology to create relevant learning experiences that mirror students’ daily lives and the reality of their futures” (United States Department of Education, 2010, p. 9). The Department of Education has partnered with leading media industry companies such as Cisco and Apple to place media technologies in K–12 schools and teacher education programs to leverage the teaching and learning of higher order thinking. Media literacy educators have strived to develop related pedagogies that tap into the ways in which media transform lives, despite the fact that media can, at times, outpace pedagogical developments (Semali, 2003). In the digital media literacy explosion, “multiple communication channels, hybrid text forms, new social relations, and the increasing salience of linguistic and cultural diversity” (Hull & Schultz, 2001, p. 589) have opened a means for schools and the media industry to form stronger ties, recognizing the importance and the power of the media industry as an increasingly engaged stakeholder in many schooling initiatives.

New/21st century literacy pedagogy centralizes the phenomenon whereby employers increasingly demand workers who have an ease and intimacy with multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996). That is, cultural, linguistic, and media literacies, for example, are important, particularly knowing when and how to use them to provide services to company clients. Indeed, it is now common practice for many corporate marketing departments to employ social media to appeal to customers and cultivate brand loyalty. Media literacy skills in the age of convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006)—that is, a culture in which new media are often overlapping and merging—will arguably generate a workforce better prepared to meet employer needs. New/21st
century literacy instruction—and pedagogy—addresses this concern.

There is, however, a different notion of skill that is predicated on cognitive abilities that must be harnessed in order to process and produce media messages as the consumer-audience-user encounters them (Potter, 2004; Silverblatt, 2008). This form of media literacy is influenced by the classic communications research paradigm of sender-receiver, which is grounded in quasi-behavioralist claims that exposure to media will induce certain behaviors (Bryant & Thompson, 2002). This branch of media studies, known as media effects, is refuted by those who espouse a socio-cultural approach to media literacy learning. For example, the works of Street (1995) and Gee (2008) call for pedagogies that account for learning in daily interaction with media. Indeed, those using the new literacies studies approach reject a cognitive-skills approach to teaching media literacy, as new literacies studies rejects behaviorism as a paradigmatic approach to the teaching of media literacy.

The tension here cannot be overestimated, because the choice of focusing on cognitive skills as opposed to socio-cultural practices-based media literacy pedagogy has profound implications for teacher and learner outcomes in the classroom. When media literacy pedagogy is conceptualized as skill acquisition there is more of an emphasis on what the individual learner ought to know as a technical skill and cognitive process with regard to reading and writing media based mostly on his or her individual abilities. When media literacy pedagogy is conceptualized as a practice, as found in a New Literacy Studies paradigm, there is a greater emphasis on pedagogy for what learners are already doing in a mediated environment with others. These practices in a social setting are then used to enhance the literacy of the learner. The teacher educator may respond to this tension by switching between pedagogy for skill and pedagogy for
practice in an effort to recognize and understand the full implications of media literacy pedagogy (Elstad, 2010).

The study that follows hones in on this tension with the following research question:

**R1b. In what ways does media literacy teacher education nurture teacher student pedagogy for skills or pedagogy for practices or both?**
As Hobbs (2010) recognizes, part of the reason this tension is crucial at this particular historical juncture is that technology resources and concrete skills are required to navigate increasingly sophisticated digital media (see also De Abreu, 2011).

**Teaching Tensions: Content or Process**

In a curriculum reform article, Semali and Hammett (1999) posed the question about the extent to which (critical) media literacy involves either content or process. This learning theory and curriculum development question has come to be central to the media literacy debate because of the impetus to clarify not only to media literacy educators, but also to broader educational stakeholders, such as those previously mentioned, how one learns media literacy and integrates it into the primary and secondary curricula. In other words, the question is: to what extent is media literacy a subject in and of itself from a media studies standpoint, or a subject to be mastered, similar to other core K–12 curricular subjects such as English, science, math, and social studies? Or should media literacy be conceptualized exclusively as an expansion of literacy, as a process that facilitates mastery of other subject content knowledge? This question presents a practical conundrum (see Figure 2.1) for educators who are already overworked by efforts to attend to the needs of diverse learners within a crowded curriculum (Semali, 1999).

The conceptual framework of learning is here informed by a clear demarcation of media literacy learning (outcomes), which involves the notion of literacy as defined by many state English language arts standards (Baker, 2012; Hobbs, 2007), as well as the common tenets of media literacy from the broader field of media education. From my perspective, as a media studies scholar and media literacy educator, media literacy can be viewed as both content in and of itself to be studied, as well as a process to facilitate the learning of other subjects. Media literacy learning can stand on its own as an independent curricular foothold. Or media literacy
can be integrated across the curriculum (Semali, 2000a). In practice, Schmidt (2013) concludes that most K-12 media literacy education is mainly limited to upper grade levels, and there occurs across a wide spectrum of disciplines. This finding lends support to the view of media literacy as a process to learn subject-specific content.

**Figure 1.2. Content or Process**

Media literacy educators tend to choose one perspective over the other, with media literacy often conceptualized as a process (National Association of Media Literacy Education,
2010). Figure 1.2 shows how literacy is an amalgam of reading and writing, as well as listening, speaking and viewing. Media literacy, on the other hand, according to Thoman (2003), tends to be predicated on several core principles: (1) Media are constructions with unique languages, (2) Media construct social reality, (3) Media have commercial and political implications, (4) Audiences negotiate meaning in media, and (5) Media contain ideological and value messages. In other words, Figure 1.2 represents a framework describing what it means to be media-literate, particularly in an English language arts context.

Even for those who agree with these principles, emphases will diverge. For example, Shannon (2011) emphasizes the possibilities for critical approaches to virtually any conceivable media, tending to favor process over specific content. More broadly, Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013) exhibit a process focus wherein they analyze “spreadable media,” or the democratizing opportunities inherent in formal and informal, small and large, and transnational media. On the other hand, content matters, as is implicit in Kellner’s (2009) detailed analysis of how Hollywood films interpreted and packaged the politics of the wars initiated by President Bush during the early years of the 21st century.

Of course, media literacy educators are equally concerned not only with the extent to which students are media-literate themselves, but also with the extent to which media literacy educators can teach media literacy, and find ways to reflect on and improve their practice; that is, media literacy educators are concerned with ways in which to define media literacy content pedagogy, or pedagogy that reflects media literacy subject knowledge (e.g., framing, manufactured consent), in the hope that such a framework can provide guidance for the development of optimal instructional strategies, practices, and activities for all media teacher students.
This discussion highlights the importance of addressing the following research question:

R2. In what ways does a media literacy teacher educator employ media literacy as process or content, and what are the implications of either or both approaches for teacher student learners?

**Teaching Tensions: Stakeholder Pressures**

The conceptual framework of teaching media literacy in English and literacy education can include a multiplicity of components but I believe a core tension that needs to be addressed concerns stakeholder pressures, which inform learning outcomes and constrain pedagogy in media literacy teacher preparation. Figure 1.3 outlines the Competing and Complementary Camps Framework of Stakeholder Pressures component of my conceptual framework. The figure covers six main stakeholders, each circling the media literacy teacher education corps. A large arrow points inward from each respective stakeholder towards media literacy teacher education at the center. A smaller arrow points outward from the media literacy teacher education corps to each camp to convey a push-pull phenomenon in which stakeholders drive media literacy curriculum development and pedagogical decision-making, but are also influenced to a lesser extent by the media literacy teacher education corps. Additionally, each stakeholder is placed along a single, circular line to show the connections among the stakeholders, regardless of whether they carry distinct interests and media literacy education agendas.

The graphic can be read, in addition, by understanding that teacher professional organizations, teacher education university programs, and the K–12 curriculum community reflect key educational camps in the tensions framework that may be in consensus, or in contention, with the other stakeholders (e.g., Government/Policy, Media Industry, Media Watchdog/Activist Organizations), or with each other. For example, media literacy teacher
education is based, first and foremost, on an English and literacy education university program where teacher education occurs, while the media industry produces the texts, tools, and technologies for reading and writing (Hobbs, 2007). Accordingly, any research on the role of media literacy in teacher education needs to look at the specific higher education context (e.g., program structure and curricular guidelines of a particular school of education, department, etc.), as well as those internet, print news, and rating agencies (e.g., Google, New York Times, Nielsen) that provide media products. Similarly, each K–12 curriculum community (which includes parents, educational administrators, local and state standards, students, and in-service teachers) will influence the sort of media literacy teacher education that takes place in a higher education context. For example, Penn State University’s media literacy teacher education is informed by Harrisburg’s English language arts guidelines, whereas Loyola Maryland University’s media literacy teacher education program adheres to standards from Baltimore. What is unique about the K–12 curriculum community is that this stakeholder in ways serves as a watchdog (along with media activist organizations) for the kind of media literacy education that is ultimately put into practice in primary and secondary education institutions.

Consider that parents and principals as stakeholders can lobby heavily for or against the use of popular culture in middle school English just as much as, if not more so than can, say, the Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME) call into question the classroom use of music television videos (MTV). From this vantage point, the K-12 curriculum community and Media Watchdog/Activist Organizations can be viewed as complementary camps because they are both concerned with the impact of youth exposure to certain media content. Last, but not least, are teacher professional organizations such as the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the International Reading Association (IRA), and the National Board for
Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) These bodies effectively govern teacher education programs in a manner similar to that of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in regulating the media industry. Of course, the Department of Education carries additional, equal weight as a government/policy stakeholder in media literacy teacher education, as is evident in initiatives such as the National Education Technology Plan (United States Department of Education, 2010). From such a perspective, teacher professional organizations and government/policy stakeholders may be seen as complementary. They both serve as governing bodies shaping media literacy teacher education. In other ways, however, these stakeholders may produce competing pressures, as documented by Montgomery (2012), who found teachers relying upon their professional identities as a way to legitimate their undercutting of bureaucratic mandates.

This discussion suggests the final research question:

R3. To what extent and how do stakeholders influence the teaching of media literacy in teacher education?
In sum, the Tensions framework can be viewed as having three main components:

Critical and/or new/21st century literacies pedagogy, and pedagogy for skills or for practices, both of which are illustrated in Figure 1.1, Content or Process, which is depicted in the Media Literacy Learning (Outcomes) in Figure 1.2, and Stakeholder Pressures, which are depicted in Figure 1.3. This study is then based on the idea that teacher educators of media literacy should, at a minimum, be aware of these components and the implications of putting them into practice in various ways and contexts. The overarching question for this study then involves the extent to which and how this framework plays out in the media literacy teacher education classroom.
**Flores-Koulish’s Perspective on Media Literacy Teacher Education**

When media literacy teacher educator Stephanie Flores-Koulish (2005) published her dissertation, “Teacher Education for Critical Consumption of Mass Media and Popular Culture,” she conveyed the significance of researching media literacy in the teacher education curriculum. Flores-Koulish’s work is an empirical case study of twenty-five pre-service elementary teachers and their knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about their level of preparation to teach media literacy according to stipulated education mandates. The main problem addressed by Flores-Koulish flows from the meager media literacy standards produced by NCATE, and to a lesser extent by the state of Massachusetts for the elementary teacher, particularly in comparison to standards for the secondary educator. In her work, the implied hypothesis to be tested was that media literacy education is underdeveloped within an elementary schooling context because official frameworks contain underdeveloped guidelines for teachers.

At a macro level, the significance of Flores-Koulish’s research to the field of media literacy can be understood as providing the foundation for a conversation on the pedagogical and curricular decisions that are made when integrating media literacy into English and literacy education courses and programs. As such, her work forms the anchor for this study.

Building on Flores-Koulish’s research, the current study addresses the relationship between media literacy and teacher education based on the pedagogical complexity of teaching to in-service teacher students, students whose own pedagogy must increasingly address consistent youth exposure to, and interaction with, various digital media. Instructors, not only in K–12 but also in higher education contexts, must contend with students who display a variety of media literacy skills and practices, as well as pressures from various stakeholders.
The significance of drawing on Flores-Koulish’s work for the present study can also be found in her own background. Flores-Koulish is a Latina, former high school English teacher, and current media literacy teacher educator at the collegiate level. She comes from a working class background, and matriculated in some of the finest institutions for teacher education, most notably Boston College where she specialized in media literacy education during her doctoral training.

**Story of the Research Questions: How This Study Came to Be**

Particularly within the field of teacher education, my understanding of tensions comes from pedagogical experiences that have led to more questions than answers. As a novice media literacy educator of pre-service teachers for secondary English, questions abounded about student teacher reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing abilities, questions that are about just what in fact can, or should, take place with regard to the applicability of media literacy pedagogy. For example, student teachers came into class with papers on which they wrote using acronyms; student teachers often entered the media literacy education classroom with media readings that were consistent with, as well as contrary to, dominant depictions of race, class, and gender; these student teachers needed to be clear about the role of media literacy for high quality teaching in the context of testing under the No Child Left Behind Act, while also understanding the importance of teaching for state standards of media literacy in the English language arts. In short, how does a teacher educator wrestle with these demands to develop pedagogy that not only helps student teachers or teacher students to become media-literate, but that also prepares them for K–12 literacy teaching? Underlying such a question is the more basic one that informs my work: how do student teachers or teacher students learn what they are supposed to learn and what is empirical evidence of such media literacy learning?
Methodology: Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Instruments

This study employs a case study methodology to analyze Flores-Koulish’s teaching through the conceptual framework of tensions of teaching media literacy. The reasons for this approach include the value, mentioned earlier, of an explicit focus on a teacher educator of teacher students in order to gain a broad and deep understanding of the processes and context informing pedagogical choices that will ultimately influence the learning of K–12 students.

Broadly, the study also drew upon some of the architecture of Hobbs and Frost’s (1998) study by using a case study, and employing an exploratory triangulation design to inquire into the ways in which a teacher educator teaches media literacy to certified in-service teachers. Media Literacy Education, a master’s-level course, included 23 teacher students and graduate students ($N=23$). The study uses six data sources: the teacher educator’s published research, interviews, the course syllabus, a researcher-developed survey, class observations, and teacher student artifacts. The primary data sources are interviews, class observations, and teacher student artifacts. The secondary data sources are the teacher educator’s published research, the course syllabus and the survey.

The study includes a close reading of the teacher educator’s published research, a document analysis of the teacher educator’s syllabus, and a preliminary interview. Additionally, a preliminary survey was administered to the in-service teachers on the first day of class to gauge media literacy knowledge. The study also used direct class observations; field notes were used to chart instructional activities as they occurred, along with learning challenges and triumphs. After each class session, the teacher educator was interviewed to validate observations and to understand her media literacy pedagogy in the teacher education class. Last, but not least, a select cadre of five in-service teacher student’s work was sampled from the population to be
analyzed in relation to the teacher educator’s pedagogy, media literacy learning occurring within the course, and implications for in-service media literacy pedagogy.

**Significance of the Research**

This study is significant for the following reasons:

1. The study offers an innovative conceptual framework. As explained earlier, this study uses a three-layered framework of media literacy pedagogy with critical and/or new literacies pedagogy, pedagogy for socio-cultural practices and for cognitive skills, media literacy learning as content or process, and stakeholder pressures to investigate how a teacher educator teaches media literacy. In other words, the study represents a full-scale attempt to capture the phenomenon of media literacy teaching in a university teacher education context.

2. The study uses the unique context of a classroom with an in-service population of K-12 teacher educators as university students, while other relevant studies either look at pre-service or inexperienced teacher educators at the university level or at experienced, in-service teachers outside of the university classroom setting (i.e., working at the K–12 level).

3. As a corollary, the unit of analysis is a contribution. It is the media literacy education course and particularly the pedagogy used by Flores-Koulish that is the focus of inquiry. The in-service teacher student’s work is investigated largely for the purpose of revealing the teacher educator’s media literacy pedagogy and not vice versa. This dissertation makes important contributions to the ways in which one might theorize media literacy in teacher education by focusing on the teacher educator herself. While other studies are concerned with the level of a pre-service teacher’s preparation to teach media literacy, this research directly addresses the implications of the teacher educator’s teaching for preparing in-service teachers to teach media literacy. Research on the ways in which teacher educators (McDonough, 2009) reflect on, and
assess their own pedagogy of *in-service* learning—particularly within the context of a soon-to-be literacy coach and reading specialist population—remains under-researched.

4. The study offers what can be called a “researcher-teacher educator methodology” in that the teacher educator’s research is used as a data source in conjunction with data drawn from her classroom teaching. This scenario presents distinct methodological challenges that call for accounting for both the teacher educator’s media literacy research ideas and her media literacy teaching ideas, and the ways in which they are similar or distinct.

5. Last but not least, this study is noteworthy for a new assessment tool: the teacher student survey. Designed specifically for this study, the survey helps to capture in-service teacher students’ preliminary knowledge about media literacy at the beginning of the course. Media literacy researchers and practitioners can benefit from use of this assessment tool to help gauge teacher knowledge of, and pedagogy for, media literacy.

**Dissertation Layout**

This chapter has provided an overview of the study, including the rationale and context for the study and the conceptual framework. Chapter 2 provides a literature review that maps out the research tradition informing the methodology and research design of the study. Chapter 3 covers research methods, and provides a description of the methods for data collection and analysis employed in the three empirical chapters that follow. Chapter 4 provides an analysis of data addressing teaching tensions surrounding critical as opposed to new/21st century literacies approaches. Chapter 5 provides an analysis of data addressing teaching tensions of media literacy as either content or process. Chapter 6 provides an analysis of data addressing teaching tensions of media literacy in terms of stakeholder pressures. The final chapter is the conclusion, which highlights some of the limitations and implications of the study, opportunities for future research,
and final thoughts and new insights regarding what the data reveal about the tensions involved in teaching media literacy in a teacher education setting.
Table 1.1

*Definition of Terms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching tensions</td>
<td>Key sources of conflict or competition that are implicitly or explicitly addressed by pedagogical choices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>The ability to construct meaning from (typographical) text (Gee, 2005).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media literacy</td>
<td>The ability to construct meaning from post-typographic mediated texts, to identify, evaluate, and analyze codes and conventions of such texts as well as producing and practical work with media (Hall, et al., 1980; Hall, 1997; Sefton-Green, 1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>Problem-posing and constructivist instructional practices, with particular attention to reflection on such teaching (Freire, 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media literacy instruction</td>
<td>Teaching strategies designed to promote the intellectual process of constructing meaning from post-typographic mediated texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media literacy pedagogy</td>
<td>Problem-posing and constructivist teaching that nurtures learning to identify, evaluate, and analyze and create codes and conventions of typographic and post-typographic mediated texts; the process of producing and practical work with media, with particular attention to the reflection on such teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media literacy education</td>
<td>The teaching and learning processes of becoming media literate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical media literacy</td>
<td>The ability to analyze how media codes and conventions construct stereotypes and social hierarchies, convey dominant values and ideologies, as well as competencies to interpret the multiple meanings and messages generated by media texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical media literacy pedagogy</td>
<td>Problem-posing and constructivist teaching that nurtures critical media literacy, with particular attention to reflection on such teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New/21st century media literacies</td>
<td>The ability to understand and shape the ways in which digital media challenge and re-inscribe multiple literacies (e.g., visual, auditory, print, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New/21st century media literacies pedagogy</td>
<td>Teaching that nurtures the ability to understand and shape the ways in which digital media challenge and re-inscribe multiple literacies (e.g., visual, auditory, print, etc.), with particular attention to reflection on such teaching.</td>
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CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW: EMPIRICAL STUDIES OF MEDIA LITERACY TEACHING AND LEARNING

This chapter reviews the literature on media literacy education, with a particular emphasis on the methodological traditions that help to rationalize the use of case study methodology and of exploratory triangulation for the design of the study. The relevance of the research questions is provided in the previous chapter, so not discussed here.

Methodological Field Questions

Coverage of empirical studies of media literacy education to help shed light on how to understand tensions in teaching media literacy in teacher education begins by addressing certain important field questions: How do literacy researchers and media studies scholars study media literacy teaching and learning empirically? More specifically, what are the dominant methodological traditions that inform such research? Which studies help to illuminate and clarify our knowledge of media literacy educational practice, particularly for English language arts classrooms? Based on the field’s methodological orientation, what questions might media literacy educators raise to contribute to the field’s empirical understanding of media literacy pedagogy? That is, what questions have not yet been asked in the field, and are worthy of systematic and rigorous investigation? In light of the tensions framework of teaching media literacy in teacher preparation contexts (i.e., media literacy pedagogy, media literacy learning outcomes, competing and complementary camps), research on the phenomenon of media literacy teaching and learning stems from previous empirical scholarship drawing upon inoculation/interventionist studies on the one hand, and cultural studies/critical pedagogy on the other (Kubey, 2003; Scharrer, 2002). It turns out that the field tends toward experimental and quasi-experimental pre- and post-test designs, typically when media literacy is viewed from a
behavioralist standpoint, and toward case study and various interpretivist methodologies on the other, often when taking an inquiry stance to media literacy teaching and learning (Alvermann and Hagood, 2000; Duran et al., 2008; Leard and Lashua, 2006; Staples, 2010a, 2010b).

**Calls for Empirical Research on Media Literacy Education**

Calls for empirical research on media literacy have been echoing throughout the academy for some time, with conflicting claims about what is needed (e.g., see Martens, 2010). In their review of empirical research on media literacy, Singer and Singer (1998) observed that since the growth of media literacy in the 1970s, “… many of the curricula that are currently available have not been empirically tested” (p. 173). These psychologists point to a rich theoretical tradition of media literacy foregrounded by educators like Masterman and theorists like Silverblatt, a tradition rooted in efforts to understand a child’s ability to think independently and a child’s sense of reality. Drawing from Huston and Wright (1982), Singer and Singer also note that, “the development in cognitive skills, linguistics competence, and world knowledge” (p. 166), is the result of television literacy, but a paucity of hard evidence undercuts its institutionalization in K–12 curriculum circles. Krueger (1998) and Hoffman (1999) underscore Singer and Singer’s concern, noting that there is only anecdotal evidence that media literacy works. As an English teacher, Krueger conveyed her frustration at a conference in which she failed to find any scholarship that spoke directly to evidence of the outcomes of media literacy instruction for English studies. Even Hoffman, who had undertaken a systematic study of three hundred secondary students via pre- and post-surveys and interviews, concluded that, “[t]hose of us who teach general semantics and media literacy can anecdotally report the influence in our classrooms every semester. But, additional empirical research is needed to offer support for this and [the] anecdotal evidence” (p.167). For Scharrer (2002), outcomes-research is paramount.
Little research exists that has defined and tested these or other anticipated outcomes from a social science research perspective. Though there are noteworthy exceptions..., research evidence supporting the effectiveness of media literacy curricula is generally rare. More effort is needed to discover (a) whether critical thinking has increased and whether critical viewing has been encouraged, (b) whether students are asking questions about the media, and (c) what other outcomes are appropriate in determining the effects of participation in media literacy (p. 354).

Kubey (2003) explicitly names the sort of empirical social scientific research that might best lead to an efficacious media literacy curriculum. “To date, there is limited hard, experimental evaluation research demonstrating the efficacy of media education or the transfer of analytic skills to other realms of critical thinking” (p. 366). Martens (2010) echoes this conclusion, stating that “many media literacy curricula appear to have more success in changing knowledge than in changing attitudes or behavior.” (p. 13)

A common area of methodological underdevelopment involves the lost voices of instructors, which might have led the researchers to perform interviews (i.e., to focus on process and not simply content). The first author of the 1985 Kelley, Gunter and Kelley study used students at his high school to develop the intervention. Perhaps asking the teachers (e.g., Kelley interrogating himself) about instructional techniques would have sufficed to lay the groundwork for more fully understanding the results of the experiment. This silence lies behind research question R1: should research—or, in the present study, the pedagogy for teaching teachers—regarding critical media literacy itself involve critical methods? Regardless of the answer, the Kelley, Gunter and Kelley study suggests that outcomes-based research for media literacy instruction tends to induce data collection methods that involve the development of assessment measures, which could then become a methodological staple of future media literacy education research.
Instrument Development-based Research

Perhaps the study mostly widely recognized as the pioneer in instrument development in the empirical investigation of media literacy education is *Evaluating Standards in Media Education*. Leading media literacy researchers Quin and Mahon (1993) tested 1,425 Australian fifteen-year-olds to evaluate pupil understanding of the country’s formal syllabus of English studies. The researchers aimed to assess the level of media literacy conceptual development, as reflected in the official curriculum, in an effort to ultimately identify effective and new teaching strategies for the acquisition of media literacy. Methodologically, the study can be understood as having a development, testing, and an evaluation phases. A team of senior English and media studies instructors first developed a syllabus to define what might be an appropriate level of media literacy know-how for each year in K–12 schooling. The team then developed instruments for the assessment of media analysis skills. The rationale for developing the instrument involved the hope that a “testing program might offer hard data as to the strengths and weaknesses of the media programs in schools” (p. 17), in light of political and educational forces that demanded proof of the rigor of media literacy for its justification as part of the English curriculum. The test assessed language and narrative media codes, production/circulation, audiences and values. The evaluation phase involved marking the tests and running statistical programs (i.e., chi square and t-tests) for outcome statements. Results showed a gendered significance, with females outperforming their male counterparts in media literacy analysis, and with English speakers outperforming their aboriginal contemporaries. Light television users outperformed heavier television users in textual analysis as well. The researchers concluded that there was a greater need for more
teaching for a *social contextual* and *ideological* understanding of media effects. The results also suggested additional teaching strategies that should focus on problem-posing concerns and intertextuality due to the “polysemous” (Quin & Mahon, 1993) nature of (media) texts.

Evaluation instruments have since improved (e.g., Byrne, 2009; Byrne, Linz & Potter, 2009). Nonetheless, Martens (2010) concludes that the inherent complexities and idiosyncrasies of samples chosen and methods utilized, as highlighted by this earlier study, continue to raise questions as to whether “results generalized to everyday mass media use.” (p. 9)

**From Technical to Behavioral Interventions**

With less of a focus on technical and textuality concerns, much empirical research on media literacy has taken the form of quantitative interventions that involve attempts to change behavior and attitudes. In *Teaching children to Evaluate Television Violence Critically: The Impact of a Dutch Schools Television Project*, Vooijs and Van der Voort (1993) debuted a quasi-experimental pre- and post-test control group design for media literacy learning and teaching. Working squarely within the media effects tradition, Vooijs and Van der Voort assessed teacher and student attitudes toward the Netherlands Schools Television Project. The goal of the curriculum was to “reduce the level of the perceived realism of television violence by making children more aware of the unrealistic nature of dramatized violence and of the salient differences between violence on television in real life” (Voorijs & Van der Voort, 1993, p. 141). “The schools television project consisted of six 20 minute schools broadcasts, accompanied by student workbooks and a teachers’ manual. The format of the programs involved excerpts from television series and films alternating with commentary” (p. 141). Three schools took part in the
project ($N=165$), with three schools serving as controls ($N=159$). The six programs consisted of: (1) different forms of violence, (2) the reality of police shootings, (3) the reality of crime investigations by private detectives, (4) the reality of crime investigations by police, (5) the reality of police using firearms, and (6) the use of violence to resolve conflicts.

Pedagogically, materials for the control group for the study used a didactic approach and scripted curriculum in which students’ workbooks accompanied broadcasts, and teachers used manuals. Students also watched recorded interviews with police officers, victims, and medical doctors who had actually carried out a range of activities depicted in the television broadcasts. Students also participated in decentration assignments. In the experimental curriculum, by contrast, the objectives and strategy were similar, but the experimental project was composed of nine lessons instead of six; the excerpts from television crime series used in the experimental lessons were replaced by segments from a more recent series produced by the Netherlands Schools Television Project; a video-taped presentation was shown with interruption for student reaction, with the control school equivalent being an uninterrupted television broadcast.

The study was also measurement-intensive. As part of the evaluation, Vooijs and Van der Voort looked at three measures: media literacy learner level of approval of the violent actions of “good guys” in television programs, perceived realism, and amount of information acquired from the curriculum. Interestingly, while not noted in the abstract as part of the methodology, teacher opinion of the schools project was measured from a random sample of 300 5$^{th}$- and 6$^{th}$-grade teachers via telephone survey. A series of questionnaires were administered to the teachers before the start of the experiment to see where students began with regard to the level of realism attributed to television programs depicting violence. The results showed that teachers participated in the schools television program in order to help students develop critical
approaches to television violence, and to reduce their students’ aggressive behavior. In the end, two distinct groups of educators emerged: media educators, or those who envisioned media as a means to improve pupil understanding of the constructionist nature of television violence, and behavioral educators, who envisioned media as means to alter child aggression, with media educators more favorable to the project.

The results of the study were somewhat mixed. In general, pre- and post- questionnaire results revealed that the project yielded children who were more aware of television’s distortion of violence, and who better understood the real-life consequences of such violence. Teachers also approved of the format with the Netherland Schools Television Project, and students found project lessons more instructive and useful than the experimental lesson. Children who followed the Schools Television lessons showed higher scores on the knowledge test than children in the control group; levels of the perceived realism of television programs depicting violence were lower in the experimental group than in the control group. The effects of the Schools Television program differed little from those following the experimental lessons. Moreover, children from the school project were better able to express what they learned, although there was little difference in educational effects across the experimental and control groups.

The role of media literacy instructors as research evaluators influenced the methodological frame of these first television studies. While the 1993 study by Vooijs and Van der Voort centered on media literacy learning framed as critical viewing of violence in television, their intervention recalls, in some ways, that of Quin and Mahon’s (1993). Indeed, while one set of researchers was carrying out their study in Australia and the other in the Netherlands, both of their data collection techniques involved an emphasis on instrument development. The difference is that, in *Evaluating Standards in Media Education*, teachers were
researchers and evaluators whereas, in *Teaching Children to Evaluate Television Violence Critically*, teachers were less involved. On the other hand, Vooijs and Van der Voort came to some of their conclusions by tapping into teacher opinions via telephone surveys as part of their evaluation methodology. Still, because the study employed a scripted-textbook curriculum that teachers simply administered, the Vooijs and Van der Voort study cannot address pedagogical concerns in terms of how media literacy educators’ strategies yielded the aforementioned results.

In the Kelley, Gunter and Kelley (1985) study, the authors were also the pedagogues of television literacy and where thus interested in the technical media analyses of their learners, but did not opt for instrument development in the same manner as the other two television literacy studies described here.

It is clear from these early studies of television learning and teaching that researchers felt the need to develop unique as opposed to standard, across the board assessments. This effort speaks to an implied assumption of non-standard curricular and pedagogical media literacy objectives—or at least non-standard ways in which to achieve them. Overall, the research described so far focused mainly on content and skills acquisition, but more recent studies have brought the process and practices aspects of media literacy pedagogy to the fore (i.e., as suggested by research questions R1b and R2).

**Beyond Television Studies: Pre- and Post-Interventions for Critical Thinking**

Key studies have looked into the impact of media literacy learning to support critical thinking and skills development. Feuerstein (1999), drawing from two hundred and seventy-three ten to twelve year-olds in six primary schools in northern Israel, developed research and control pre- and post-designs to understand the role of media literacy in the development of critical thinking. Grounded in the theory of skills versus infusion theory, Feuerstein hypothesized that
low performers would display greater gains in critical thinking as a result of media literacy instruction. To test her hypothesis, from February to June of 1997, Feuerstein employed a methodologically rich approach, administering media and language tests, conducting class observations, administering teacher questionnaires, interviewing media teachers, and conducting group interviews. The study failed to highlight results from all of the study’s various data sources, reporting largely—if not exclusively—from the questionnaires. However, this study is important, from a media literacy instructional perspective, because the students carried out critical studies and practical productions based on the well-respected British Film Institute model curriculum. Various media literacy activities were covered, including researching, defining and locating problems, processing information, decision-making, and drawing and evaluating conclusions. There was a video production undertaken in small groups, and multifaceted tasks.

The results showed a significant difference between certain learners, with the initial lower-performing group outpacing the higher-performing groups. The reason for this result, Feuerstein deduced, was that the lower-performing group had a stronger media literacy educator at their disposal, which sharpened their media literacy analysis skills.

This study is methodologically similar to that of Quin and Mahon (1993), because Feuerstein drew directly from the Australian scholars’ language and narrative pre- and post-tests for assessment of her Israeli population. Indeed, what stands out from Feuerstein’s study is that, despite a shift in focus away from television literacy to an emphasis on critical thinking skills, the methodological design remained consistent with the status quo, as a quasi-experimental intervention study to evaluate the outcomes of media literacy learning.
Much other empirical research on critical thinking and media literacy learning skills exists. Chief among these is Hobbs and Frost’s (2003) study, *Measuring the acquisition of media-literacy skills*. Over the course of a year, the researchers produced a quasi-experimental non-equivalent groups design involving 300 11th-grade English pupils, to assess their acquisition of skills for reading, writing, listening, and viewing media. Hobbs and Frost were responding to the research question: “How does media literacy instruction, integrated within a yearlong course in high school English language arts, affect the development of students’ message comprehension, writing, and critical thinking skills?” (p. 350) They employed the traditional pre- and post-questionnaire format, with a treatment group that received media literacy instruction, and a control group that received a standard English curriculum. The treatment group involved seven teachers designing and implementing a yearlong media communications program at a high school in Massachusetts, a program that was integrated into the high school English curriculum. Still, the curriculum needed to adhere to traditional academic goals of reading comprehension, interpretation, message analysis, as well as writing in order to appease orthodox K–12 curriculum stakeholders (i.e., parents and the administration).

But the following mediated non-fiction formats were front and center: print news and magazine articles to identify construction techniques, point of view, National Public Radio news commentary for omitted information and comparison, message, and purpose, and television news for teens. Pedagogically, the teachers engaged in media analysis from the perspective of genre theory, using cognitive apprenticeships, active investigation, meaning-making processes, and with instructional methods such as viewing, paired reading, journal writing, question sharing and production work. Scant production work resulted though because of teacher anxiety with the new
media, and their over-confidence as English teachers in the overriding value of print literacy.

The results showed higher reading comprehension and viewing for the treatment group. The control group displayed higher listening skills, but there was no significant difference in writing between the groups. Like Feuerstein, Hobbs and Frost entertained the question of the role of media literacy in cultivating media literacy skills, and studied the phenomena empirically via a quasi-experimental methodology. Subtle differences in methodology stem from, for instance, the populations studied, with Hobbs and Frost studying students in secondary English, as opposed to the primary school students found in Feuerstein’s study—who tended not to be engaged in subject-specific schooling practices. Both studies, like Voojis and Van der Voort, employed the concept of matching, as opposed to the randomized-controls that were evident in the Kelly, Gunter, and Kelley study, an approach which hinders the ability to arrive at causal claims for media literacy education. Of course, it is harder to get permission for randomization across than within schools as the unit of observation, because different treatment of otherwise similar students within a given school can create tensions. This problem helps to explain why the quasi-experimental methodology has been applied more often than its experimental counterpart.

Experimental research, particularly in tandem with quantitative measures for evaluation, continues to be attractive to researchers and policy-makers because it offers the promise of replicability and universality due to the “harder evidence” thereby generated (Martens, 2010, p. 11). But that promise has proved somewhat hollow in light of “boomerang effects” identified in recent studies. For example, media literacy interventions designed to make children resistant to gender schemas affecting women scientists can have the opposite effect of reinforcing those schemas (Steinke, et al., 2007), while interventions designed to suppress can actually increase children’s willingness to use violence (Nathanson, 2004; Byrne, 2009). By implication, the
empirical utility of intervention design does not necessarily lead to the generation of useful knowledge for teachers or policy-makers.

**Critical Media Literacy Intervention Research**

Not all intervention studies grounded in quasi-experimental methodology have conformed to standard media literacy teaching and learning conceptual models. Consider for instance Duran et al.’s (2008) study, *Holistic media education: An assessment of the effectiveness of a college course in media literacy*, which aimed to test the effectiveness of a college course in media literacy using what the researchers term “a holistic approach.” Other scholars in the field (Jhally & Lewis, 1998; Kellner & Share, 2005; Semali, 2000a, 2003; Shannon, 2011; Share, 2009) support holistic media education, which is another term for critical media education, where the analysis of media texts takes into consideration power structures, ideology, and the social contexts of representation in which texts are produced. Duran et al.’s study involved three hundred and eighty undergraduates from forty-four majors in a pre-test/post-test and control group post-test only, quasi-experimental design. Representation of students was an amalgam ranging from freshman to seniors. Participants were tested on interpretations of a sixty second television commercial for Kellogg’s Disney cereals. The experimental group was composed of forty-one communication majors, whereas the control group was randomly selected from one hundred and thirty-four students. An additional two hundred and ninety-four participants were employed to determine the factor structure of measures of media knowledge and influence, completing the “Knowledge of Media Structures and Media Influence” scale “to provide a sufficient sample size to determine the dimensional structures of the measures” (p. 59). The control group and auxiliary participants were recruited from introductory general education courses.
Like prior interventions in media literacy education, Duran et al.’s study included the administration of a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In the first, participants responded to three open ended questions about the video presentation of advertising. The second section assessed awareness of media structures and issues and perceptions of influence, which involved a five factor structure: awareness of the economic structure of the media, wariness regarding media activism strategies, an awareness of media advocacy groups, involvement in media activism, and media reform concerns. A detailed overview of the experimental course reveals that the course proceeded sequentially from themes involving, “I. Media Literacy: What and Why?” to “IV. Getting involved: How, When and Where?” (Duran et al., 2008). These themes each included theory, such as defining media literacy, as well as practice, such as creating websites, all in an effort to encourage active participation in media education. Departing from previous designs, for the first time the instructor for the experimental course also taught the control group in order to control for instructor effects in the intervention. From the syllabus, it is clear that instructional practices were grounded in media activism and brought a political economic perspective to media literacy education.

This approach was markedly different from that found in previous studies that focused mainly on television literacy, and framed media literacy education as a skills acquisition process. In other words, Duran et al. were concerned mainly, though not exclusively, with the institutional and industry analysis of media for evaluating media literacy learning. Duran et al.’s study, though methodologically consistent with the field in terms of its experimental-like design, departed pedagogically from previous empirical research by defining media literacy teaching and learning as a social cognitive political concern. The results suggested that holistic media literacy course learners displayed a greater awareness of media structures, such as ownership and control,
than their control group counterparts. However, it is also significant that the experimental participants were communication majors, each of whom had taken at least one media/communications course prior to the intervention.

What is also important to note methodologically is that the study is, like previously mentioned studies, largely about media literacy learning as opposed to media literacy teaching. Similar to Kelley, Gunter, Kelley, and Quin and Mahon, Duran et al. (2008) focused their analysis on an assessment of outcomes from intervention learning without incorporating data collection methods (e.g., conducting observations and interviewing) that could offer insight into the ways in which media literacy educators strategize the pedagogy of media literacy for the educational growth of their pupils. Duran et al. even admitted that the lack of an interview component weakened their study. “The results of this study should also be supplemented by qualitative research that uses in-depth interview techniques to enhance our understanding of how media literacy goals and objectives are interpreted by students…” (p. 65) This statement underscores that the researchers were more concerned with the perspective of the learners of media literacy over and above that of those who teach them. This is not necessarily a shortcoming, but does speak to a common trend in the field of highlighting learner concerns over and above teacher concerns with media literacy education. Duran et al.’s study also speaks to another design concern for empirical research on media literacy education, which centers on pre- and post- test designs that do not account for change at various time intervals other than the difference from the beginning to the end of the study. This deficiency, the researchers observed, called for a longitudinal approach (Duran et al., 2008).
Longitudinal Intervention for Media Literacy Education Research

Byrne’s (2009) study, *Media literacy interventions: What makes them Boom or Boomerang?* addressed this methodological chasm in the field by generating a longitudinal experiment for a media literacy instructional intervention. One hundred and fifty-six 4th and 5th graders were randomly assigned to one of two treatment groups or to a control group over a ten-week period. The treatments consisted of either a basic condition, wherein students received a lesson on media literacy concepts of violence in the media and in the real world by viewing PG-rated movie clips or an activity condition wherein children were exposed to the basic condition and then completed a cognitive activity by reading aloud a paragraph they had written about what they learned, or to a control condition in which children received a placebo lesson on common jobs in movies while watching clips as examples. The clips were followed by a short production activity where the children wrote a scene and were videotaped acting it out; as in the Voojis and Van der Voort study, the stated objective was to reduce the negative effects of media violence.

More than anything, the *measures* in this study are markedly different from those used in the studies previously highlighted. The researchers tested children at four intervals. During week one, a baseline test was administered to assess all three group levels of knowledge of media, media effects, viewing habits, and demographics, with the primary dependent variable as willingness to use aggression. During week two, all groups participated in a pre-test by watching a three-minute clip of the *Karate Kid*, and were then assessed foring the level of aggressiveness. During week four, all groups were given a post-test, which consisted of watching the stimulus clip, and again were assessed for
aggressiveness. During week ten, all groups were re-tested by again watching the stimulus before being assessed for aggressiveness. The results showed that the children in the control group reported no significant differences in their willingness to use aggression. Children in the basic condition reported more willingness to use aggression than the activity children at time three. However, from time three to four, children in the basic condition reduced willingness to use aggression. Byrne concluded that, overall, the cognitive activity did make a significant difference in reducing the willingness to use aggression, but there was only a small difference between the control and basic condition groups with regard to the same phenomenon.

Pedagogically, Byrne’s (2009) study borrowed overtly from cognitive science modes of instruction. The methodological design of the study—namely, a clear cognitive activity to define a treatment condition—grounded the evaluation study in a cognitive science framing of media literacy education. Indeed, Feuerstein’s (1999) intervention on the role of media literacy in developing critical thinking skills also speaks to a cognitive emphasis on modes of learning, and Vooijs and Van der Voort’s quasi-experimental study—another media literacy education study on the effects of television violence (and a precursor informing Byrne’s work)—also involves a cognitive science-laden methodology. Of course, it could be argued that media literacy education inherently involves a cognitive science component, particularly in helping learners to develop critical analysis skills. Still, more so than Feuerstein’s study, Byrne’s intervention suggests that foregrounding cognitive science in media literacy learning can shape the methodological framing of empirical research on media literacy education.
Contributions of Case Studies to the Field

While experimental and quasi-experimental pre- and post-test interventions dominate the methodological approaches to empirical research on media literacy teaching and learning (e.g., see Martens, 2010, p. 11), the case study approach has also made significant inroads. In one of their ground-breaking studies on media literacy instructional practices, Hobbs and Frost (1998) developed a mixed methods (i.e., qualitative and quantitative) strategy, using a case study and post-test only, non-experimental design to analyze the impact of the in-service teaching of media literacy on the learning of 210 9th-grade students across math, English, science and social studies classrooms. Within the context of school reform, Hobbs and Frost rationalized that the case study approach would allow researchers to best document the instructional practices developed by teachers in one school district, and to monitor teachers’ implementation of instructional media literacy innovations in the classroom. Use of quantitative measures, on the other hand, was used to focus on, “knowledge and skill-based outcomes of the instructional processes used in the classroom…for research on both teacher behavior and student performance” (p. 127).

Beyond methodology, what is significant about Hobbs and Frost’s (1998) empirical research is the emphasis of the effect of media literacy on teacher education and, in particular, on in-service teachers. The review of the literature provided earlier in this chapter shows that interventions tended to center on the education of the learner over and above that of the teacher in the field of media literacy education research. Here is one of the few empirical studies that took into account, and heavily touched on, the instructional practices that resulted in particular media literacy learning outcomes. The study included thick description of not only the practices themselves, but also of the conditions out of which media literacy teaching in this in-service context emerged.
Hobbs and Frost explain that these instructional practices were the outgrowth of a staff development program, which grew from summer staff development experiences at the Harvard School of Education, and particularly a course taught by Renee Hobbs to 30 teachers from the district. In that course, Hobbs drew concepts from the British Film Institute framework: audience, agency, technologies, languages, representation, and genres. The course included activities to strengthen teachers’ media analysis skills, along with discussions of issues portrayed in media that heavily affect youth, such as violence, race and class, social context. Once educators returned to their respective schools, they lobbied for the creation of a task force on media literacy because they became convinced that media shape youth lifestyles.

The teachers analyzed various types of television, radio, magazines, and newspapers, surveyed media curricular materials, and explored how the course helped with connections between current teacher practices and media literacy learning goals. This curriculum was realized in a unit of instruction project, with lessons and materials. From this course, teachers implemented what they had learned about the teaching and learning of media literacy as a result of a small federal grant from the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) in Washington, D.C.

What is also interesting, and markedly different here from the other studies, is that media literacy teaching had been institutionalized for several years in the local school, and in-service media literacy teaching was voluntary, involving a team-based cross-subject approach to secondary instruction. There were four teams composed of approximately sixty-five students each: the Chameleon Team, the Plaid Team, the Red Team, and the Gold Team. The Chameleon team took a coordinated approach and was the only team to write a detailed curriculum plan with outlined activities across all four subject areas, which included news-making, students’ daily
reading and analysis of the *Boston Globe*, as well as advertising analysis of target audience, appeals, visual and auditory devices, and the placement of ads in broadcasting. In math, logical reasoning and syllogisms prevailed. In English, students practiced writing news articles, press releases, and editorials. In science, students investigated representations of science in the media, such as performing a close analysis of the Alaskan oil spill non-fiction television programming at the national level in comparison with local television station coverage. In short, the Chameleon team, “used the widest variety of instructional practices to develop media literacy skills, including media literacy across all subject areas, using primarily teacher-generated activities and materials” (Hobbs & Frost, 1998, p. 131), balancing media analysis and production.

By contrast, the Plaid team chose not to use any of the proposed materials, and instead created their own. Social studies teachers chose to use short video clips from feature films such as John Ford’s *Grapes of Wrath*, documentaries for world history using interpretive questions for connections and paradoxes with history and the screen. Media production activities of students involved working in teams to create short videos about geographic regions by writing scripts, selecting and ordering six pictorial images and transferring narration and images to videotape. Red team instructions called on the students to develop a six week unit, with thematic lessons on Heroes as part of the ninth grade textbook English curriculum. They used off-the-shelf-curriculum materials, and content analyzed material from the *Beyond Blame* curriculum on media violence. There was also use of an Adsmarts curriculum for tobacco and alcohol prevention. Finally, the Gold Team served initially as the control group in the study, but ended up using the Adsmarts curriculum when a member of the team realized many students had started to smoke and use alcohol. In short, some teams organically created curricula, whereas others adhered to a scripted version, resulting in hypothesis generation but not hypothesis testing.
Like Feuerstein (1999), Hobbs and Frost (1998) drew from Quin and Mahon (1993), developing a post-test to assess student media literacy learning in which students responded to a paper and pencil test after access to a particular media text. The test was designed to identify target audience, author purpose, techniques, and more, focusing on textual analysis. The measurement instrument used a text from a television news program targeted at teens from Channel One. The assessment aimed to measure comprehension skills from multiple choice and open-ended questions, and specifically media literacy skills, media consumption habits and behaviors. The results showed that the Chameleon team outperformed all other groups in media literacy skills, such as target audience, techniques, newscast construction, whereas the Red team scored the lowest. As far as comprehension, the Plaid team did best, which may be due in part, as the authors observe, to the fact that students from this team had fewer television sets than did the others.

Clearly, employment of the case study approach has its merits in terms of allowing media literacy education researchers to identify instructional practices that can yield particular media literacy learning results. According to Hobbs and Frost (1998), the significance of the case study and quantitative methodology is clear:

This case study demonstrates the variety and unpredictability of various ‘entry points’ for teachers as they develop and refine their own reasons for deciding to include media literacy within the content of this existing curriculum… [Results of the quantitative research on students’ learning showed that] students’ media literacy skills were highest for those students participating in a program of instruction where media education activities are integrated across all subject areas, where teacher-generated activities and materials were used, where explicit connections were developed across subject area, where both analysis and production activities were included, and where explicit instruction in various genres (e.g. including news, documentary, and advertising) was included. (p. 139)

What Hobbs and Frost’s conclusions underscore is that the case study helped researchers to tap into, and zero in on, the instructional practices that fostered particular kinds of media literacy
learning. The quantitative measurement could then assist with generating additional empirical data about the relationships between media literacy teaching and learning to respond to questions such as: “What kinds of classroom practices build what sorts of media literacy skills? [and] what styles of instruction best support students’ ability to engage in critical analysis of media texts?” (p. 127).

While the case study has enriched outcomes-based pre- and post-test research, the case study can stand on its own as a methodological frame for the evaluation of media literacy education. Williamson (1999) employed this methodology to respond to questions centered on how new communications technologies altered our understanding of media literacy, and how media subjects could be made relevant to students who had followed different educational pathways prior to entering a first year undergraduate media literacy course. With 250 participants, Williamson applied the case study approach to the course, Media Communications Research, which involved web-based flexible learning. The media literacy course was delivered in two modules: the first was the Australian media-scape, which introduced institutions, policies, and histories of press, radio, film, and television, with attention to the international context; the second involved setting up project work to develop research capacities and explore the implications of using institutionally-based genres of media writing. In contrast to earlier empirical scholarship, Williamson used informal feedback from media literacy instruction for administering assessment work, and a subject evaluation questionnaire was administered to show disciplinary competencies and skills relevant to various production and studies majors. The results showed that the course failed to solve the problems involved in introducing an array of media practices, issues and techniques to the diverse group of students who took up the subject. Williamson’s case study, however, like Hobbs and Frost’s, provided a greater understanding of
the contextual nature of media literacy instruction through the application of the case study as the methodology to highlight the details of the evaluation without hard quantitative data to support research claims. It appears that for Williams, the case study served less as an actual evaluation tool measuring “What Works” (United States Department of Education, 2010), than a way to uncover “What is taking Place.”

The utility of the case study for empirical research on media literacy education is located in its ability to evaluate the subtleties of media literacy learning, subtleties that are difficult or impossible to gauge via an exclusive pre- and post-test design. Shannon’s (2011) research supports this logic, arguing that applying a critical focus to issues and experiences found in the day-to-day lives of students – or taking students where they are at a place and point in time – is key to developing an understanding of critical media literacy; quantitative approaches necessarily preclude the exploration necessary to discern where a specific group of students are located.

Alvermann and Hagood’s (2000) research also underscored this point by showing that the infusion of popular music instruction in a secondary education curriculum could lead students to critical analysis. In an attempt to respond to a question regarding the capacity for reading enthusiasts to display a similar zeal for adolescents’ diverse literacy practices, Alvermann and Hagood theorized and put forth the notion of “fandom” in a critical media literacy instruction context. Zeroing in on two adolescents—Sarah and Max—this evaluation study cast these literacy students as reflexive learners of popular music, emphasizing the ways in which they marked their preferences for musical genres.

The results showed that while the subjects diverged on levels of active reading of musical texts, at times rejecting the idea of being part of the fandom phenomenon, the evidence
suggested otherwise, and that Sarah and Max were indeed engaged in fandom. Max’s fandom was realized through social connections with those such as his physics and literature teachers, who shared an affinity for similar rock bands, whereas Sarah’s fandom identity came from her keen textualist approaches. Pedagogically, introducing the lyrics of songs with which students proclaimed an affinity induced the students to view literacy learning as pleasure. Parody and imitation emerged as additional strategies for critical media literacy learning that invited students to “act on” what they already knew, in order to strengthen their literacy resolve. Alvermann and Hagood’s research adds significantly to the conversation on empirical knowledge of media literacy education by suggesting ways that media literacy educators can decrease the high and low culture divide in the classroom—a central concern of the critical media literacy curriculum. Moreover, their analysis centered on claims that musical tastes were indicative of socio-economic class status, as evidenced by Max’s preference for Pink Floyd. Learning about students’ musical backgrounds could be a segue into a metacognitive discussion of the larger forces that directly impact students’ lives.

Case studies continue to develop, and highlight the importance of careful design and substantial interventions, rather than minimal, short-term efforts. For an example of the latter, Domine (2012) carefully explored qualitative results from exposing 99 college freshman to three distinct television media messages – an advertisement, a public relations message, and a news broadcast – and found minimal effects.

The Case Study in Tandem with Other Interpretivist Methodologies

While case studies have improved empirical understandings of media literacy, it appears that researchers prefer to use the methodological approach in tandem with others. Leard and Lashua (2006) used this approach and included a range of interpretivist methods for the
evaluation of media literacy teaching and learning. Similar to the Duran et al. (2008) and Alvermann and Hagood (2000) studies, Leard and Lashua’s research is grounded in critical notions of media literacy education. Ethnographic bricolage and a case study inform research on the ways in which marginalized youth of color made use of popular culture, particularly rap music, to voice their contentions with public schooling and daily life in general.

Methodologically, Leard and Lashua’s study included interviews, focus-group discussions, and participant observations over a two-month period, with twelve students and a staff of eight as their sample size. Two cases—a secondary charter and a private school—served as the units of analysis; narrative, arts-based and performative methods were the common instructional approaches. One case highlighted how a school used popular theatre and critical literacy to connect with students’ experiences where focuses on narratives in rap songs could help to build respectful classroom relationships with disengaged youth. Results included emancipatory praxis among the youth and instructors alike as well as confidence positions, increased listening skills, shared dialogue, and improved knowledge of the politics of representation.

Another contribution of the Leard and Lashua study to the field of media literacy education was through their overt consideration of the subjectivity of the researcher with respect to the human participants of their study as necessary for the successful practice of critical evaluation research. In a section on “Locating the Research,” the researchers expressed a teacher-researcher tension.

We… shared similar concerns about negotiating our own positions with students as white, older, educated, and relatively affluent people in positions of authority. We both sought to break down hierarchical structures of authority throughout teaching practices as staff members at these schools. Additionally, we wanted to incorporate these same approaches to our doctoral projects in these contexts. Brett’s music-creation option class was well suited to this approach. Diane’s
practice considered the use of popular theatre, photography, and video as tools for literacy development. (Leard & Lashua, 2006, p. 246)

Instead of inoculation/interventionist concerns, *Popular Media* reminds media literacy education researchers that teaching practice should be consistent with research practice, particularly when the goal of literacy development is to break down hierarchies. While the Gunter, Kelly and Gunter study, for example, included teachers-as-researchers as well, it was Leard and Lashua who injected the importance of media literacy researcher self-interrogation as part of the methodology. However, it is also true that the two studies were asking distinct sets of questions regarding the teaching and learning of media literacy: the former was concerned with measuring skills acquisition, whereas the latter was concerned with building agency. Such divergent research agendas set the tone and methodological trajectory of both studies, with one tending toward randomized experimental design, and the other arriving at a case study and ethnographic bricolage for evaluation.

**The Case Study as a Method for Understanding Teacher Education**

Considering only the research that has employed the case study method, one might argue that Flores-Koulish’s (2005) work stands out. The significance of the work lies first in the study’s population parameters. *Teacher Education for Critical Consumption of Mass Media and Popular Culture*, touches on the learning experiences of pre-service elementary education students. Flores-Koulish averred that the study was “designed to explore the media worlds of undergraduates enrolled in elementary education” (p. 99). The study was also centered on their awareness of media literacy as an emerging area of literacy education, and the significance of learning how to incorporate this literacy area into the K–12 curriculum. The contribution of the study rests in part on its focus on pre-service elementary, as opposed to secondary, learners.

The second layer of importance of the study lies in the methodology applied. As
mentioned, Flores-Koulish’s work was an empirical case study of 25 pre-service “elementary teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes” about their level of preparation to teach media literacy according to stipulated education mandates from NCATE and the state of Massachusetts. From this population, Flores-Koulish culled a subgroup of five elementary learners to develop a deep understanding of their views regarding the process of becoming media-literate through exposure in coursework, and the extent to which they were ultimately prepared to teach media literacy. Methodologically, the study stands out as what Flores-Koulish might call an “intervention,” in that these pre-service teachers were intentionally exposed to communications curricula and “tested” for it (p. 110).

On the other hand, Flores-Koulish maintained that her study was not quasi-experimental research because of the “testing” methods of interviews and discussion groups used. Nor did she conduct action research because “…participants did not have the opportunity to make any particular changes in their organization or structure” (p. 110). A researcher-developed survey was employed to get a sense of pre-service learners’ media consumption habits and skills. In the end, Flores-Koulish concluded:

...[D]ata from the survey, interviews, and discussion groups show that...[pre-service elementary education learners] self-reported perceptions of media consumption are low, both from home and their schooling, and, along with that, the degree to which they are knowledgeable about media analysis is limited. Their abilities for deep pedagogical and curricular awareness for media literacy compound this deficit. (p. 99)

Flores-Koulish surmised that for this pre-service population to actualize media literacy, their teacher education needed to account for media literacy content knowledge as pedagogical content knowledge, curricular knowledge, and subject matter content knowledge. The teacher education that her participants received was insufficient to acquire pedagogical content knowledge, in large part because they lacked subject content knowledge. But the methodology of
the study also revealed that by conducting the “intervention,” pre-service learners also felt “empowered” through sheer exposure to this new area of literacy, and the possibilities it opened up to connect with students.

**The Trajectory of Media Literacy Education as Rationale for this Study**

This review of the literature suggests that teacher educators have been vested in media literacy learning, but with a greater focus on behavior and skills development over and above engagement and peer interaction in media literacy education. What is also telling is that there is a preference for outcomes-based research of media literacy learning over and above teaching, and with research on media literacy teaching that privileges in-service, over and above pre-service, instruction. Further, research on the in-service teaching of media literacy has primarily focused on the context of the K–12 classroom, over and above the university teaching and learning context.

The larger setting for this research involves the fact that efforts to institutionalize media literacy in the K–12 English language arts community have been contentious (Kubey & Baker, 1999), and media literacy is only slowly and tentatively making its way into teacher education circles as a legitimate subject of study for literacy educators. Particularly in light of the empirical research of Hobbs and Frost (1998, 2003), media literacy educators should expand Kubey’s (1999) question to pose the following: Has media literacy found a curricular foothold in teacher education? Scant research (e.g., Hobbs, 2007) taps into the following question: What are the implications for the ways in which one might evaluate such pre-service or in-service media literacy instruction and pedagogy? While efforts to measure media literacy learning and to develop associated instructional practices for in-service teaching have been documented, media education researchers have overlooked assessment and inquiry efforts in pre-service teacher
preparation contexts. Even today, “little is known about teachers’ actual classroom practices” (Martens, 2010, p. 9) and, to evade the issues of teacher education and behavior entirely, some research uses controlled settings with video fragments as media interventions (Reichart, et al., 2007; Ramabubramanian, 2007; Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007).

As media literacy courses gain headway in the teacher education curriculum, literacy researchers and teacher educators must find ways to gauge empirically, not only student or teacher understandings, but also pre-service student teacher or teacher student understandings of the ability to “analyze, evaluate, or produce” (Martens, 2010, p. 1) print and non-print texts and information in K–16 literacy circles. This is the issue addressed by research questions R1b and R2, with the prior inquiring into the learning of pedagogy for skills as opposed to practices, and the latter focusing on tensions between media literacy as process as opposed to content. It seems likely that a singular focus on skills and content in the education of media literacy educators will not adequately prepare them for success with their students.

An empirical study of how the conceptual framework provided here works in practice in regard to the various stakeholders, the issue at the core of research question R3, is particularly important for educators in the age of accountability (Considine, 2002). It is the practicality of media literacy teacher education that must be put under a microscope when teachers and teacher educators are under pressure from competing and complementary stakeholders to elucidate the relevancy of media literacy to literacy studies. In the age of high-stakes testing, pre- and in-service learning and teaching of media literacy stands to gain credibility from assessment and inquiry measures. As a result, program evaluation research may become important for media literacy education in the future (Schwarz, 2001).

Despite the paucity of empirical research on media literacy education, the field has
produced scholarship that is methodologically rigorous. However, studies that have historically led the field tended to be quantitative interventions for behavioral/attitudinal change and for the media literacy skill acquisition of learners. On the other hand, the field has made use of the case study along with other methods to hone in on media literacy education practices. For those who are interested in pedagogy, particularly within the tensions framework of teaching media literacy in teacher education, it behooves media literacy educators to employ methods that help *to inquire* directly about the ways in which media literacy education addresses reflection, theory, practice, and beliefs. This is evident in Stein and Prewett’s (2009) study which details the instructional practices that induce particular kinds of media literacy learning. This scenario may call for a greater reliance upon mixed methods research or for more qualitative interventions (Fuller, Damico, & Rodgers, 2004) to create empirical understandings of the best ways to enhance the literary lives of students as well as teachers. Future empirical research on media literacy for language arts should employ methodologies that go beyond behaviorist models of investigating phenomena, and that strengthen our understanding of advanced teaching and the learning of instructional practices and activities of media analysis and production that help media literacy educators to reflect on and improve their media literacy pedagogy in the classroom. It is for this reason that the case study methodology is used for the present study.
CHAPTER 3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This dissertation is a case study. The value of the case study approach is explained by a focus on the pedagogy of a teacher educator. The goal of the case study is to operationalize the tensions framework empirically to gauge the extent to which it is relevant in an actual media literacy teacher education environment. In other words, use of the case study methodology is premised on the need to study media literacy teacher education in an actual teaching/learning context (Pollock, et al., 2010). Moreover, use of the case study approach can help answer the “how” research question by providing a microscopic view of the teaching tensions phenomena under study.

Twenty-three students—most of whom are in-service teachers—provide student-level observations. The field research site is a media literacy education course, which is a required course for the Masters in Education (M.Ed.) Literacy and Reading programs, respectively, at a university on the East Coast. The teacher education program itself is part of the School of Education at the university.

**Research Design**

This study uses an exploratory triangulation design. The case study is “exploratory” in the sense that the goal of the study is to provide a general overview of the parameters of instructional activity as well as of the teacher educator’s pedagogical decisions (i.e., helping to answer the “why” question) to include specific instructional activities at various stages in the course. The design is grounded in Tellis’ (1997) understanding of “triangulation” in the sense that “multiple sources of data” are analyzed within a case study context (Introduction, para. 6), and the case study involves “…situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear set of outcomes” (Introduction, para. 10).
There were six data sources, three of which were available or generated pre-course and three of which were generated during the course. Pre-course data sources included: (1) the teacher educator’s published research, (2) the course syllabus, and (3) a preliminary survey of the students. Course data sources included (1) Interviews with the teacher educator, (2) class (direct) observations (Commonwealth Association, 2010), and (3) teacher student artifacts. One of the interviews (coded “0”) was administered prior to the course, so the results of that interview are treated as pre-course.

**Pre-course Data**

**Teacher Educator’s Published Research**

*Teacher Education for Critical Consumption of Mass Media and Popular Culture* is the teacher educator’s published dissertation (Flores-Koulish, 2005), and was content analyzed. Flores-Koulish’s work is an empirical case study of 25 pre-service elementary teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about their preparation to teach media literacy according to stipulated education mandates. Here she also conveys much of her philosophical views on media literacy education. The text also provided insight into her views on media literacy from a learning theory and pedagogical perspective.

**Course Syllabus**

The researcher was granted access to the teacher educator’s syllabus in order to make the case to the dissertation and IRB committees for conducting the present study. The course was entitled “Media Literacy Education and M.Ed in Literacy and Reading Programs” (hence abbreviated to Media Literacy Education course). The syllabus for Media Literacy Education included: “required texts,” “course descriptions,” “alignment with professional standards,” “specific educational objectives of the course,” “conduct of the course,” “grading with
assignment descriptions,” “tentative course schedule,” “What Makes the University different with a discussion of [a religious] tradition,” and “a Few Good Media Literacy Resources for Educators.” Since the syllabus was from a previous semester, it clearly provides pre-course data.

**Preliminary Survey**

Consistent with previous methodological approaches to the empirical study of media literacy, the researcher developed a survey of media literacy teacher education (Stein & Powell, 2009; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2009), which was administered during the first day of the course. The survey was preliminary in the sense that it was intended to gather information on teacher student knowledge prior to any learning which might occur during the semester.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections (see Appendix A). The first section provided information on demographics, the field in which respondents teach and professional certifications and location (Stein and Powell report identical information, except they did not request information on professional certifications; see p. 137). The second section gathered information on the type and amount of media use by the teacher students, which is consistent with the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation study on media in the lives of 8 to 18 year olds; Stein and Powell did not collect these sort of data, but the information is of obvious relevance to this study, so specific items were developed by the researcher. The third section concerns level of media literacy learning as measured by level of familiarity (e.g., definition of, commonly used for, experience applying) for thirty-eight items on an eight-point Likert scale. Stein and Powell asked a single question regarding experience (2009, p. 138), so to provide more comprehensive information, the research developed these items. For the scale, “one” denotes the least familiarity with a media literacy concept, and “eight” denotes the most familiarity with a media literacy concept. Stein and Powell utilized a six-point scale while; in earlier research, the researcher with
previous colleagues utilized a 10-point scale (Hu, et al., 2004), so the eight-point scale was selected as intermediate. Examples of these familiarity items included “phonics,” “alliteration,” and “expository writing,” “agenda-setting,” “transmedia navigation,” and “the politics of representation.” A fourth section, also original to this research, asked teacher students to rate their level of media literacy pedagogical knowledge by asking them to provide definitions of the concepts “literacy” and “critical media literacy,” and by asking them to explain what they believe were “instructional practices, strategies, and activities” for “literacy” and “critical media literacy” learning. The final section of the survey, again developed by the researcher, asked respondents to write a paragraph on the following question: “What do you think are some of the pedagogical and learning challenges teachers face in teaching media literacy in K–12 schools?” The key word “challenges” was used to get at what in-service teachers would view as tensions of teaching media literacy without asking the question directly.

**Demographics.** Twenty-three teacher students responded to the survey. The age of the population ranged from 23 to 40+ years, with a little less than half of the class in the 23–28 cohort. Six respondents identified themselves as Black, and the rest self-identified as White. Respondents included one male and 22 females. All were native English language speakers and graduate students with the exception of one who self-reported as a “Special Student.” Majors included: reading specialist, literacy, and curriculum and instruction, with reading specialists, and to a lesser extent, literacy majors, making up the bulk (N=18) of the Media Literacy Education class. Average years of teaching were 7.45, with the minimum being 1 year and the maximum being 18 years. Content area of the in-service teachers ranged from elementary education, early childhood education and reading, to English, art, and Spanish. Most of the teacher students taught at the primary level; only three reported being secondary education
teachers. One student was an Educational Leadership student and therefore had not taught. All students who were teachers in K-12 schools reported being certified to teach in the state of Maryland. A few teachers possessed dual or triple certifications to teach in other states, such as Missouri, California, Colorado, South Carolina, Rhode Island, and New York.

**Course Data**

**Interviews**

Eleven interviews were conducted with the teacher educator. The first and the last interviews lasted for more than two hours, whereas the others were approximately an hour long. The first interview served as a pre-course interview to obtain biographical, philosophical, and educational information that informs the teacher educator’s pedagogy and design of the media literacy education course. As Appendix B shows, interview questions ranged from “What is Literacy? What is Media? and What is Pedagogy?” to “What is your impression, based on past experiences, of how your students (i.e., teacher students) view your media literacy instruction for nurturing them for the teaching workforce?” or “At a macro-level, how does or should the process of becoming media-literate contribute to the professional development of impending K–12 English/Language arts teachers?” (Interview 0, p. 2).

Beyond the preliminary interview, the other interviews following each class session opened with asking the teacher educator to touch on any general impressions, concerns, and insights. For example, in interview five, I posed the following: “So as you know, I always open these sessions very generally, let you touch on anything, any observations or challenges, mis-comforts, comforts, great ideas, what have you. So maybe let’s start with that. Your general impressions of how things went, where you’re at in the semester with media literacy education, your teachers, you know that sort of a thing” (Interview 5, p. 1). The interviews tended to close
with a general question about other concerns that were not raised during the interview itself. For example, in the same Interview 5, “Well on that note is there, are there any last comments that you want to share about the class? Things perhaps that I didn’t touch on that you like to have for the record or what have you? Other, other reflections or discomforts, challenges, the things that are going well?” (Interview 5, p. 13).

From there, the teacher educator was often asked about observations from the field notes (described below). This probing was intended to identify challenging situations that occurred in teaching a media literacy lesson. Consider the following exchange between the researcher and the teacher educator participant as an example of a question that aimed to inquire about this tensions phenomenon, where “N” denotes the interviewer, and “R” the respondent.

N: You’ve mentioned the Spanish teacher and she said something that I find really interesting and I wasn’t sure what to make of this because she was talking about you know the challenge of teaching media literacy in Spanish. And how she . . .
R: In middle schools. So you figure so they’re second or first year of learning Spanish.
N: Right okay. And she was saying how you know trying to do in the target language is clearly difficult and how she was going to have to sacrifice some of the content. And I guess I, I actually just wasn’t really sure what she meant by that in the sense that she would not be able to use the more if you . . . I don’t want to say the more sophisticated but the more you know expanded vocabulary that comes with media literacy education because she’s teaching 8th graders you know 8th grade Spanish level. Is that what she meant by that? (Interview 10, 2011, p. 7).

Many of the questions are also about the history of an instructional activity or the rationale for employing it in the curriculum. For example, in interview seven, I, the researcher, said,

I want to go directly to the critical literacy activity because I found that activity to be very important and engaging and a very central part of their teacher education within the context of media education. So if we can start first with you just giving a bit of background about that activity in terms of how you came to even create the activity and, and you know how you decided to put it at you know what place in the curriculum . . . in this teacher education curriculum and, and then we can go from there to you know more detailed questions” (Interview, 2011, p. 4).
In addition, often times there were straightforward validity questions asked to confirm recorded observations.

**Class Observations**

Class observations were conducted during each of the sessions except for two. There were originally thirteen class sessions, but severe weather conditions led to the cancellation of one session (the teacher educator attempted to make it up by combining the second and third class sessions). The researcher missed one, “Week 6: Media Production,” due to extenuating circumstances. A museum field trip, during week 8, was not formally observed, although the researcher attended the museum with the class. As a result, the observations numbered sequentially 1 through 10 match course weeks as follows.

**Table 3.1**

*Observations and Matching Week of Syllabus*

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For the class observations, field notes provide the major source of data. The field notes are a combination of notes gathered by the researcher that describe the teacher educator’s teaching of media literacy. They include, but are not limited to, discussions, learner questions, chalkboard and flip board notations, teacher educator power point lectures and teacher educator
generated class agendas. Overall, the field notes are highly detailed descriptions of what happened in each class session.

**Teacher Student Artifacts**

Five different teacher student artifacts serve as the third course data source: Media Memoir, New Media Exploration Project, Case study research paper, T.V. Advertisement Analysis Paper, and Media Literacy Curriculum Unit. These teacher student artifacts were used primarily to answer research questions R2 and R3b (in what ways does a media literacy teacher educator employ media literacy as process or content, and what are the implications of doing so for teacher student learners? And, in what ways does media literacy teacher education nurture teacher student pedagogy?). As analyses will show in the following chapters, each of the artifacts reflects not only a particular media literacy pedagogy that the teacher educator employed, but also the challenges and triumphs of media literacy learning within the teacher education learning context. Further, the evaluative comments from the teacher educator were analyzed to shed light on the direction the teacher educator was trying to point her learners towards as they began to not only learn media literacy, but also to develop pedagogies to support learners in their own K–12 classrooms. Descriptions of each teacher student artifact can be found in the data chapters, and the syllabus description served as part of the data analysis as well.

Artifact data were collected for five (instead of 23) students (n=5) to help provide a deeper but obviously less broad understanding of the course. Responses to the qualitative section of the survey were used to select those five teacher students for the artifact analysis, and two specific criteria were applied. First, the responses should be representative of understandings shared among most or all students in relation to several key concepts and relevant practices involved in this study, including literacy, media literacy, critical media literacy, and new/21st
century media literacy. Second, the students should exhibit a knowledge of the real-world, macro issues surrounding the teaching of media literacy, such as media overload and saturation, or the crowded curriculum and high stakes testing. While these criteria will not produce a random sample, they will generate a group of individuals who begin the course with shared conceptual understandings, but with a relatively greater understanding of the practical issues involved in developing their own pedagogy, and hence will arguably provide a more realistic view of how their pedagogical development within the framework of the course can translate into action in their own classrooms.

Methods

Data Collection

The first step in the data collection process involved retrieval of the teacher educator’s published research (Flores-Koulish, 2005). The second step involved acquiring the course syllabus for Media Literacy Education from the teacher educator. The third step involved conducting a preliminary interview prior to the first day of class with the teacher educator on her media literacy pedagogy. Afterwards, the preliminary survey was administered to the entire class on the first day. Shortly after administering the survey I began observing the instruction and pedagogy of the teacher education during each class session each week. I also conducted an interview with the teacher educator the day after each class session to validate direct observations and to understand the pedagogical rationale behind the teacher educator’s media literacy pedagogy used for teacher education. As the last step in data collection, copies of the teacher student artifacts were obtained from the teacher educator.
Data Analyses

Data were analyzed in concert with the research questions asked in this study. Findings are reported in Chapters 4 through 6. Chapter 4 focuses on teaching tensions relating to critical and/or new 21st century literacies pedagogy, and whether this form of pedagogy focuses more on skills or practices. Chapter 4 is concerned with research questions R1a and R1b (What pedagogical approaches does a teacher educator of media literacy employ [Critical or New/Twenty-First Century Literacies]? Pedagogy for cognitive skills or for socio-cultural practices? And, in what ways does media literacy teacher education nurture teacher student pedagogy?)

Chapter 4 begins with an analysis of pre-course data regarding the teacher educator’s use of critical media literacy pedagogy or new/21st century literacies pedagogy. I applied content analysis to the teacher educator’s published work, document analysis to the syllabus, and discourse analysis to the preliminary interview. I did this to identify clues regarding how the teacher educator might approach her teaching. I made use of these analytical frames to look for references to critical media literacy and new/21st century literacies and pedagogy for socio-cultural practices and for cognitive and vocational skills, and the manner in which Flores-Koulish, the teacher educator, described such pedagogy as consistent with her own or not.

The pre-course survey was analyzed next, beginning with an analysis of the thirty-eight items that comprise the media literacy construct via items analysis to gauge the extent to which the factors of “literacy,” “media literacy,” “new/21st century literacy,” and “critical media literacy,” respectively, are used to describe factors comprised of the particular items. The 38-items were analyzed using Cronbach’s alpha, which confirmed the validity of the factors themselves.
Next, field notes were analyzed to chart the breadth and depth of critical media literacy teaching by the teacher educator. The field notes were content and document analyzed for instances that spoke to critical media literacy. This could be as evidenced from reference to the word “critical” found in the title of Observation Two syllabus entries for “Expanding Notions of Literacy” and “Critical Literacy”/Literacies and Popular Culture in the Classroom.” Or such instances could occur in less overt ways with reference to such stalwarts as Noam Chomsky and Bob McChesney found in Observation 7. Field notes were juxtaposed with interviews, which were analyzed using discourse analysis. I extracted excerpts from the interview that referred directly to actual instructional activities catalogued in the observation under analysis, and aligned the interview excerpt with the observation. Identifying an actual tension in teaching came from the juxtaposition of these data, particularly as the teacher educator expressed in the interview uncomfortable moments that occurred when teaching or in response to an interview question about her teaching of media literacy in her teacher education class.

Similar to the analysis of critical media literacy, the next analysis uncovered new/21st century literacies pedagogy instances relying upon observations juxtaposed with interview data. Field notes served to identify actual new/21st century literacies educational activities and were explored further during the interviews. As the conceptual framework suggests, there was an overlap between the two. It is field notes that help to distinguish new/21st century literacies from critical media literacy. The agenda for class that the teacher educator passed out to her students at the beginning of each class session offered clear pedagogical direction in favor of either critical or new/21st century literacies in the title of the agenda itself. Additional ways to make plain the appearance of such pedagogies also lay in the activities, materials for activities, and discussion. For example, if the class were discussing the implications of adolescent use of
Facebook and other social media, then such a discussion would be marked unequivocally as a new/21st century literacies teacher education learning experience.

In addition, this section includes document analysis of the new media exploration assignment found in the teacher educator’s syllabus, juxtaposed with an interview excerpt, and with the teacher educator’s classroom comments in response to the URLs of five teacher students’ new media exploration projects. These comments were content analyzed to inquire into how the teacher educator was nurturing new literacies learning, and the challenges she faced in doing so.

Then, the ways in which the teacher educator advanced skills-based media literacy pedagogy, based on an analysis of observation notes, were highlighted. In addition, the teacher educator’s power point slides were introduced and triangulated with observations and interview data. The slides were content-analyzed for instances that illustrated a skills approach to teaching media literacy. This section included a description from the T.V. advertisement analysis paper from the syllabus. An interview with the teacher educator provided insight into her rationale for requiring the assignment, and the tensions that arose once her in-service students completed it. Moreover, this section included an analysis of skills questions from media literacy educator Frank Baker (2012) and from the Teaching the Levees curriculum that were part of the course. Analyses of these and additional power point slides in tandem with interview data allowed for stronger claims about vocational skills pedagogy that was supposed to be overruled by sociocultural media literacy teaching.

The final section of Chapter 4 addresses pedagogy for skills and practices, and includes analyses of observations (i.e., fieldnotes, teacher educator agenda, teacher lecture slides, etc…) triangulated with interview data. The teacher educator’s comments on the teacher students’
media memoir assignment were juxtaposed with excerpts from the assignment itself, and the teacher educator’s comments were analyzed for socio-cultural themes (e.g., role of family in media use).

Data analyses described in Chapter 5 answered the research question R2 (In what ways does a media literacy teacher educator employ media literacy as process or content, and what are the implications of doing so for teacher student learners?); results were used to explicate the foci of Chapter 5, which looked at teaching tensions—content or process. The teacher educator’s publication, syllabus, and preliminary interview were content, document, and discourse analyzed for clues about the teacher educator’s views on this tension. Use of field notes, along with teacher student artifacts, also helped to respond to this question. Close analysis of five teacher students’ final curriculum units shed light on the implications of media literacy teaching for content or process learning.

The bulk of analyses found in Chapter 5 is on the teacher educator’s comments on Final Curriculum Units, and on the units themselves, because such data speaks not only to what the in-service learners learned in an applied sense, but also speaks to the implications of their own learning for teacher student pedagogy. Textual analysis of the teacher educator’s comments allowed one to zero in on the extent to which the teacher educator was nurturing learning for media literacy as a subject or as a process for learning core subjects.

The analysis described in Chapter 6 centers on research question R3 (To what extent and how do stakeholders contribute to teaching media literacy in teacher education?), and this chapter’s focus on teaching tensions relating to stakeholder pressures. Field notes—in particular, teacher educator power point slides and interviews—served to respond to this question, and they uniquely revealed the structural forces that influenced media literacy education occurring in the
class. The syllabus played a secondary role in addressing the stakeholder question, particularly when referenced in the interviews. In addition, the teacher educator’s published research, syllabus and preliminary interview were content, document, and discourse analyzed with regard to how the interests of stakeholders factored into the course.

Like previous chapters, Chapter 6 makes use of observation and interview data. Field notes, particularly the teacher educator’s power point slides, were triangulated with interview data. The agendas and power point slides, when juxtaposed with the interview data, elucidate those forces that not only guided but influenced what and how media literacy was taught in the teacher education course. With regard to tensions, it is worth noting that interview data played a major role in revealing the tensions the teacher educator faced in teaching media literacy. These tensions can be identified during pedagogical reflection on the class session or in comments on teacher student work. They can also be found by looking at pedagogical practices—found in observations—and seeing any discrepancy in the kind of pedagogy the teacher educator professes and the pedagogy that she ultimately puts into practice.

Analyses of data in the next three chapters explores how the teacher educator’s media literacy pedagogy engages with some key tensions of teaching media literacy in teacher education.
CHAPTER 4. TEACHING TENSIONS: CRITICAL AND/OR NEW/21ST CENTURY LITERACIES PEDAGOGIES

The focus of this chapter is the third level of the teaching tensions framework: critical and/or new literacies pedagogy. The data analysis plan for this chapter was designed to answer the following research questions:

R1a. What media literacy pedagogical approaches does a teacher educator employ?
R1b. In what ways does media literacy teacher education nurture teacher student pedagogy?

Pre-course Analysis

Critical Media Literacy Pedagogy

Publication/teacher educator research. Evidence concerning the pedagogy for the media literacy education course came first from the teacher educator’s own research, which resulted in the publication, *Teacher education for critical consumption of mass media and popular culture* (Routledge, 2005). Clearly, the title of her work, which included the word “critical,” pointed directly to her belief in training teachers to read the media.

In addition to her research and resulting publication, the syllabus for her class suggested a strong interest in critical media literacy teaching and learning, beginning with the “Required Texts” that included Vasquez’s (2004) *Negotiating critical literacies with young children*. Again, the direct use of the term “Critical” in the title of that work suggested a critical media literacy pedagogy approach in preparing in-service teachers.

Still, the “Tentative Course Schedule” best underscored the dominant themes in the teacher educator’s pedagogical approach. Figure 4.1 contains an excerpt from the teacher educator’s syllabus. The first column includes the week of instruction; the second, the actual date of the class
meeting; the third, assigned readings for the topic covered on a specific date of the course; and the fourth, the class topic. A total of four topics may be viewed as relating to critical media literacy learning, with the last three class topics referring directly to critical media literacy. Week 7, March 3, included “Media Ownership, Alternative Media, & New Media.” The title of this class session may be read as pertaining to both critical and new/21st century literacies pedagogy. “Media Ownership” signifies pedagogy on the structure of media industry, and “Alternative” media suggests pedagogy on media in opposition to non-corporatist “Big media.” New Media, ostensibly as a topic of the course, reflects directly the sort of new media pedagogical approach that the teacher educators planned for the particular class session.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading to complete BEFORE CLASS</th>
<th>Class topic/Assignment due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 7  | 3.3  | *Chomsky  
*Media Ownership Charts  
*Jenkins et al | Media Ownership, Alternative Media, & New Media 
TV Advertisement Analysis Papers/Presentations Due |
| 10 | 3.24 | Vasquez, ch. 1, 2, 7 & 5 OR 6  
*Gainer, et al | Critical Media Literacy in the Classroom: Curriculum, part 2 
**New Media Productions Due** |
| 11 | 3.31 | *Flores-Koulish, et al  
*Student curriculum units | Engaging Students in Critical Media Literacy: Curriculum, part 3 
**Discuss Final Exam: Curriculum Units** |
| 12 | 4.14 | *McLaughlin & DeVoogd | Critical Media Literacy: How Can this Be Actualized? 
**Case Studies Due** |

*Figure 4.1. Excerpt of “Tentative Course Schedule” from Teacher Educator Syllabus*
Interview. Beyond the teacher educator’s research and syllabus, interview data suggested that she would teach her teacher students how to become media-literate and develop associated pedagogy by taking a critical stance. In the preliminary interview conducted on the day before the first day of class, the teacher educator disclosed that her pedagogical leanings are often toward the critical, and the classic critical thinking paradigm; “I see it [media literacy] as a journey. I try to take them through this journey in an effort to show them why things are the way they are…that [media] messages are intended to convince us to do things; there are power issues here” (Interview 0, p. 1).

In discussing the teaching philosophies that inform her own pedagogy of media literacy in the teacher education course, the teacher educator maintained that she takes a critical media literacy approach to consumption of media because such an approach was in line with the values of the institution in which she taught media literacy itself. “[Media literacy is in line with the views of] the type of faculty that come [here]. [Religious] education upholds a critical stance, the idea of questioning, makes sense at a [Religious] institution” (Interview 0, p. 3). For the teacher educator, the logic was simple. The institution at which she taught media literacy was a religious institution. The religious philosophy of education is one of questioning, of problem-posing—in a Freirean sense—of taking a critical stance. Therefore, the pedagogical approach that would be most in line with both her and her institution’s philosophy of education is the critical media literacy approach.

A further suggestion that critical media literacy would factor more heavily into the teacher educator’s teaching was her philosophy of education, influenced by particular educational theorists from whom the teacher educator drew support. In the preliminary interview, the teacher educator maintained that she was “…inspired by Maxine Greene…awakening of the imagination…the promise for media literacy to have the same space” (Interview 0, p. 1). That the teacher educator
cited Maxine Greene—the educational philosopher and teacher well-known for social activism—invoked a critical media literacy framework grounded in social activism.

Aside from her educational philosophy and preferred theorists, viewing her pedagogical approaches as critical is consistent with the teacher educator’s professional ties. In particular, her membership in a watchdog organization, the Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME), also alluded to a critical stance. The mission of ACME, according to the organization’s website, is to provide “Independently-funded media literacy education [that] plays a crucial role in challenging Big Media's monopoly over our culture, helping to move the world to a more just, democratic and sustainable future” (http://www.acmecoalition.org/). This tenet suggests a very transformative media literacy education approach, which is the ethos of critical media literacy. For the teacher educator of this graduate course in media literacy to align herself with ACME, she, like ACME, likely anchors her teaching most in critical media literacy.

**New/21st Century Literacies Pedagogy**

**Syllabus.** Although the evidence presented thus far suggests that critical media literacy would provide the dominant pedagogical approach for the course, other evidence suggested that new/21st century literacies pedagogy would be included. Consider the definition of media literacy education offered in the syllabus section entitled “Course Description”: “…media literacy expands notions of ‘reading’ beyond traditional print texts to acknowledge the various multi-literacies necessary for our 21st-century.” This explicit mentioning of 21st century literacies (with the plural), contrasts with the absence of any discussion of critical media literacy—at least not via a statement in the syllabus itself.

Moreover, direct references to new/21st century literacies as a topic of class sessions offered further evidence that new/21st century literacies as a pedagogical approach would not be
ignored. Figure 4.2 reveals that classes in Weeks 7 and 10 will include a look at new/21st century literacies as part of teaching and learning in the class. Specifically, in Week 7, teacher students were to have come to class having read the Jenkins et al. article with “New Media” as part of the larger class topic. Similarly, in Week 10, the “New Media Productions” assignment would be due. This phenomenon does not mean, however, that new/21st century literacies would in fact be a topic of the class that Week, since new media is in reference to assignments due and not to a class topic. Accordingly, by comparison to critical media literacy in terms of readings and actual direct references in the syllabus, new/21st century literacies did not appear to be very relevant as a pedagogical approach on the eve of the start of this media literacy education class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading to complete BEFORE CLASS</th>
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| 7  | 3.3  | *Chomsky  
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| 10 | 3.24 | Vasquez, ch. 1, 2, 7 & 5 OR 6  
*Gainer, et al | Critical Media Literacy in the Classroom: Curriculum, part 2  
New Media Productions Due |

*Figure 4.2. Excerpt from the “Tentative Course Schedule” in the Teacher Educator Syllabus*

**Interview.** Interview data also suggested that new/21st century literacies pedagogy would play a greater role in conceptual learning than in pedagogical practice by the teacher educator. In the preliminary interview prior to the first day of class, the first question to which the teacher educator responded centered on how she defined literacy. In her response, the teacher educator opined that literacy was about being “…a 21st century literate person…,” among other things (Interview 0, p. 1). Moreover, when delving into new literacies, the teacher educator lamented that “New literacies started
after [her] teacher educator training in media literacy education” (Interview 0, p. 1).

Accordingly, the teacher educator entered with a keen awareness of the fact that she had no formal education herself in new/21st century literacies, which suggests that she would favor critical media literacy pedagogy over and above new/21st century literacies for the education of the in-service student population.

**Pedagogy for Practices**

**Syllabus.** The evidence suggesting that critical media literacy would provide the dominant pedagogical approach also implied that teacher students would take to a practices-over and above a skills-based form of media literacy pedagogy. For example, an opening assignment, found on the syllabus, suggested that the teacher educator intended to foreground media literacy practices over skills while educating her teacher students. Consider the description of the following assignment, Media Memoir, which was intended to set the groundwork for media literacy learning in the course.

Write a reflection on your childhood experience(s) with media. How did your family use media when you were growing up? How did you experience the media at school? How did your teachers talk about (or not) the media, popular culture, etc.? How did the media shape you personally? This is a reflective piece, written in the first person, and is intimate, descriptive, and detailed. Maximum 5 pages typed.

As the first assignment, the questions raised by the teacher educator suggested her desire to focus analysis on the rituals—that is, the everyday, social practices of media use with which her teacher students were engaged. Key words such as “childhood experiences,” “family use,” “growing up,” and “teacher talk” all speak to a socio-cultural practices inquiry approach to media literacy education. Methodologically, the assignment underscored such intentions. The use of the “I”: the Memoir needed to be very “descriptive” and “detailed” as well. In this sense, the Media Memoir took on the form of
an auto-ethnography. From this vantage point, opening with a media memoir suggested a media literacy roadmap that was socio-cultural practices-based.

**Preliminary Interview.** Other data suggesting a social-cultural practices approach to media literacy included the ways in which the teacher educator talked about her own entry into media literacy education. In the preliminary interview, the teacher educator responded to questions about her prior training and education to teach the course in the first place. She began by talking about how she grew up in a working-class household where television viewership was normalized. The teacher educator maintained that traditional schooling was difficult for her, but she had in fact learned from television in ways that many of her peers learned from the classroom teacher. Financial constraints caused her to decide to go into the Air Force and from there to community college where she attended a short workshop on media literacy (Interview 0, p. 3). Indeed, she phrased her response to these preliminary interview questions in a manner reminiscent of a *media memoir*. That, coupled with evidence of a preference for critical media literacy and the primacy of the media memoir assignment, suggested that socio-cultural practices would factor more heavily than skills-based media literacy pedagogy in her course.

**Pedagogy for Skills**

**Syllabus.** Even though there was strong evidence regarding the dominance of socio-cultural practices of media literacy, there was also evidence that a skills-based approach would play some role in this media literacy teacher education course. For example, the opening definition in the “Course Description” of the syllabus read: “Media literacy education is defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate media in a variety of forms.” One could argue that this definition reflected the teacher educator’s skills-based sensibility—that is,
media literacy education may be viewed as involving a set of distinct analytical tools for reading and writing media texts.

Weaker evidence of what one was likely to expect pedagogically from the teacher educator was revealed in class readings. The other of the “Required Texts,” Jackson and Jamieson’s (2007) *Unspun: Finding facts in a world of disinformation*, reflected the teacher educator’s goal of grounding teacher students in fundamental media literacy education as propagated by classic communication researchers. Inclusion of *Unspun* did not speak to skills from an overtly vocational or inherently cognitive perspective, but to understanding how journalists can spin information for propagandist or distortion-of-reality purposes.

In addition, a TV advertisement analysis paper assignment spoke to a skills approach to teaching media literacy. What stood out in the description of paper assignment was the directive to “use the key media literacy questions as a start.” Taken from the Center for Media Literacy, the questions offered a method of reading and writing the media: Who created this message? What creative techniques are used to attract my attention? How might different people understand this message differently from me? What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message? Why is this message being sent? These questions recall the second level of the tensions framework for teaching media literacy discussed in the next chapter. While not etched in stone, these questions speak to a field-accepted analytical approach to media literacy education. To some extent, then, one would anticipate this teacher educator’s classroom instruction to go beyond a mere social-practices understanding of media literacy education to include media literacy education that would be procedural and systematic.
The Teacher Student Population

As far as media use was concerned, this in-service population represented a range of media use habits. The survey asked respondents to report on the amount of media consumed for fun or used for leisure the previous day. A little over two-thirds self-reported print use for an hour or less for leisure the day before, whereas close to two-thirds reported viewing television more than 1–3 hours. About half reported between 30 minutes and one hour of music/audio use. About a third did not report being engaged in social-networking at all, with the majority of the rest of the class reporting an hour or less. Nearly all, save for three, reported no use of video games. Similar trends were present for video websites, instant messaging, graphics/photos or “Other” media. There was a little usage of “Other Websites” and “e-mail” for leisure. Surprisingly, over half self-reported not reading magazines or newspapers online, and another one quarter reported doing so for at least five minutes and up to thirty minutes.

Background Information. The extent of the class’s media education training was low even for an introductory class in media literacy education. Sixty-nine percent reported that this was their first media literacy course—33% had taken at least one course before. In addition, 60% had not experienced additional training (i.e., through internships and voluntary assignments, or other means). Another 65% did not have professional experience in the media industry or as a media professional in an organization. Five students had such experience, however.

Validity of the Media Literacy Construct. The media literacy section of the survey included 38 items intended to pick up information on four distinct constructs. The four constructs, and associated item numbers (see Appendix A, section III) were for familiarity with “Literacy” (items 1-14), “Media Literacy” (items 15-27), “New/21st century Literacy” (items 28-32), and “Critical Media Literacy” (items 33-38). Given that items were developed for each
construct, exploratory factor analysis was not performed. Instead, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for each scale. Each scale or construct was reliable as indicated by a Cronbach’s alpha cut-off of .7 (Nunnaly, 1978), including “Literacy” ($\alpha=.85$), “Media Literacy” ($\alpha=.92$), “New/21st century Literacy” ($\alpha=.79$), and “Critical Media Literacy” ($\alpha=.90$). Note that these are the raw coefficients, which is appropriate given the same scale was used for each item (the standardized alphas are higher). Further, considering the possible deletion of items, the largest positive difference is for item 31 in the New/21st century Literacy scale, which would raise the alpha by less than four points (to .826) if deleted, again suggesting the scales are reliable.

**Media Literacy Knowledge.** Table 4.1 shows the average aggregate self-report figures for each of the four constructs or scales.

Table 4.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Scales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>5.158</td>
<td>1.108</td>
<td>2.857</td>
<td>7.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Literacy</td>
<td>4.239</td>
<td>1.478</td>
<td>1.231</td>
<td>7.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New/21st Century Literacy</td>
<td>2.687</td>
<td>1.300</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>6.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Media Literacy</td>
<td>2.754</td>
<td>1.594</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>7.167</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: N=23.*

As expected with a large population of reading specialists and literacy educators, in-service teachers self-reported the greatest degree of familiarity with literacy concepts (mean score=5.15). Knowledge of media literacy *per se* was lower, with a mean score for the twenty-three participants of 4.23, although not significantly lower (i.e., it does not fall outside of the
other mean plus or minus its standard deviation). The teacher students reported about the same level of familiarity with new/21st century literacies and critical media literacy upon entry into the course at 2.68 and 2.75, respectively. This observation was also consistent with correlation matrix figures that showed a significant (p < .0001) correlation between familiarity with new/21st century literacies and critical media literacy.

**Selection of Teacher student Sample**

While twenty-three teacher students enrolled in the introductory course on media literacy education, the work of five teacher students served as a means to answer the research question centered on “In what ways does media literacy teacher education nurture teacher student pedagogy?” As discussed in the previous chapter, criterion for choosing this particular cadre of in-service learners were applied to the qualitative responses they reported at the end of the preliminary survey. Table 4.1 indicates the variety of responses. The three columns are divided into three sections: an identifier for the in-service student, his/her own definitions of key media literacy terms, and his/her explanation of associated instructional practices, respectively. Within each column are four rows, with each row reflecting a definition of a media literacy term: “Literacy,” “Media Literacy,” “New/21st century Literacies,” or “Critical Media Literacy.” The rows to the left of each of these “term” rows provide the instructional activity associated with the term itself. For example, for the in-service teacher “Nicholas”, “Literacy,” is the ability to “read critically,” and an associated instructional practice would be “reading comprehension skills.” The grey row below the four previous rows signifies the in-service learner’s response to the final survey question of “What do you think are some of the pedagogical and learning challenges teachers face in teaching media literacy in K–12 schools?” For example, for Nicholas,
“pedagogical and learning challenges” of teaching media literacy in K–12 schools included:

“Media overload; filtering out junk from gold; Interest in non-21st century literacy.”

Table 4.2

*Teacher Student Survey Responses: Media Literacy Definitions and Teaching Strategies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Definition of Key Terms</th>
<th>Which instructional activities, strategies and practices do you associate with literacy learning? Explain.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td><strong>Definition of Key Terms</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas</td>
<td>Literacy—Able to read critically</td>
<td>Reading comprehension skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media Literacy—Using all forms of media in reading</td>
<td>Internet, comp, television, video for research &amp; reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New/21st century Literacy—Technology as a form of literature</td>
<td>See above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Media Literacy—Seeing media through a critical lens</td>
<td>Fact/opinion, bias/no bias, critical thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Pedagogical and Learning Challenges</strong></td>
<td>Media overload; Filtering out junk from gold; Interest in non-21st century literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Marie</td>
<td>Literacy—The ability to decode, identify, &amp; read words as well as comprehend what is read/heard/viewed</td>
<td>Reading; blending; writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media Literacy - Literacies outside of books (t.v., phone, games, internet)</td>
<td>Educational games (software)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New/21st century Literacy - Modern literacies (blogs, Youtube, Facebook, etc)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Media Literacy-N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Pedagogical and Learning Challenges</strong></td>
<td>One is that teachers lack the knowledge themselves of what media literacy is and therefore don’t understand a know how to teach it. Also, time is a big factor. There often is not time to focus on media literacy, especially with high-stakes testing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*continued next page*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Definition of Key Terms</th>
<th>Which instructional activities, strategies and practices do you associate with literacy learning? Explain.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jessica</strong></td>
<td>Literacy- All that is enveloped in fully knowing a content area, often refers to reading or computers. Not always eg. “computer literate”</td>
<td>Building background, increasing awareness, exploration, specific instruction experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media Literacy - Facility w. many media types. TV/WEB/GAMES/RADIO/IPOD etc.</td>
<td>Watching things, using computers, visual presentations reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New/21st century Literacy - Facility w/ blogs, zines, texting, laptops, visual presentations</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Media Literacy- Participating in media with an awareness of what overt or covert messages are being portrayed</td>
<td>Watching/listening &amp; country # of times X happens recording message (in writing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pedagogical and Learning Challenges</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>It is difficult to teach media literacy in a class that hasn’t mastered traditional literacy. Critical thinking skills are, ironically, often criticized. The hardware is not always available, but when it is we don’t have the right skills, programs, or time to set it up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Naomi</strong></td>
<td>Literacy- The ability to create and understand the written word.</td>
<td>Reading (for entertainment/information), inferring, analyzing written material, producing written responses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media Literacy - Creating or understanding/being familiar with types of media.</td>
<td>Creating songs, videos, commercials, etc. Analyzing news sources and commercials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New/21st century Literacy - Creating/being familiar w/ new types of media (ie—social networking).</td>
<td>Blogging, Twitter/Facebook posts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Media Literacy- Analyzing the effects of media on society.</td>
<td>Analyzing news content, commercials/advertisements and their effects on specific demographics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*continued next page*
Students are sometimes more “media-literate” than their teachers. They have grown up with and are accustomed to the incredible amounts of media they encounter on a daily basis. This presents a few challenges. First—it may be hard for them to turn a critical eye on something so “normal” for them. Secondly—their teachers may be unwilling to utilize the media tools @ their disposal either because of their unfamiliarity, or because they do not see the educational value/benefit.

While each teacher student’s unique responses to these questions captured their level of media literacy knowledge at the time they were initially surveyed, evidence indicated common themes among this group that revealed a sufficiently representative sample. Here, sufficient is defined as the basic distribution of responses for the entire media literacy teacher education class. For example, each teacher student surveyed offered a definition of literacy centered on reading, which is consistent with the larger population’s understanding of the term upon entry into the media literacy education course. Only teacher Naomi diverged from commonly held views with her definition of literacy, which included “the ability to create and understand the written word” (emphasis added). This definition suggested not only “reading” as part of literacy, but also “writing.” Still, even Naomi relied on reading as the focus of literacy when she offered
instructional strategies associated with the concept. As found in row four, column two, this included: “Reading (for entertainment/information), inferring, analyzing written material, producing written responses” (emphasis added).

Teacher students tended to view writing as an instructional strategy of literacy, but not necessarily as the conceptual underpinning of the term in a manner similar to reading. In her attempt to provide examples of literacy instructional strategies, teacher student Anne-Marie offered “Reading, blending, writing.” Naomi observed literacy instruction to be “Reading (for entertainment/information), inferring, analyzing written material, producing written responses.” Jessica, by contrast, refrained from referring to “writing” as a strategy for teaching literacy, and instead leaned toward an inquiry approach that included “background, increasing awareness, exploration.” Nicholas, on the other hand, saw literacy instruction as skills-based. So did Amanda, who was the sole respondent among the sample of teacher students to reference “phonics”—perhaps the most recognized instructional strategy for literacy among practitioners in the field (confirmed with an item mean score of 6.9 of the 38 items). (The only other item with a higher mean at 7.0 was fluency.) In other words, all twenty-three learners indicated high familiarity with phonics, but only some actually referenced it.

Like their definitions of, and associated instructional strategies with, literacy, teacher students defined media literacy by relying on references to “reading” or “literacy.” For Nicholas, media literacy was “using all forms of media in reading.” Anne-Marie defined media literacy to be “Literacies outside of books (TV, phone, games, internet).” Amanda observed that media literacy was “Literacy of media—TV, Radio, internet, etc.” These definitions suggest that teacher students saw media literacy as a continuum of literacy at the beginning of the course. By contrast, Jessica referred to media literacy as “Facility w. many media types.” Naomi’s rendition
included “Creating or understanding/being familiar with types of media.” These definitions highlight knowledge of media types in terms of the particularity of media forms with no direct reference to reading or literacy. Interestingly, as in her definition of literacy, Naomi added “creating” to her definition of media literacy. Her views, therefore, also suggest a production or writing component to media literacy as her way of viewing the media from the start of class.

With media literacy instructional strategies, things were less clear and often confusing for teacher students. In many cases, teacher students fell back on use of reading as an instructional strategy for media literacy. Consider that in his response, Nicholas listed various media forms, along with the words “...research & reading.” In a similar manner, Anne-Marie, instructionally stumped, offered “Educational games (software).” Jessica concurred, stating “watching things, using computers, visual presentations reading.” For Amanda, strategies to teach media literacy included “Reading stories on the internet—for example Starfall.” Departing from her peers, Naomi observed instruction of media literacy to be “Creating songs, videos, commercials, etc. Analyzing news sources and commercials.” Once again Naomi adhered to writing as a conceptual and a practitioner strategy for media literacy education.

Responses to questions centered on “new/21st century literacies” and “critical media literacy”—two distinct forms of media literacy—lend evidence to a fair-at-best conceptual and pedagogical knowledge of media literacy upon entry into the introductory media literacy education course. Teacher students possessed a basic understanding of “New/21st century literacies,” but without the instructional strategies base. Consider Nicholas’s definition that linked New/21st century Literacies to “literature Technology as a form of literature.” Anne-Marie employed the term “Modern literacies (blogs, Youtube, Facebook, etc.)” Jessica identified e-media to explain her position: “Facility w/ blogs, zines, texting, laptops, visual presentations.”
Naomi’s response was consistent with her previous definitions, noting the production component: “Creating/being familiar w/new types of media (i.e.—social networking).” Amanda, like so many others in the larger population, did not respond to the question at all.

With critical media literacy (CML), the definitions were not as great a challenge as were the instructional strategies that indicated a lack of understanding among teacher students of the practitioner context of the term. Nicholas maintained that critical media literacy was “Seeing media through a critical lens” and associated instructional practices were listed as “Fact/opinion; Bias/no bias; critical thinking skills.” The problem with Nicholas’s conceptual definition was his failure to define “critical.” The problem with his practitioner definition was more pronounced, as mention of fact/opinion and bias/no bias reflected what some might view as inherent media as opposed to critical media literacy learning.

Others were similarly unsuccessful in distinguishing critical media from media literacy pedagogy, while being sensitive to the conceptual understanding of the term. Jessica opined that critical media literacy was “Participating in media with an awareness of what overt or covert messages are being portrayed.” One could argue that such a definition is a necessary but insufficient definition of CML, which is predicated on identifying media portrayals and reading against the status quo. With regard to strategies to teach critical media literacy, Jessica pointed interestingly to a classic media studies technique called content analysis but without naming it: “Watching/listening & country # of times X happens recording message (in writing).” One could argue that counting the numbers of violent incidents in a Hollywood blockbuster is a means to employ an oppositional reading of a media text. Still, Jessica appeared unaware that the strategy she named for CML was an inherent strategy for CML or media literacy in part because she offered no explanation here when given the opportunity to do so. Moreover, this phenomenon
was further confounded by the fact that she did not identify the specific technique itself as content analysis or use such a description for media literacy.

Naomi, on the other hand, viewed critical media literacy through an overt behavioralist lens. Her definition included: “Analyzing the effects of media on society” (emphasis added). Unlike her classmate, Naomi’s definition of CML recalled the branch of media studies referred to as “media effects.” This area of media studies assumes that media have the power to directly influence how people think and behave based on sheer exposure to particular media content. For example, watching the film “The Terminator” would lead a young man to kill innocent people. Such a position, though, is counter to a critical media literacy pedagogical approach that empowers audiences to resist and offer alternative readings of mediated texts. In this instance, Naomi’s response could reflect CML pedagogy by speaking to how the Hollywood action-adventure of the Terminator constructs gender that equates masculinity with force, brutality, and killing.

As far as instructional strategies were concerned, Naomi drew closest to what critical media literacy might look like in an actual class with “Analyzing news content, commercials/advertisements and their effects on specific demographics.” Naomi adhered to an “effects” understanding of teaching CML as well, but also included “demographics” (e.g., age, gender, class), which is a unit of analysis central to CML. Others, as shown in Table 4.2, were far from even a cursory understanding of either critical media literacy or new/21st century literacies, choosing to leave some responses blank. This overall lack of understanding is consistent with the low levels of self-reported familiarity with both critical media literacy and new/21st century literacies found in Table 4.1.
The second criterion for choosing these teacher students to represent the broader media literacy education class populace was applied to their responses to the final question of the survey about pedagogical and learning challenges in teaching media literacy in K–12 schools found in the last column of Table 4.1. As a whole, these five touched on such concerns as media overload and saturation, lack of teacher training/knowledge of how to teach media literacy, crowded curriculum and high stakes testing, hardware problems (cutting-edge), and non-21st century literacies/not mastering traditional literacy. Despite entering the graduate course in media literacy education with weak conceptual and pedagogical knowledge of media literacy itself, views on learning and pedagogical challenges suggested that these teacher students also entered with a deep insight into real-world, macro concerns about teaching media literacy.

Course Analysis

Critical Media Literacy Pedagogy

Data suggests that the teacher educator employed critical media literacy over and above new/21st century literacies pedagogy. As were evident in the syllabus and interviews, the teacher educator took an overt, direct stance to critical media literacy pedagogy. By contrast, she often employed new/21st century literacies as an approach to teaching media literacy to teacher students with little, direct acknowledgment or awareness of employing the approach itself. The paucity of new/21st century literacies pedagogy can be best attributed to her own lack of training in this area about, a lack of which she was very aware.

Field notes showed some instructional activity aimed at teacher student collaborative learning as part of their media literacy education. Chief among those was grouping teacher students in two’s to discuss their favorite media examples, which included popular television shows and films (e.g., “Black Swan,” “Seinfeld,” and “American Idol”). This activity touched on
media use and taste as an aspect of media literacy education—a necessary, but in and of itself insufficient condition to media literacy education.

To address issues of critical literacy and popular culture, the teacher educator developed a power point presentation entitled “Literacy and Power.” Delivered in part as an interactive lecture on the evolution of literacy, the presentation’s content was developed to drive home a critical literacy learning goal. As the teacher educator moved to discuss literacy as discourse, she highlighted how it addressed issues of power, hierarchy and the dominance of certain social groups, using a mix of short films and readings. All course elements were designed to enable the teacher students to begin to see the teaching of media literacy at a functional level based on unique teaching strategies. But did instruction in class or explanation in the interview suggest uses for critical media literacy education? The researcher posed a question about the relationship between media literacy and critical pedagogy, to which the teacher educator responded:

. . .[T]here’s a heavy emphasis on critical notions in education in the C&I program. And so most of the C&I students have had a class on race, class and gender or they’ve had a class on educational innovations that’s looking at Charles Payne’s work in Chicago . . .[the] difficult questions about education and issues within . . . the next class will have us doing these kinds of personal action plans and and looking at ways to be able to make a difference in such a way that I may be able to hear them articulate how it resonates with them and the ways that they can see the benefits. (Interview 8, p. 15).

What stands out at this point in the course was that the teacher educator had few to no indicators of the extent to which—if at all—her teacher students “get media literacy,” “critical media literacy” or “critical pedagogy.” What was also clear was that strategies to teach media literacy could also be employed to teach critical media literacy, as evidenced by employment of simulation as a strategy to teach fandom as well as for reinterpretations of classic fairytales. Again, though, the question was the extent to which the class possessed this instructional insight into media literacy.
By the end of “Media Literacy Education,” the teacher educator was less interested in *if* her teacher students were using critical media literacy in their respective classes than *how* they were using CML. At that time, discussion was the overwhelmingly dominant activity in the classroom, reflecting the fact that the entire class was taught by listening to the teacher students discuss their final curriculum units. Everyone had a chance to showcase their final projects and to gain from their colleagues’ additional pedagogical insight on how to teach media literacy within diverse schooling contexts.

In the second to last class, an in-service student talked about her honest anxiety with teaching media literacy to her art students after having taken the course in media literacy. The teacher educator commented on the challenge faced by her students in doing an ‘edgy’ instructional activity with her learners in the art class. The following exchange between the researcher and teacher educator revealed that perhaps the art teacher should have held back a bit: the teacher educator felt that the art teacher had:

…found herself stumped pedagogically with the little thing she did in her case study . . . [she should take] a theory course on literacy theories and new media literacy theories [as well as] a course on media literacy pedagogies. These are all standalone courses that can help to deepen people’s knowledge base . . . .the one thing that’s kind of popping in my mind is that it comes down to the choice of texts . . . you only should choose something that you feel you can help navigate your students through and at the same time you might have students who will surprise you with questions and comments . . . it sounds like she probably chose something that was probably pretty provocative given that they made comments about racism . . . it’s a Title I school . . . .But they must also be comfortable with her to be able to go in those directions. (Interview 9, p. 3).

The problem the teacher educator observed for her teacher student had less to do with her introductory knowledge of media literacy than with how to teach on media texts that spoke to issues of race, class, and so forth. From the perspective of the teacher educator, the tension for the teacher student was that she took up a media literacy education topic that could have been not
only beyond her purview, but in line with that of her students in the Title 1 school. While the teacher educator did not touch directly on this situation, it spoke to the challenge of teaching the critical aspect of media literacy. Teaching critical media literacy demands that teachers be prepared to take up issues in the classroom that are often politically dicey. Perhaps, as the teacher educator alluded to, the art teacher—as cutting edge as she might be—was not ready to engage in critical media literacy. With new/21st century literacies, in-service teachers may have other challenges.

**New/21st Century Literacies Pedagogy**

Data revealed that the teacher educator employed new/21st century literacies pedagogy much less than critical media literacy pedagogy in educating teacher students. When the teacher educator did in fact employ such a pedagogical approach, she was often unaware of doing so.

At this juncture, the teacher educator was trying to introduce, per the class title, media literacy on a trajectory that focused on the evolution of literacy. New/21st century literacies were taught from an inquiry standpoint. Consider the following interview excerpt in which the teacher educator commented on a question raised by one of her teacher students about when she was and was not engaging in media literacy.

> And so that was great that she brought that up and the other person echoed it . . . it shows that they really want to . . Naomi elaborated by saying is it just my students doing an activity on Twitter and Shakespeare? I forgot which specific place she referenced in Shakespeare. But you know she talked about questioning whether her use of Twitter as an activity was media education or media literacy. (Interview 4, p. 4)

This excerpt speaks to the conceptual idea of media use as media education. The teacher educator opined that questioning the use of Twitter to teach Shakespeare was a nod in the right direction for teacher education in media literacy because her student had thought enough about Lankshear and Knobel to use it to question her use of contemporary technologies for literacy.
learning in her K–12 classroom. Still, the interview excerpt does not clarify what sort of activity was carried out via use of Twitter. Using a new media technology in class does not necessarily mean teaching for new/21st century literacies learning. The question then becomes, how had Naomi employed this new medium to enhance her learner’s literacy acquisition?

Later in the course, the teacher educator was asked during an interview to touch on pedagogical decisions to use emerging technologies to optimize learning in the class: “. . . after reading Lankshear and Nobel’s piece I think that they can see that they need to take risks themselves in terms of the tools they’re employing as teachers . . . that’s still something that they’re wrestling with and we’re moving more toward if that makes sense” (Interview 4, p. 6).

For the teacher educator, media literacy as new/21st century literacies was as much about digitized reader and producer experiences as it was about a risk-taking educational technology pedagogical experience. Enrollment in this class allowed the student teachers the opportunity to reflect on the tools they use in their classrooms. In the eyes of the teacher educator, new literacies is about unsettling the self:

. . .[S]ome of the students are working in impoverished communities where the tools are less readily available . . . at the same time more and more classrooms are getting these smart boards that have a lot of interactive potential and participatory potential. And so I think it’s just the idea of teachers opening up to the notions of participatory pedagogies and authorships both to express themselves in terms of text but as well to express knowing to be able to participate in the expressions of knowing . . . if they’re really using it in ways that are participatory then you know the kids are out of their desks and touching the screen and doing those things . . . in a way it really required the teachers to give up certain kinds of powers that they typically hold in order to use them most effectively . . . the new medias are tools that enable that to happen. (Interview 8, p. 17)

For the teacher educator, new/21st century literacies are significant for the ways in which such instruction and pedagogy can encourage learner participation and inspire teachers to relinquish power, as with CML, where learners become equal authors of their own literacy learning. She conceptualized new/21st century literacies more along the lines of use and engagement with new
media technologies in an educational technology and production sense. In other words, her sentiments suggested use of new media to expand K–12 learning at a macro level, rather than looking at how these new media technologies alter literacy learning.

Taking a panoramic view of the teacher educator’s stance on new literacies versus critical media literacy, she felt tensions regarding where she stood. Once again, interview data from the final session indicated these tensions when engaged in pedagogical reflection on the issue at hand:

. . . [T]he tools in terms of technologies and the critical theory in those ideas and the ways to be able to make them accessible to my audience, which I talked about in the beginning and I will emphasize now they’re on the ground, folks, living normal lives, not aiming towards high theory necessarily . . . And so how is it that I can talk to them to get them to come along with me on this critical ride? You get them where they are so that they’ll see it and see its importance . . . it’s the idea that I want to know . . . what it’s like to “live” a second life. But then let’s go further. Okay, this is what it’s like to live in someone else’s created world. Let’s go further; how can we create it ourselves? At the same time there still is a huge learning curve for me because I didn’t grow up in the video game culture. And . . . it’s just not natural to me. (Interview 10, p. 26)

The teacher educator expressed relief about being able to fit critical literacy into the “Final Curriculum Unit” lesson, which was the final class session for the course. On the other hand, the teacher educator admitted to weaker solidarity with new literacies for reasons other than training—in fact, the reason is generational, as many teachers were raised in a more traditional literacies environment. As previously mentioned, the National Council of Teachers of English maintains a policy position in favor of 21st century literacies education in light of the fact that students tend to have greater exposure to and use media technologies more frequently than their teachers (NCTE, 2007). On the other hand, as the teacher educator pointed out, she should “stay on top of it all” because she is an educator.

For the teacher educator, critical and perhaps new/21st century literacies appeared to be the conceptual framework that reflected her teaching tension:
That was Howard Gardner’s unique contribution... within that area of collaborating with James G and Henry Jenkins on the component of the ethical dimensions of new media. Didn’t I share last week that example of the TED lecture in which the person talked about opportunities for playing more videogames and how we can learn how to solve the world’s problems. (Interview 10, p. 36)

The teacher educator followed new/21st century literacies pedagogy in emphasizing problem-solving and higher-order skills development. While this is somewhat of a departure for new literacies studies, it is more consistent with 21st century literacies, which places emphasis on the ways in which digital media encourage participatory communities of practice. While new literacies studies are concerned with problem-solving and higher-order thinking, the participatory nature linked to literacy practices most governs NLS.

To take this further, interview data ultimately confirmed the teacher educator’s view on the perennial question of the difference between critical and new/21st century literacies. In the researcher’s first probing of the teacher educator’s views on new/21st century literacies and CML, the teacher educator opined that,

... It’s almost like concentric circles in that there are some aspects that new media literacies and new media work to boost notions of critical pedagogy. At the same time some things don’t require new media and new media literacies. They can be of a critical pedagogy nature... specifically, things like wiki links and other citizen journalist type of participation, participatory actions can have critical pedagogy leanings and can certainly... work part and parcel with each other... At the same time there are many ways in which new media don’t have the intentions of critical pedagogy. (Interview 8, p. 15)

From the teacher educator’s perspective, critical media literacy and new/21st century literacies pedagogy should be thought of as critical and/or new literacies pedagogy. The two are distinct, but complimentary, pedagogies. New/21st century literacies pedagogy can be, but is not necessarily, critical, and vice versa. In the end, though, with all of the evidence shown so far, the teacher educator favored critical media literacy as the actual, dominant pedagogical approach.
Pedagogy for Practices

Data suggest that pedagogy for socio-cultural practices overruled cognitive approaches to media literacy education excepting a vocational skills approach to reading and writing the media. This phenomenon of taking a socio-cultural approach makes sense in part because of the teacher educator’s tendency toward critical media literacy, which includes a culturalist framework. Beyond the section on critical media literacy pedagogy, because critical media literacy pedagogy has been previously addressed, this section focuses on those pedagogical moments that explicitly convey a socio-cultural practices ethos on the part of the media literacy teacher educator and her students.

The teacher educator tapped into her class’s media consumption habits as a prelude to media literacy education. The more self-aware they were of their own out-of-school media practices, the more likely they were to be aware of and likely teach to their own students’ literacy needs in K–12 schools. She stated that,

[A]ll we have the opportunity to do within this particular class is to help them understand how the field of literacy has evolved and to see where it is now. And that’s really first and foremost my aim for that particular session just to get them to understand that literacy is not reading per se, which is what is still really quite frankly understood in general in schools. So that’s my first aim. Now the second aim is related to how they take that idea and concept back to their classroom in a media literacy framework . . . (Interview 3, p. 3)

For the teacher educator, how one becomes literate was inherently a matter of context—she taught to that belief. The significance of the sociocultural perspective is that it empowers educators to value all learners that represent diverse discourse communities. The teacher educator perceived the socio-culturalist as the one who undermines the privilege of certain cultures over others. For the teacher educator, socio-cultural teaching rejects the rank-and-file vision of her teacher students and their learners as well.
The final class session as a whole was indicative of the teacher educator’s teaching of media literacy from a socio-cultural/constructivist perspective. She had each student talk about their final curriculum projects, their plans for further investigation of media literacy, and any points about media literacy that confused them. Interview data revealed that part of the intent of the final class was for the students to learn different pedagogies from each other within the context of discussion. The teacher educator made a pedagogical decision to employ a very socio-cultural lens for media literacy education. Through the interaction, the discourse, the fellowship, the cultural practice of sharing media literacy integration ideas, her students might learn more:

...It was a pedagogical choice to allow them the opportunity to share these... you saw people writing down resources that people were sharing with each other. And that’s what I aim to do within my classes is to create a very constructivist type class where they’re out there doing research for real reasons that they are sharing with their professional colleagues that are really, truly useful. (Interview 10, p. 14)

The program description for this course stands out for its explication of literacy as “critical reading to viewing skills,” “knowledge…to navigate their worlds both inside and outside school,” “socio-cultural and developmental perspectives on literacy,” “literacy as a social justice issue,” and “attention to cultural and social practices or activities that shape peoples interaction with texts and contexts.” The explication of literacy supports a skills approach, while also underscoring “perspectives” that are socio-cultural. “Inside and outside school” appeals to “new/21st century literacies,” whereas “social justice” interjects notions of “critical” literacy. All in all, the literacy program endorsed both socio-cultural practices pedagogy as well as skills. Considering that the institution has framed all pedagogies as socio-cultural practices and skills, and critical (media) literacy and new/21st century literacies, use of these distinct pedagogical approaches is not surprising.
Pedagogy for Skills

Data suggests that the media literacy educator nurtured teacher student pedagogy for socio-cultural practices over and above cognitive skills, but not above skills from a vocational standpoint. However, like new/21st century literacies, when the teacher educator employed (technical) skills-based media literacy pedagogy, again, she was often less aware of it. In fact, the teacher educator engaged in skills-based media literacy education almost exclusively to undermine it. From an instructional activity perspective, observation data suggested that the teacher educator implemented skills mainly for reading and writing the media.

At times the teacher educator defined media literacy skills as those vocational skills that empower the teacher to learn and employ some of the same skills that empower media professionals to communicate their messages to audiences and consumers. Knowledge of such techniques, the teacher educator opined, helped to level the playing field a little for the literacy teacher who typically was only familiar with strategies employed by authors of a short list of print media (e.g., short stories, novels, poems), namely literature. She offered both a social-cultural and cognitive referent in clarifying the role and significance of teaching media literacy from a vocational skills-based perspective. The idea of increasing a person’s importance could be achieved visually by pointing the camera up; conversely, a person’s value may be decreased visually by pointing the camera down. Both techniques point to the cultural nature of media industry practices that elicit cognitive—as opposed to cultural—responses. In this sense, skills with the camera angle, according to the teacher educator, reflected the broader mediated culture.

In the end, the teacher educator maintained that technique (skill) and purpose (practice) should be used in harmony. However, purpose should triumph: “... you can get lost in the technique. But I think the extent to which we deal with technique in the class is at a level at
which technique and purpose blend together. And purpose is the more meaningful point . . .” (Interview 2, p. 7).

The teacher educator was concerned with the “so what” of skills (Interview 2, p. 7) more than passing them on to her teacher students. In essence, the teacher educator dared not fall into the “technicist trap” in which her students would learn vocational skills that media professionals employed merely for the sake of knowing them, out of context and larger social meaning. The teacher educator hoped to convey throughout the course how media professionals’ skills within cultural parameters enable them to gain insight into what they are saying about the larger society.

Much of the class centered on visual literacy. In particular, the pedagogical decision had been made to help these teacher students learn how to read images: first with the instructional activity of a theory lecture, followed by the art teacher’s lecture on aesthetics, and then the small group activity to “practice” what the teacher educator and teacher student-as-lecturer were trying to drive home as a way to read the media. Hence, the practice drill became a central instructional activity in attaining skills-based media literacy learning. However, based on previous comments, the teacher educator saw technical reading of media texts as secondary to the “so what” question but she remained content with the contours of the course session. Interview data revealed her zeal for the practice drill visual literacy pedagogy:

. . . [W]e were able to really look at some practical elements of techniques and tools that are used to get across some of the ideas within media construction and how with regard to the verbal tricks and whatnot, the visual tricks. And I felt that it worked really nice to put those two things together. (Interview 5, p. 1)

On the other hand, the teacher educator admitted that upon listening to teacher students analyzing magazine ads, some groups fell below expectations. She believed that group or collaborative learning would result in everyone being on the same media literacy page. Only one of the twenty-three teacher students was an art teacher with the acute training needed to read the
visual image. Moreover, as an introductory course, few had trained for more than one class session to analyze the visual word. Still, the teacher educator was convinced that art education was a solid means to media literacy education (Baker, 2012). In responding to a question about whether advertising should be considered art, the teacher educator opined:

. . . [I]t’s a very provocative question and I learned from my own experiences in art history classes how to train my eyes in reading images and I see a very natural connection between reading art, traditional art more specifically, in terms of the actual graphic design elements . . . [but] with some of the things that Erica was presenting on, she started to then move out to the controversial nature of some art [which] was provocative and parallel with considering the different types of sophistication that can exist in seemingly bland or controversial media . . . that’s a really important parallel of how we perceive images which can be art or, or traditional media advertising and whatnot and then how it impacts us. (Interview 5, p. 9)

One glaring tension in teaching media literacy was dealing with the triumphs and challenges of working with technology, particularly when aiming to teach media writing. Recalling the Week 6/Media Production lesson about media making, the teacher educator described how class use of Flip cameras, iMovie, and the university instruction tool Moodle went awry. The experience revealed the shortcomings of being too constructivist in teaching media literacy skills. The teacher educator described the activity as “open-ended, constructivist,” using the Media Production power point that explained “storyboarding” in order to demystify media production. She then showed three examples of media making, one of which was very basic and had been accomplished some time ago with middle school students. She brought in a specialist from the university’s digital media laboratory who had been a consultant for this lesson over the last few years to discuss the use of iMovie. Because several teacher students had Macintosh laptops, the teacher educator asked them to volunteer their laptops for construction of public service announcements. The goal was to finish the PSA and upload it to Moodle for viewing. However, rather than a seamless flow in media production, the teacher observed that,
[T]hey were having problems uploading it [PSA] from what I saw and then there was one group that was having a particular amount of problems just in general getting the video from the flip camera on to the laptop . . . . So I looked at Moodle the other Week and noticed that there was a lot of frustration expressed on there about the project overall . . . first, they felt the people didn’t have the technological understandings and skills and . . . in a way it was almost too constructivist for them . . . .Still,] I have confidence that the students can do it . . . this is a very capable group . . . .And so I have confidence that it was just the stars weren’t aligned and that’s disappointing. (Interview 6, p. 4)

Even though they were not able to watch the videos, the teacher educator expected the teacher students to get past their frustrations before they watched the final products at the next class session. Instead, students voiced grave disdain in the Moodle discussion section about the tech experience—something the teacher educator had never experienced. She attributed their complaints to not being comfortable with the media production concepts, which may be due to her pedagogical decision to do the activity earlier than normal in the course.

For the teacher educator, performing media literacy clearly trumped regurgitating media literacy in that even if her teacher students could not readily name the media literacy concepts, they could perform the analytics needed to be discerning consumers and producers of media. In the end, the tension for the teacher educator lay in the fact that she might not have been aware of her pedagogy with regard to nurturing skills-based media literacy. The teacher educator maintained after the first Week of class that she intended to engage in skills in so far as they helped her to drive home to her students the cultural nature of our mediated society. Clearly, cognitive skills-based media literacy pedagogy did not hold sway, as the teacher educator intentionally tried to avoid the subject by not responding to student queries or integrating it into the teacher education curriculum. Vocationalist aims, on the other hand, offered a little rapprochement for the media literacy teacher educator and her pedagogical goals. Still, evidence lends support to weak cognitive skills-based media literacy education, but strong vocational skills training in the media literacy teacher education class.
Conclusion

This chapter addressed the first level of the teaching tensions framework: critical and/or new/21st century literacies pedagogy. In particular, data analysis centered on seeking answers to the following questions:

R1a. What media literacy pedagogical approaches does a teacher educator employ (critical or new/21st century literacies)?

R1b. In what ways does media literacy teacher education nurture teacher student pedagogy?

The data showed that the teacher educator employed critical media literacy pedagogy over and above new/21st century literacies pedagogy. When the teacher educator did engage in new/21st century literacy pedagogy, it was as a means to use new media rather than to ascertain the kinds of literacies re-inscribed and contested by the media technology itself. At other times the teacher educator was not very aware of when she actually engaged in such pedagogy at all. The data also showed that although the teacher educator was much more interested in media literacy education for a socio-cultural understanding of media, nearly as much of the pedagogy rested on skills—albeit vocational skills. Media literacy pedagogy for social-cultural practices did trump cognitive aims, but not vocational and technical skills-based media literacy education. Similarly, the teacher educator was less aware of when she was teaching for skills than when she was teaching to socio-cultural practices.

This chapter focused on how the teacher educator addressed pedagogical tensions between critical and new/21st century media literacies. The next chapter analyzes the ways in which the teacher educator wrestled with media literacy learning as content or process.
CHAPTER 5. TEACHING TENSIONS: CONTENT OR PROCESS

This chapter focuses on the second level of the teaching tensions framework: content or process. In looking at this level, data analysis centered on identifying information needed to respond to the following question:

R1. In what ways do media literacy teacher educators employ media literacy as content or process, and what are the implications of doing so for teacher student learners?

Pre-course Analysis

Publication/Teacher Educator Research

Initial evidence regarding the teacher educator’s approach to media literacy in her teacher education class as content or as process can be found in the teacher educator’s published research on the subject, *Teacher education for critical consumption of mass media and popular culture* (Flores-Koulish, 2005). In this text, the teacher educator maintained that media literacy was a subject in and of itself as well as a process for learning core subjects such as English/Language arts, math, social science, and science. In discussing the curricular knowledge with which pre-service elementary teachers should be familiar to enact media literacy in their own classrooms, the teacher educator wrote: “…they should be familiar not only with general media studies curricula but also curricula within potential strands in which media literacy might be embedded such as health, social studies, and language arts” (p. 106). In other words, from this perspective, an educator can teach, as Frechette (2006) would say, “about’ and ‘through’ media,” reflecting elements of both content and process.

Syllabus

Additional evidence on this issue can be found in the teacher educator’s syllabus in the section “Required Texts.” Of the required readings, Jackson and Jamieson (2007), "Unspun:
Finding facts in a world of disinformation” suggested a content and process approach to media literacy education because the authors are world-renowned communication scholars whose published work on the media studies concept of spin was discussed as part of the teacher educator’s media literacy education class. In other words, using this book as required reading suggested that the teacher educator viewed media literacy from a media studies content standpoint, as much as for a tool to be a discerning consumer of news, advertising, and information in the public sphere.

The course description on the syllabus provided evidence of the influence of the field of communication and media studies for the learning of media literacy as both content and process.

Course Description: An in-depth introduction to media literacy education as an emerging field and its components. Media literacy education is defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate media in a variety of forms; media literacy expands notions of “reading” beyond traditional print texts to acknowledge the various multi-literacies necessary for our 21st-century. Like multiculturalism, media literacy education can be integrated into a variety of subject areas, and it considers perspective and difference. Within this course, students will become introduced to this literacy field and conduct teacher research.

The teacher educator cited Aufderheide’s field-recognized definition of media literacy that lends support to a purview of media literacy as a learning process more than as content for learning subjects. The underlying assumption with this definition is that media literacy involves a fourfold methodology—this was supported in interview data when discussing issues of accessing, analyzing, evaluating, and communicating through media in order to become media-literate. The content side of the definition can be understood with the fourth leg of communication—perhaps not only through media to address larger socio-political and economic concerns, but to focus on the communication medium in and of itself.

The learning objectives of the course also offered clues on the teacher educator’s views on media literacy as process or content. Review of these teacher education learning goals suggested that both were included.
Specific Educational Objectives of the Course
At the completion of the course, the student will be able to:
1. Be familiar with the history of media literacy education, both in a U.S. context and internationally.
2. Begin to understand the complex interactions that take place between reader/viewer and media texts.
3. Appreciate the power of the media to transmit culture.
4. Adopt a wider appreciation for media as text.
5. Begin to integrate media literacy education lessons into existing curriculum.

“Interactions...between reader/viewer” and “integrate...into existing curriculum” spoke to media literacy as process, whereas “media to transmit culture” and “appreciation for media as text” favored media literacy as content. The idea of media literacy as content was pushed further in the assertion that the process of media transmitting culture is a culture in and of itself. In other words, while media constructs are a representation of reality as opposed to being reality itself, a media-saturated society begs us to view our mediated world as part and parcel of our culture. As Thoman and Jolls of the Centre for Media Literacy observed, “Media no longer just shape our culture...they ARE our culture” (2005, p. 9). From this angle, media literacy can be understood as content.

Preliminary Interview
Interview data also pointed to the phenomenon of the teacher educator’s view of media literacy as both content and process. In the interview prior to the first day of class, the teacher educator was asked whether media literacy was content or process, and she responded unabashedly that “it’s ‘both’” (Interview 0, p. 3). She did not provide any rationale for her response, but simply seemed to feel at ease with this learning and pedagogical position. Still, while such comfort with the idea of media literacy as both content and process may be easy to maintain conceptually, developing praxis for media literacy as content and process may be a little more challenging, particularly in the
context of teacher education where the population represented in-service teachers for a variety of subject areas such as art and Spanish.

**Course Analysis**

Data analysis showed that the teacher educator employed media literacy as process more than content toward the end of the course. This phenomenon was due in large part, as mentioned, to the reality of the teacher education in-service population at the elementary level whose range in teaching subjects demanded that the teacher educator teach media literacy for integration across the curriculum. However, media literacy as content played a significant role in the education of the teacher student population as well, particularly in the first half of the course.

**Content and Process**

Observation data, and field notes in particular, showed that the first class session involved both content and process media literacy learning. More than simply learning skills to read television via the Nickelodeon “TV Smarts for Kids”, the first class was an introductory lesson to the field of media literacy, as indicated in the title Week 1: General Introduction & Syllabus Overview. The teacher educator laid the groundwork for her teacher students to know exactly what it was they would be learning, and some approaches to how to learn it.

After returning from break, the educator used the visual aid of a power point presentation to provide media literacy instruction/explanation on “Media Literacy Education.” The opening slide included Aufderheide’s definition, which, as already explained, reflects media literacy learning as process. By slides three and four, however, the teacher educator offered definitions of media itself that can be understood as setting a conceptual *content* groundwork.
By slide 4, the teacher educator paused to use the visual aid of a large white flip pad to engage in what she called Media Literacy 101: The Reader’s Digest, to document what her teacher students loved and hated about the media. Field note data from this activity included brainstorming responses.

Negatives: bias, advertising towards children; limits human interaction; consumerism; less variety/more conglomeration; people a lot of images are pure fantasy; manufactured culture; effects on children; role models; targeting as pre-teens; images of women, minorities, gays stereotypes; p.c. tidy; peer pressure; unwilling to use if they don’t understand;
Positives: networking—can ask seven people if want to go to dinner in two seconds; global experiences; entertaining; escapism; communication; access to information—everything at fingertips; instant gratification; learning styles; helps for unmotivated students; promotes creativity; occupies kids times; globalization; time constraints.

What this instructional activity revealed was that the teacher educator was using descriptions of media—genres, mediums, and other characteristics (including its possibilities and limitations) to help teacher students obtain a basic foundation in media literacy education. In other words, the teacher educator was teaching her class using a quasi-exploratory analysis to enable them to become familiar with media—as the unit of analysis—itself.

The same power point presentation also revealed the teacher educator teaching for media literacy learning as process. Echoing the second level of the tensions framework, the teacher educator’s Slide 9 highlighted “Key Concepts in Media Literacy.”

![Key Concepts in Media Literacy](image)

*Figure 5.3. Slide 9 Media Literacy Education Power Point*

Some of these concepts reflected content as much as process, particularly the one that recalls the media studies concept of “representation.” That is, they reflect content more than methods to achieve media literacy.
The teacher educator concluded her power point with the following questions:

![Figure 5.4. Slide 12 Media Literacy Education Power Point](image)

Each of these questions correlated with the key themes of authorship, format, audience, content, and purpose, respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Five Core Concepts</th>
<th>Five Key Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| #1      | Authorship  
All media messages are "constructed."                                         | Who created this message?                                                          |
| #2      | Format  
Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.   | What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?                         |
| #3      | Audience  
Different people experience the same media message differently.               | How might different people understand this message differently from me?             |
| #4      | Content  
Media have embedded values and points of view.                                 | What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in; or omitted from, this message? |
| #5      | Purpose  
Most media are organized to gain profit and/or power.                            | Why is this message being sent?                                                    |

*Figure 5.4. Center for Media Literacy’s “Five Key Questions Form Foundation for Media Inquiry”*
Process over Content

Like the first class, the media literacy pedagogy espoused by the teacher educator was both process- and content-focused. This class, as discussed in the previous chapter, was designed to examine the evolution of literacy in terms of paradigms, from Plato and Gutenberg to current notions (e.g., Tyner and Gee) of literacy as situational. Touching on this trend, the teacher educator offered Luke and Freebody’s (1990) schema of four resources to interact with text.

Luke & Freebody (1990) whiteboard w/ ink pen:
researchers from Australia
-4 resources
1. Code Breaker
   How do I crack this code?
2. Text Participants
   What does this text mean to me?
3. Text-user
   What do I do with this text?
4. Text-analyst
   What does this text do to me? (Field Notes 2, p. 3)

Luke and Freebody’s questions recall a meaning-making orientation that was consistent with an inquiry and not an evaluative approach to teaching media literacy. Without being too reductionist, this process focused on reading media texts. The second class session also included media literacy as content. This learning approach was nurtured by the teacher educator, zeroing in on the concept of representation.

Media Literacy as Content

The third session was designed to give context to the field from a historical perspective, focusing on media literacy as content. The title was Week 4: History of Media Education Here & Abroad. In an effort to touch on one of the Week 4 Agenda items, “Media as ‘agents of cultural decline’”, the teacher educator opened with an activity developed to illustrate the evolution of media by addressing issues of high and low culture. Field note data showed that the teacher
educator divided the class into groups of four. The groups had seven minutes to plan a skit. One group gave a three-minute rendition of being a Michael Jackson fan. Another group acted out a scene from the rapper Flavor Flav’s “With Love”. The notion of fandom allowed teacher students to more readily empathize with their students. Afterwards, the teacher educator offered three different ways to view media literacy:

---innoculationist approach as first approach
---screen education
media as popular culture; want to analyze certain cultures
---representational or symbolic systems
Stuart Hall discussions of representation; definition of the term (Field Notes 3, p. 2).

Of the three, the inoculationist view is the most widespread in the United States, per the teacher educator—many parents and teachers would prefer to turn students off from Michael Jackson and Flavor Flav. The second, screen education, emphasizes the aesthetics of film and television. The third, already discussed, centers on representation, particularly of sub-groups. The instructional group activity, coupled with these approaches to media, all stressed media content as a means to become media-literate.

Another content learning approach in this session was a guest visit by world-renowned media studies expert Sister Rose Pacatte, who offered a humanist perspective on media analysis without mentioning how to use media literacy to teach core subjects. In fact, she actually demonstrated her own high level of media literacy with a reading of a Smart Dogs Blame the Cat, by drawing on the five critical points. Her goal in doing so was to transform culture.

Pepsi commercial entertaining making us feel good; played at Super Bowl commercial 1 million dollars; being bought and sold; making us feel good and warm; don’t know why or how, but more inclined when have a choice; target audience=soundtrack is 40s and 50s, not just one age group, for white audience, lifestyle of spick and span, artificially constructed; soda companies are pushing back; who gains from sugar; does this commercial make any difference? no why?
broader culture? pushing a product, to be better consumers; for character formation and for empathy; talking to second the third graders; start off by articulating human values for media literacy; How to assess media literacy learning; ask someone to critc something the way they do; bringing out into public discourse (Field Notes 3, p. 4).

In her analysis of *Smart Dogs*, Sr. Rose touched on emotions, medium, venue/context, budget, target audience, values, and more. These all fall back on the key questions of the framework for analysis. Then Sr. Rose talked to the class about how to begin analyzing media texts, especially for the novice learner, by “articulating human values.” This could mean opening with a simple question—how did the commercial make you feel? From there additional questions about the medium and more might follow. In the end, Sr. Rose was teaching about and through the media.

**Content, Process then Content**

The fourth class session opened with an *Unspun* activity, which recalled both process and content media literacy learning. Jackson and Jamieson’s work was unpacked to learn about the ways in which media spins in its favor. The activity involved dividing the students into groups of two (one group had three)—following rules akin to speed dating, each group had to write up the rules found at the end of the book and put them on poster to then be put on the walls for the entire class to see. Each rule was written in its original form (in bold below) on the poster board; every minute, each group rotated to a new poster, having to re-state the rule or provide an example. Once all groups had rotated to each poster, the class was opened for discussion about the spin of these rules. Poster examples with Jackson and Jamieson’s rules included:

Rule 1#

**You can’t be completely certain**

“Only fools are certain”

New info can change your ideas…

Never say “always” or “never”

There are no absolutes…every theory is vulnerable to being disproved.

“There’s always a yeah, but…”

Don’t truth 100% of those tested…false claims
Rule # 2

**You can be certain enough**

Be certain as you need to be
Always double check
Once you act you can’t take it back
(Picture of Glove with If the Glove doesn’t fit you must acquit!”)

Look b4 U leap
Measure twice cut once
You don’t know that you’ll die eventually
Sometimes you have to go with what you know!

Rule #3

**Look for agreement among experts**

1+2=2+1 agreements
We mostly agree
Get a second opinion

Field notes showed that there was much laughter and discussion about what was being written on the wall: at 5:07 Reading aloud the posters; everyone walking together toward each poster reading; at 5:13 Discussion about unspun, fact check.org; commercials and Listerine; teacher vignette about toothpaste necessity (Field Notes 4, p. 2).

The *Unspun* activity helped teacher students see how a “factual statement” could be altered or spun based on a shift in language use. This was particularly germane to this cadre of teachers who were matriculating for a master’s degree in reading and literacy. Such a spin could allow advertisers, for example, to make seemingly false claims without being held accountable because they were not being inaccurate—they were simply altering the language without seemingly altering the idea. The class discussion also covered the positions of both major U.S. political parties. One student opined that she was very critical of the parties because of their spin: “we are at an age when one does not actively listen to political opinions with which one does not agree. Legislators getting more savvy with spin” (Field Notes 4, p. 2).

Other process media literacy learning included the Ann Marie mini lecture from The Week 5 Agenda:
What’s so special about images?

- Ann Marie Barry mini lecture
  - To understand visual literacy, one must understand the processes a theory of perception.
    - That is, what we see is not “a truth”
  - Hard wiring, past experiences/social norms, and current needs & feelings affect our perceptions of what we experience visually.
  - Additionally, the way our brains process visual information enters our limbic or feeling system first, and then may or may not reach the neo cortex or thinking parts of our brain. (Week 5 Agenda)

The description processes here took a neuro-cognitive approach as opposed to focusing on methods for becoming media-literate. The teacher educator stressed the work of the acclaimed visual communication scholar Berry to underscore the idea that literacy teachers needed to consider the ways in which the brain processed visual texts as they taught media literacy. Drawing from Barry, the teacher educator argued that perception contained three components: (a) hardwiring; (b) past experiences; and (c) soci—that is, looking at the immediate surface of a medium. The processes here also highlight whatever background the reader has that they would bring to the visual text, and social interaction with the text itself.

Integration

Instructional activities were deliberately designed to help the class work through ways to integrate media literacy into various subject areas. The curriculum unit-student examples reading suggested addressing media literacy as process because it touched on students who’d taken and created units using media literacy to teach environmental science/writing and social studies. The “After the Media Literacy Course: Three Early Childhood Teachers Look Back” involved integration of media literacy into the language arts curriculum.

A round robin conversation was held in the last class about how the teacher students had integrated media literacy into their curriculum units for their actual classes. Thus, while most
students were taking the course to fulfill one of the requirements for a master’s in education as a reading specialist, they developed a range of content curricula such as Baltimore City’s Health Unit, the American Revolution, and the Weather, Rainbow, and Art. The in-service teachers talked about integrating Andy Warhol portraits of Elvis, Frootloops, Cookie Crisps and Total Raisin Bran cereal advertising, Funshipbob, Goanimate, and more into their subjects.

The greatest tension, though, came when the Spanish teacher disclosed that media literacy required a deeper level of thinking in the target language than was possible for her 8th-grade learners. As a result, she maintained that she would have to sacrifice content of the Spanish language to be able to teach media literacy to her students. One in-service Spanish instructor developed a unit on Texas and Spanish culture and the future world cup. The students would listen to three different world songs from the world cup. Fused in would be a Justin Timberlake video whose sounds and images would be dissected. Contrary to the tension of teaching media literacy as a subject in and of itself versus as a process to achieve mastery of core subjects, this tension was different: the Spanish teacher had to sacrifice her Spanish content to be able to use media literacy to teach Spanish itself.

The Spanish teacher example showed that media literacy learning for the target subject—if not media studies—can be a tall order. This lent some support to the idea that media literacy is a subject in and of itself with its own language and idiosyncrasies. With regard to Spanish teaching, as was the case for many teachers, particularly in the early grades, teaching media literacy was thought to be a challenge developmentally because their learners had not yet mastered subject content or functionalist reading and other basic learning skills. Several teachers argued that teaching media literacy was challenging because it demanded young learners to think beyond the parameters of where they were in the development cycle.
Final Curriculum Units—Whose Fault is it Anyway?

Teacher educator grading of the final curriculum units lent evidence relevant to content and process. Those lessons were designed to deepen conceptual knowledge of media studies, along with that of the target subject, tended to rank highest. Grading of one teacher student’s expeditionary learning curriculum unit with content aims largely anchored in environmental science, and a peripheral emphasis on language arts and social studies, illustrated the direction in which the teacher educator would like her student to take her learners.

I really like the illustrated journals your students create. It’s an excellent base from which to build and integrate media literacy concepts. Here are some suggestions for improving this emerging media literacy-integrated unit:

- Provide direct instruction in visual literacy so that students are wisely taking their photographs, not just pointing and shooting at any litter or environmental hazard.
- Spend a lesson analyzing powerful or impactful vocabulary that’s utilized in advertisements, both commercial and/or PSAs.
- Analyze some of the PSAs from the AdCouncil. There’s an “educational resources” tab that can direct you toward important classroom resources that would be helpful to you. This can be tied in with both of the above.
- The RAFTS acronym could have been much better integrated and even expanded throughout the unit. The students could not only create a PSA poster, but also a full-on environmental media campaign (i.e., they could determine where their posters would best be placed? What other media methods and/or channels would reach a target audience, etc.)
- If you had highlighted the media literacy insertions as per the assignment, they would have been easier to find, and then perhaps you would have noted more clearly that the “Week 1 (New Product)” lesson on pgs 16-23 did not have any media literacy additions.

Here are the media literacy lesson insertions I found throughout:

1. The visual journal
2. The enhanced visual journal (with magazine photos)
3. The PSA poster (Haiku with photograph)
4. Photoshop usage

Rubric grade:

Components—3 (excluded the content area up front, and as per above, the media literacy lessons totaled less than 5)
Questions—3 (answers all, but needs work as noted throughout for “publication”)

Writing clarity—3 (same as above)

Mechanics—4 (Though there are errors as noted and this piece is not yet ready for publication, the errors are not enough to interfere with the overall intentions.)

Total=13/16

Media Literacy Curriculum Unit—Nicholas

Grade Level: Fourth or Fifth Grade
Title: Whose Fault is it Anyway?
Length of time: 5-6 weeks for this investigation, 12 weeks for entire Learning Expedition

Unit Abstract

The entire Expeditionary Learning unit is called, “Whose Fault is it Anyway?” This expedition is broken up into two investigations. The first investigation teaches how the earth was formed and looks at the rock cycle, plate tectonics, and states of matter.

For the second part of the investigation, we transition to from how the earth was created to how humans have impacted the earth, either positively or negatively. We will be taking trips to the landfill, wastewater treatment plant, the Baltimore harbor, and a local park to see the mark humans have made and currently make on this planet. The students will create a Public Service Announcement as a final project to encourage the community to be good stewards of the Earth.

The series of lesson plans that follow take a look into the second piece of the investigation—How do humans impact the Earth? The lesson plans that follow are pieces of each product that will be created along the way. In the intent of getting as much information in about each product, the lesson plans skip from one product to the next and may not give a complete picture of each daily lesson plan. Notes are given at the bottom of each day to highlight what should be taught next.

As an Expeditionary Learning school, we use learning targets to describe where we are going with our children. These targets are:

- I can analyze how humans have affected the hospitable nature of earth over time.
  - I can identify the qualities of Earth that make it hospitable for humans.
  - I can explain how humans have negatively impacted life on Earth.
- I can use word choice to write haiku that conveys a message about the environment.
- I can inform the public that the choices we make affect the health of the earth by creating a Public Service Announcement.

Each learning target has an assessment tied to it. The targets, assessments, and explanations
are listed below.

**Day One**

**Content Area:** Language Arts, Science, Social Studies (Expeditionary Learning)

**Objective:** I can inform the public that the choices we make affect the health of the earth by creating a Public Service Announcement.

**Time:** 5 days; 45 minute sessions

**Assessment:** Public Service Announcement

**Purpose:** To assess a student’s knowledge of the content

**Materials:** Permission slips, chaperone list, fieldwork list, note catchers, paper, pencils, strong and weak examples of photos, finished haikus, computers with Photoshop, projector or SmartBoard, pictures for students to edit.

**Hook:** Look at a teacher’s model of final product—Haiku with photo. Read quote about the impact of public service announcements from the Adcouncil: http://www.adcouncil.org/default.aspx?id=304.

**Lesson:** Now we are ready to combine your photos and your haikus! This week we will be learning about Photoshop. By Friday, your poster will have your haiku on it. You will use the powerful impact of your words and your photo to convince someone to make a change.

Model opening up a photo on Photoshop. Model playing with the photo editing buttons and pull down menus. Allow students to “play” with a photo on the first day.

By day two, students should practice adding text over the photo.

By day three, students should become masters at editing a photo.

By day four, demonstrate with the class the importance of text placement and allow them to manipulate their own photo.

**Closing:** Each day we use this program, we become closer at creating a poster that will impact someone’s habit. Nice work!

**Assessment:** Each day, monitor each student’s progress with a checklist.

**Adaptations:** Assistance with computer and/or typing.
Soda can in bay
Poisoning, killing, choking
The fish that we eat.

Example of haiku for the class.

Example of a student-generated PSA.

Appendix

**RAFTS statement (How will you frame the product?)**

**Role:** Environmentalist

**Audience:** Baltimore communities

**Format:** Photographic Haiku

**Topic:** Human’s impact on Earth

**Strong Verb:** Inform

**RAFTS Statement:** You are an environmentalist. Your job is to inform the community of Baltimore about the impact humans have had on Earth. You will create a photograph that incorporates a haiku along with a dramatic pose in your community informing your audience about the impact humans have had on Earth.

*Figure 5.6. Artifact 1. Graded Assignment*
The first commentary from the teacher educator suggests the need for the teacher student to touch more on “media literacy concepts” as an indicator of content learning. The directive to provide direct instruction to deepen visual literacy learning recalls more process-focused learning of environmental hazards. On the other hand, creating a lesson on “powerful and impactful vocabulary that’s utilized in advertisements” means that the teacher educator understood the need for learners to first get a content understanding of media literacy education in order to further master PSA of environmental science. The final statement about the RAFTS (i.e., role, audience, format, topic, strong verb) indicated a process orientation to the suggestion of using ad placements and other media methods to improve environmental awareness.

Final Curriculum Units—3rd Grade English Language Arts

Compared to the previous unit, grading comments differed markedly with this English language arts unit for third graders. Emphasis, as the comments showed, was on the creativity of the lesson itself and the process of using media literacy for storytelling.

I like your intentions here Anne-Marie--they're very creative, and I like how you connect media literacy with language arts through creating stories. That makes a lot of sense! The unit itself, however, needed more development and details before it was "ready for publication." 4/3/3/4

Media Literacy Curriculum Unit—Anne-Marie

Abstract

Stories are all around us. We all need to recognize that a good story has three distinct parts...a Beginning, middle and a resolution, the end. English Language Arts Curriculum, as well as, Library Media Center programs emphasizes the importance of the parts of a story. Students, that are aware of the parts of a story, will enjoy reading whole books rather than parts and when asked to write, will know that they need a beginning, middle and an end. By using books and videos to practice identifying the parts of the story, the teacher/facilitator is introducing media literacy to the students through the curriculum in a controlled atmosphere.

Instructional Objectives
A. Comprehension of Informational Text

1. Develop comprehension skills by reading a variety of self-selected and assigned print and non-print informational texts, including electronic media
   a. Read, use, and identify the characteristics of nonfiction materials such as textbooks, appropriate reference materials, personal narratives, diaries, journals, biographies, newspapers, letters, articles, web sites and other online materials, other appropriate content-specific texts to gain information and content knowledge

B. 3.3.b Identify and explain the elements of a story

C. 3.3.c Identify and describe the setting and mood (Mood is an inference skill—See curriculum page for Inference)

D. 3.3.d Identify and analyze the characters

E. 3.3.e Identify and explain relationships between and among characters, setting, and events.

A. Technology and Society

1. Explain how technology affects people and society
   a) Explain how technology (such as computers, calculators, television, cameras, PDAs, CD-ROM, and DVD) influences societies
   b) Identify examples of how technology has affected the environment, past and present
   c) Explain how technology tools have or can be used to meet the needs of societies

B. Legal and Ethical Issues

1. Practice responsible and appropriate use of technology systems, software, and information
   a) Explain the purpose of and follow the acceptable use policy
   b) Work cooperatively and collaboratively with others when using technology in the classroom
   c) Practice responsible use of technology systems and software
   d) Demonstrate proper care of equipment (such as following lab rules, handling equipment with care)

Process…based unit

TITLE: Story in Television Commercials

CONNECTIONS TO SUBJECT AREA:
Stories can be found all around us. Stories are being told to use constantly. We very often, do not recognize the story. Students and educators need to understand the idea, details, audience and purpose in the stories of commercials.

MATERIALS NEEDED:
1. Video tape of as many television commercials you can tape
2. The products to go with the commercials i.e. Poptarts, Frosted Flakes, doll, game, etc.
3. Worksheet for homework
4. TV/VCR and for assessment project...
5. Video Recorder and video tapes
6. Hyperstudio program on computer
7. art supplies optional...
8. additional video tapes for students to video tape their favorite commercials from their favorite television shows.

PROCESS:
We are going to investigate how to tell a whole story in less than a minute!
We watch Stories everyday and sometimes the stories are only told to us for 30 seconds!
Show a commercial....review the parts of the story...have students tell you who the characters are, the setting, the action, the product being sold....
Show a second commercial...review the parts of the story...have students tell you who the characters are, the setting, the action, the product being sold....
Show the actual Product i.e. the box of Poptarts or cereal or toy in the package...
compare to the commercial representation...Discuss Fact and Fiction as in commercials....
Show a third commercial...review the parts of the story...have students tell you who the characters are, the setting, the action, the product being sold as well as predicting Fact and Fiction in the commercials ....
Show the actual Product i.e. the box of Poptarts or cereal or toy in the package...
compare to the commercial representation...Discuss Fact and Fiction in the commercial again, if you need to....
Hand out Homework worksheets( and blank video tapes , if available)...Students will need to do three commercials each...
(if students do not have access to televisions then allow them to review commercials you have taped, while in the classroom...) When sheets return to school discuss what commercials they watched, the stories they discovered , the facts and fictions they realized and then go to the assessment project....

ASSESSMENT:
Students, working in cooperative groups, will present a commercial of their very own about anything in school.
The commercial may be done on video, Hyperstudio or live action.
The presented project must have all aspects of a story and a “television commercial”..
The students adaptation may not be longer the 60 seconds!
Students will vote at the end of the presentations which group followed the directions
the best and created the most interesting commercial!

Name_______________________

Television Commercial Worksheet

Who are the characters in the story of the commercial?
____________________________________________
____________________________________________
____________________________________________

Where is the story of the commercial taking place? Do they use music?
____________________________________________
____________________________________________

What happens in the story of the commercial
beginning_______________________________________________________________
____________________________________________
middle_______________________________________________________________
____________________________________________
____________________________________________
____________________________________________
end____________________________________________
____________________________________________

Is there something that is said again and again and again?
____________________________________________
____________________________________________

What is the television commercial trying to get you to BUY? In other words, what is this commercial for?
____________________________________________
____________________________________________
Did you notice any fiction mixed into the fact?_________
What was not true?______________________________

TITLE: Story on the Internet, Web sites with character!

CONNECTIONS TO SUBJECT AREA:
The Internet is a massive network of Information. The information is a curious mix of fact, fiction and junk! It is important that our students are exposed to the very best sites and information the Internet can offer. The best sites often have all the parts of a good story! The students need to evaluate the information they find, whether the information be electronic, digital or print.

MATERIALS NEEDED
Acceptable Use Policy (sent home, signed, returned and filed)
Parent Letter for AUP (sent home)
Evaluation sheets (see attached)
Computers with Internet Access (the more the better! one per cooperative work group of max. 3 students and 1 per teacher/facilitator)
Monitor with Computer attached for large group display
monitor and VCR
Story WebQuest (sample included) or bookmarked exemplary sites... try
www.harwich.edu/depts/lmcelm/wbqsts.htm or www.discoveryschool.com/schrockguide/
for guidance if you are unfamiliar with the Internet or Webquests.

PROCESS:
Pick a subject and start searching the Internet for sites when you find exemplary sites...follow all links to see where they lead.. Site passes that test...add it to your Web Quest....
When you have found one to four sites....write the quest for your students...

First experience is doing the web quest... students in cooperative groups bringing back information you direct them to...

Second experience...give students the report cards...send them on the same web quest... have them fill out the report cards for the sites they know....(it will take less class time)

On another day send them to bookmarked sites on computer...have the students evaluate the sites that you have picked and they visit...

ASSESSMENT:
Students will have several Report Card Evaluations.
There will be some excellent evaluations and the students will have the URLs to visit again. Students will have objects the webquest directed them to gather. Students will be excited about visiting the great sites again.

Figure 5.7. Artifact 2. Graded Assignment

The integration of media literacy into the language arts curriculum in general was much easier to do than for other core subjects such as science, social studies, and math. This reality may be due in part to the fact that media literacy and media studies are descendants of literacy and English (Sefton-Green, 1995). In other words, engagement in media literacy can be viewed as doing English. But the argument here was that media literacy, though mutually inclusive, had a distinct epistemology and content that marked itself as different from other subjects—even English. Reviewing the numerical markings of the unit showed that the teacher educator was less concerned with the extent to which Anne-Marie adhered to media literacy content or process, and more about the clarity of questions and writing.

Final Curriculum Units—Media Literacy Unit

Although the title of this curriculum unit suggested that the in-service kindergarten teacher had planned to teach media literacy from a content perspective, the learning goal was in fact centered on transportation. That is, Jessica was interested in helping her elementary students learn about modes of transportation by engaging in media literacy exercises. For the teacher educator, though, Jessica’s lesson plan hinged on sensitizing kindergarteners to media literacy processes a little earlier.

Jessica, you have a promising unit here. A few suggestions I have to enhance it further with media literacy:

- why not use clips and/or pictures from popular culture showing cartoon and/or science fiction vehicles (e.g., Flintstones cars, Wicked Witch's flying broom, etc.)? That could get you in to the media literacy components earlier.
- seems to me that you could also have the students create an ad (at the end of the unit), whether print or video, on the Baltimore Grand Prix; you will have provided
them with enough background knowledge and media literacy such that they should be able to do this.
3/4/3/4

Media Literacy Curriculum Unit–Jessica

This unit of study is designed for my pre-kindergarten students. We follow the kindergarten state curriculum for reading and math, and mix pre-k and k objectives for science and social studies. The goal of this unit is to use our curiosity about something we deal with routinely, transportation, to give us a reason to interact with various types of media and technology. My students currently have 3 computers in the classroom, plus my laptop which they use under my supervision. We have two printers. The children have already learned how to sign on to the computers and type in a web address. All but six children can do this independently.

In this unit there are six lessons planned. Day four and day five are actually one lesson, split over two days. There was not a natural place in which to divide the lesson, so it is left up to the discretion of the instructor as to when to stop for the day and continue the next.

Week 1

Objectives:

Students will listen to an expository book about many types of vehicles.

Students will identify types of transportation from magazine and newspaper pictures.

Materials:

book Big Book of Things That Go, teacher-collected newspapers and magazines, student scissors, chart paper and pen

Procedure:

Introduce unit by reading some of Big Book of Things That Go (DK Publishing, 1994).

Tell students that we will learn about transportation in our city, and that first we need to define the word transportation.

After a working definition is decided upon ask, “Is everything in the book considered transportation?” Discuss which vehicles would not be considered transportation.

Next, the students will discuss what they already know about transportation, and some things they would like to learn additional information. Children will dictate their suggestions under appropriate heading on a chart:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we know about transportation</th>
<th>What we are curious about with transportation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher will distribute current newspapers and magazines. Students will cut out pictures of any mode of transportation. Pictures will be saved for next lesson.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assessment:**

Have children cut only forms of transportation out, or have they not stuck to definition of what transportation is?

**Day Three**

**Objectives:**

Students will identify how the appearance of trolleys and busses has changed from the past to the present.

Students will convey a persuasive message through drawing and/or writing.

**Materials:**

Plain paper for billboard drawing, computer and Smartboard

**Procedure:**

Students will visit website for Baltimore Transit Archives [http://www.btco.net/index2.html](http://www.btco.net/index2.html) to look for pictures of buses and other forms of public transportation.

With support and guidance from the teacher, the students note how public transportation has changed from past to present. Just for fun, children should also look for other things in the photographs that have changed over the years, for instance, some pictures show people, so children should note how style of clothing has changed from current styles.

**Day Four and Day Five (to be split where instructor feels is appropriate)**

**Objectives:**

Students will listen to two expository selections about cars.

Students will compare and contrast using a Venn diagram on the Smartboard.

Students will investigate an informational website.

Students will identify main ideas of a website as presented through pictures.
Materials:
Computers and printers Books: Racing Cars, and Car, Smartboard, Smartboard software that include a Venn diagram template

Procedure:
Children will listen to Racing Cars (Investigate Series) Whitecap Books and then will browse through pictures of Car (DK Eyewitness Books) by Richard Sutton. (The second book is about all types of cars, but we will focus on pictures of traditional passenger cars.)

Children will contrast and compare both types of vehicles by completing a Venn diagram as a class on the Smartboard. The class will use a template that comes with the Smartboard software. Children will write simple phrases in diagram using Smartboard pens.

Using pictures from the Racing Cars book as a segue teacher will introduce the Baltimore Grand Prix race that will occur in September, 2011.

Teacher will demonstrate how to type in web address for the Baltimore Gran Prix on the computer keyboard. Children will take turns clicking on different tabs to navigate the site. (Students in this class currently know how to copy letters I have written that spell out a web address, so this particular skill is not a new one.) (http://www.baltimoregrandprix.com)

Teacher will lead a discussion on what children think are the main ideas presented through the pictures on the website

Explore Lego Digital Designer at http://ldd.lego.com on Smartboard. Show children how to create a simple car in the same style as the cars that will be racing in Baltimore.

Children will use the Lego Digital Designer to design a simple race car. Students will print their car creation.

Assessment:
Over the next few days, each child should be able to type in the web address for the Lego Digital Designer then create and print a simple car.

Day Six

Objectives:
With guidance and support, students will be able to identify “real” and “pretend” components of a movie trailer and a television ad for a car.

Note: It is suggested that the instructor read the discussion on the link to help facilitate a discussion of real and not-real parts of an ad. Although the author of this essay does not believe that 5 year olds can identify what might be real or not, my experience with my
current students is that they can do this on a very simple level.

http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/abcs-media-literacy-what-can-pre-schoolers-learn

**Materials:**

Smartboard and projector to view commercial and movie trailer

**Procedure:**

Children will view the trailer for the movie *Cars*  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzwWqkxBb5I. (In Baltimore City schools, this will need to be downloaded at home to a flash drive as access to YouTube is denied in schools).

Teacher will lead a discussion on what makes these cars not real.

Children will then view an ad from TV that depicts a man stretching his car so that it is a more appropriate size for a couple with a baby.  
http://carcommercialfan.com/2011/03/baby-nissan-commercial/. This ad begins with a woman reading a pregnancy test, so teacher will need to skip first scenes of commercial.

Using the medialit.org questions to guide young children as a guide, discuss how this ad for a real car is also not real.

Ask children if they have ever wanted a toy that looks great on a television ad, but does not really perform like the ad shows. Encourage children why the people who make the commercials would make a toy look better than it really is.

**Assessment:**

This is a skill that is being introduced so no formal assessment is appropriate.

Figure 5.8. Artifact 3. Graded Assignment

The problem with this unit, from the teacher educator’s perspective, was its assumption that the learner was already well enough prepared to engage in media literacy in the latter part of the lesson. Review of Day 1 suggested greater media exposure—to books, newspapers, magazines—as educational materials, as much, if not more, than the use of media as a unit of analysis. Media literacy learning, then, was neither content nor process because it was not media literacy learning at all. By contrast, the learning objective in Day 6, “With guidance and support, students will be able to identify ‘real’ and ‘pretend’ components of a movie trailer and a television ad for a car,”
spoke to media literacy. This learning goal could be translated into the learning goal of identifying fact and fiction found in the mediated texts. In this sense, the in-service teacher was most concerned with media as a social construction of reality, more than media literacy as construction with unique languages as a means to learn about transportation. The directives of the teacher educator, coupled with the unit itself, underscored media literacy as a process for achieving learning within a transportation content.

**Final Curriculum Units—Romeo and Juliet**

In this final unit, the in-service teacher concentrated on using media literacy to teach English language arts, like the previous unit. One main difference between the previous unit, developed by Anne-Marie, and this unit of Naomi’s, was that Naomi’s learners were 8th graders and the unit was about Romeo and Juliet as opposed to storytelling. As per the teacher educator’s comments, the strength of the unit was the multimediality of the lesson. More than that, the teacher educator preferred a volume of distribution in media literacy but not necessarily in lesson-planning that distributed content.

> Naomi, I LOVE the multi-media nature of your unit! It's terrific. I wonder, however, if you could consider sprinkling these lessons throughout the course of the overall R&J unit? Seems to me that you could. Just a thought. Terrific work! 16

**Media Literacy Curriculum Unit—Naomi**

**Final Media Curriculum Unit: Romeo and Juliet**

**Context:** This is an eighth grade English/Language Arts unit.

**Abstract/synopsis:** *Literature in the Tragic Mode* is one of three major units of study in the Howard County Middle School English Essential Curriculum. William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* is the main text read during this unit. The unit is covered over the course of three months; these lessons are to be completed after the students have finished reading the play. Unless otherwise stated, each lesson is intended to take place during one 90-minute class period.

**Instructional goals/objectives:** See lessons for specific goals and objectives addressed.
Objectives in italics indicate Maryland State Assessment limits.

Lesson # 1          Title: Analyzing Different Visual Representations of Romeo and Juliet

(Note: This lesson is intended to take place over the course of two 90-minute classes).

Materials:

• Romeo + Juliet, 1996, directed by Baz Luhrman
• Romeo and Juliet, 1968, directed by Franco Zefferelli
• DVD player (or computer connected to LCD projector)
• Pro/con note sheets for each student
• Chart paper and markers
• Persuasive essay prompt

Objectives:

• Evaluate the differences between the text and visual representations while focusing on the artist/director’s motives.
• Analyze and evaluate the relationship between a literary text and its historical and/or social context.
• Compose oral, written, and visual presentations to persuade.

Development/Procedures:

• Instructor conducts brief introductory conversation: what makes for a “good” film interpretation of a well-known book/story/play? Have students ever seen a great film interpretation of a book they have read? What made it good? What about a “bad” one? Why did they feel it was poorly done? How important is it for a director to stay true to the original plot of a story? Keep track of answers on chart paper via an idea web.
• Hand out pro/con note sheets to students. Explain that they will be filling out these organizers as they watch clips from both film versions of R&J over the course of the next three days. They should be keeping track of what they feel are positive visual interpretations of the play, as well as negative interpretations. This is entirely subjective, but students should consider such aspects as entertainment value, acting, accurate dialogue, etc.
• Show three major clips from Luhrman’s film: the balcony scene, the Mercutio/Tybalt/Romeo fight scene, and the final death scene.
• Show three major clips from Zefferelli’s film: the balcony scene, the Mercutio/Tybalt/Romeo fight scene, and the final death scene.
• Allow students to finish filling in their diagram.
• Whole class discussion/share out: while teacher scribes, students share their major pros and cons of each film. Allow students to add new ideas to their own papers as they see fit.
• Discussion: which film was “better”? More enjoyable/entertaining? More realistic?
More accurate (not just in time period, but also in mood, tone, dialogue, plot, etc.)?

**Homework/Enrichment/Assessment:**

- Students will use their notes to write a five-paragraph persuasive essay.
- Prompt: Pretend that Howard County has asked you to preview and approve one film version of *Romeo and Juliet* to be used in eighth grade English classrooms for enrichment purposes. You are to choose between Baz Luhrman’s 1996 version and Franco Zeffirelli’s 1968 version. **After viewing both films, choose the one that you believe is the better version for students to view.** Write a five paragraph persuasive report detailing your reasons for choosing this interpretation of the play. Some concepts to keep in mind: is it entertaining? Is it accurate? Does it have value?

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**Romeo and Juliet: The Films**

In preparation for an upcoming ECR, use this note sheet to track your observations of both film versions of *Romeo and Juliet*. Make sure you are listing specific, detailed pros and cons about each film. These can be anything from setting, costumes, actors’ performances, music, accuracy, etc. Use the back of this sheet if you need more space.

**Romeo and Juliet** - directed by Franco Zeffirelli, 1968

Pros: 

Cons: 

**Romeo + Juliet**—directed by Baz Luhrmann, 1996

Pros: 

Cons: 

**Lesson # 6** 

**Title:** *Creating an Advertisement for R&J*

**Materials:**

- Copies of four magazine advertisements (can and should be varied)
- Chart paper and markers
- Rubric

**Objectives:**

Compose oral, written, and visual presentations to persuade.

- Support a position and generate convincing evidence.
- Consider the effectiveness of audience appeal and organization.
- Use connotation, parallelisms, repetition, figurative language, and aesthetics to control audience emotion and reaction.

**Development/Procedures:**

- **Conduct whole class conversation re: advertisements. Ask students:** how do
creators of advertisements try to get our attention? What techniques do they use? Which techniques are most effective? Which are least effective? Why?

- Split class into four groups and conduct an advertisement analysis (about 10-15 minutes). Give each group a copy of an advertisement from a magazine (can and should be varied). Ask students to come up with the following answers as a group and answer on chart paper:
  - What is this advertisement selling?
  - Who is selling it?
  - Who is the intended audience of this advertisement?
  - Are the techniques used in this advertisement effective? Why or why not?

- Bring groups back together as whole class and share out their findings. Allow other groups to comment on whether or not they agree with the group’s analysis. Give time for each group to share (about 4-5 minutes per group).

- Inform students that they will be coming up with an ad for a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Globe Theater in Elizabethan London.

- Brainstorm: what would catch people’s attention in Elizabethan England? Considering the wide range of people in the audience (from nobles to groundlings), what techniques might work best to catch their attention?

**Homework/Enrichment/Assessment:**

- Students will create an ad for *Romeo and Juliet*, using whatever software they are most comfortable with (Microsoft Word, Glogster, etc).

- In addition to the advertisement, students must write a brief response, addressing the following topics:
  - Who is your intended audience? How did you attract them in your ad?
  - Justify your aesthetic choices (color, photos, font, etc).
  - What persuasive techniques did you use? Why?
  - Why is your advertisement effective?

*Figure 5.9. Artifact 4. Graded Assignment*

The teacher educator gave Naomi’s Romeo and Juliet lesson full marks. Note that all lessons centered on media literacy analysis that was based on both content and process. Again, where are the markers of content and process media literacy, particularly in an 8th-grade English language arts curriculum unit? In other words, how could one distinguish process from content? Moreover, if media literacy learning for content was present, what in this lesson was English language arts content and media literacy content? The reality was that many of the learning goals could be classified as being focused on both English and media literacy. Texts included books, movies, and commercial advertisements—and more. Interestingly, the in-service teacher learning goal of
“Evaluating the differences between the text and visual representations while focusing on the artist/director’s motives” suggested that a text was print, and that the visual was post-typographic. Media literacy learning then was about more visual than print literacy. Still, with regard to content or process, this lesson was largely process-based due to the limited focus on the discussion or description of media literacy concepts. No instructional activity asked English language arts learners to list, name, or identify specific media literacy concepts as they learned about them. The unit plan was rich in media literacy inquiry learning that centered on audience, language, authorship and representation. The listing of questions, as opposed to a listing of concepts, lent evidence to a process approach to media literacy education for the 8th-grade learner.

**Final Curriculum Units—Apples and Pumpkins?**

The last curriculum unit of analysis came from another kindergarten teacher. Amanda was concerned with delivering a science unit on seasonal vegetation to her elementary learners over a ten-day period. While mechanically proficient, the teacher educator’s remarks revealed that the in-service learner sacrificed media literacy—content and process wise—to teach her science lessons.

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_Amanda, I'm glad you explained your school context in class. That explains how you seemed timid to take risks with the media literacy components. As it stood, you mostly just added media usage, even though there could be rich opportunities for the children to analyze and evaluate the media you've inserted. If you'd like to "spice it up" and add some other elements, please let me know, and we'll work together on it further. 😊_

*Grade: 4/2/4/4*

**Media Literacy Curriculum Unit—Amanda**

- **Grade:** Kindergarten
- **Content Area:** Science
- **Unit:** Fall- Apples and Pumpkins
- **Time Frame:** 10 days
Unit Overview:
In this unit the students will be to identify and describe signs of fall and describe the changes that are happening to our earth, as well as learning about seasonal vegetation. They will be able to sequence the stages of a pumpkins growth, identify the different types of fall apples and learn the story of Johnny Appleseed.

Enduring understandings/Essential Questions-
Science-
Students will:

- Understand that asking questions and making observations can help them learn about the natural world.
- Describe the properties of common objects.
- Compare and contrast objects.
- Communicate observations orally.
- Make predictions.

Language Arts-
Students will:

- Learn basic story elements and use them to aid comprehension.
- Use a variety of strategies to solve problems when interacting with print.
- Apply phonetic principles appropriately.

- Relate the written word to personal knowledge and experience.
- Plan, draft, confer, revise, edit, and publish stories, pictures, and information.
- Employ proper grammatical construction and mechanics to promote communication.
- Use prior knowledge to interpret explicit and inferred information.
- Write legibly with the proper spacing, formation and sizing.

Technology-

- Students will demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes using technology.
- Students will use digital media and environments to communicate and work collaboratively, including at a distance, to support individual learning and contribute to the learning of others.
- Students will apply digital tools to gather, evaluate, and use information.
- Students will demonstrate a sound understanding of technology concepts, systems, and operations.
Day 8:
Procedures:

- Together as a class we will take a book walk through: Johnny Appleseed by Jodie Shepherd.
- The class will make predictions about what they think the story will be about. I will record their predictions on the computer which will be connected to the projector and displayed on the screen.
- I will then read the story to the class.
- Once I am done reading the story to the class, we will read over our predictions.
- I will then re-read the story to the class.
- Next, the children will tell me what the story was about and I will record these predictions on the computer.
- We will compare our predictions about what we thought would happen in the story and what actually happened in the story.
- The children will fill out a story map describing the characters and the setting. (see attached)

Story Map-

Assessment-

- The children will be divided into groups of two. Each pair will receive a bag with items such as an apple, imitation small tree, overalls, a pan, etc. One child can be the narrator and one partner will be Johnny Apple seed. Together the group will create a readers theatre where they can act out the story of Johnny Appleseed.

*Figure 5.10. Artifact 5. Graded Assignment*
The teacher educator’s question was predictable—where is media literacy here? Phrases such as “use digital media,” “use information,” and “apply digital tool” lent support to the teacher educator’s charge that media literacy for Amanda involved media use and use of digital tools. In other words, the lesson was largely devoid of access, analysis, evaluation and, to some extent, communication in a variety of forms. One might argue that “Appreciate literature through varied media, books, dramatic play and performances,” was an expression of some media literacy learning objective. Day 8 Procedures, “We will compare our predictions about what we thought would happen in the story and what actually happened in the story”, reflected the media literacy learning goal of understanding fact versus fiction. Still, in the end it appeared that Amanda had sacrificed media literacy—whether in terms of content or process—for science education.

**Conclusion**

The data revealed that the teacher educator taught media literacy as content more than process at the beginning of the course, which was designed to introduce in-service learners to the field of media literacy. The goal was to familiarize the teacher students with media literacy concepts and find ways to engage in the media literacy process of utilizing inquiry-based questions to mediate texts and technologies. The second half of the class was designed to facilitate teacher students’ learning of media literacy so that they could integrate the concepts into actual school lessons. All in all, media literacy teaching was much more process-based from the perspective of identifying ways to incorporate media literacy into core subjects for learners at various learning stages.

An analysis of the grading of a cadre of in-service teachers’ final curricular units revealed that much of the teaching ultimately lent itself to process more than content media literacy learning. That is, few curricular units focused on how to name and identify media literacy
concepts—instead, they focused on inquiry-based questioning of texts. Often times, media literacy learning was absent, with simple media use taking place. In this sense, the tension in teaching media literacy in teacher education, from a learning perspective, was less about media literacy learning as content or process than about including media literacy learning in all teaching versus core content teaching with the use of media.
CHAPTER 6. TEACHING TENSIONS: STAKEHOLDER PRESSURES

This chapter focuses on the first level of the teaching tensions framework, Stakeholder Pressures, as summarized in Figure 6.1. Data analysis for this chapter centered on answering the following question:

R1. To what extent and how do stakeholders contribute to the teaching of media literacy in teacher education?

As shown in the figure, six competing and complementary camps influence the type(s) of media literacy ultimately taught to and learned by students in the teacher education program. These camps are: (1) the teacher education program itself (e.g., Appalachian State University, Kent State, Columbia, University of Georgia, University of Connecticut, Temple University, Webster University, Penn State University); (2) teacher professional organizations (e.g., International Reading Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education); (3) the K–12 curriculum community (e.g., primary or secondary schooling institution, teachers, principals, students, parents, local school district, state curriculum); (4) the media industry (e.g., Nickelodeon, Google, New York Times, National Public Radio); (5) media watchdog/activist organizations (e.g., Media Matters, Media Education Foundation, Action Coalition of Media Education, Fairness and Accuracy in Media); and (6) government/policy (e.g., National Education Technology Plan, Federal Communications Commission, No Child Left Behind, Department of Education).
The research question on stakeholders is framed in parameter terms. That is, the aim of this chapter is to look at the degree of involvement of each stakeholder in a media literacy education course. The next sections offer pre-course analyses of the teacher educator’s published research, the course syllabus, and the initial interview, before turning to analyses of observations of various class periods.

**Pre-course Analysis**

**Teacher Educator’s Published Research**

The first evidence supporting the importance of teachers’ professional organizations, the K–12 curriculum community, and media watchdog/activist organizations comes from the teacher
educator’s main publication (Flores-Koulish, 2005). In interviews, the teacher educator made specific references to the International Reading Association, the American Library Association, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as major drivers of media literacy education. Moreover, the publication offers important information on constraints faced by local schools in allowing instruction in media literacy. Last but not least, the publication refers to the Action Coalition of Media Education’s influence in lobbying for media reform as a way to improve the media to which children and adolescents are exposed.

**Syllabus**

The syllabus offers signs that signify the roles of various stakeholders in the teacher educator’s teaching of media literacy. In the section on “Alignment with professional standards,” for example, the teacher educator references the International Reading Association repeatedly (see circled IRA references below).

**Alignment with professional standards.**

1. Support classroom teachers and paraprofessionals in the use of a wide range of instructional practices, approaches, and methods, including technology-based practices. Help teachers select appropriate options and explain the evidence-base for selecting practices to best meet the needs of all students.

   Demonstrate the options in your own teaching and in demonstration teaching

   *(IRA 2.2)*

2. Support classroom teachers and paraprofessionals in the use of a wide range of curriculum materials. Help teachers select appropriate options and explain the evidence base for selecting practices to best meet the needs of all students.
Demonstrate the options in your own teaching and in demonstration teaching (IRA 2.3)

3. Use methods to effectively revise instructional plans to motivate all students. They demonstrate these techniques and they can articulate the research base that grounds their practice. (IRA 4.4)

4. Conduct professional study groups for paraprofessionals and teachers (IRA 5.2)
   - This sections underscores the prominence of the teacher professional organization, IRA, in Media Literacy Education.

The IRA also figures prominently in grading for the course:

New Media Exploration Project—20% (IRA 2.2, 5.2)
T.V. Advertisement Analysis paper—20% (IRA 2.3)
Case study research paper—20% (IRA 5.2)

FINAL EXAM:

Media Literacy Curriculum Unit—20% (IRA 2.2, 2.3, 4.4, 5.2)

Ostensibly, the teacher educator was using the IRA to rationalize the structure of the course—including grading—in large part because the media literacy course is part of a broader program for reading specialists. Indeed, direct reference to the NCTE would be found here if the program’s goals were to prepare these in-service teachers more for content English than the teaching of media literacy.

What also stands as a force in media literacy teaching is an explicit discussion of the role of the university as a religious institution.
What makes … university different?

What distinguishes this course from a course taught at a large state university? To put things another way, what extra benefit does this course offer to justify the higher tuition… charges? The difference is [our religion’s] educational philosophy. Here’s how that philosophy influences and enhances this course.

The syllabus goes on to describe the religious philosophy as being a composite of several tenets: (1) concern for the world; (2) concern for critical thinking; (3) emphasis on communication skills; (4) concern for ethics and values; (5) balanced approach to academic excellence; (6) emphasis on cooperation and caring; and (7) concern for the individual (p. 9). The particular religious approach appears to be very humanist and very much in line with the philosophical and learning goals of media literacy education, such as critical thinking and communication.

Additional evidence that media watchdog/activist organizations serve as an influence in the course was offered by the teacher educator by way of a list of media literacy resources for educators.

**Media Education Foundation**
26 Center Street
Northampton, MA 01060
800-897-0089
An organization big on media research and video resources. Among other resources, it carries Sut Jhally, George Gerbner, and Jean Kilbourne videos.

**ACME: Action Coalition for Media Education**
6400 Wyoming Blvd NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109
(505) 828-3377
WEB: [http://www.acmecoalition.org/](http://www.acmecoalition.org/)
An advocacy group committed to promoting media education, independent media production, and reform in response to the threat of transnational corporate media ownership.

**NAMLE: National Association for Media Literacy Education**
WEB: [http://namle.net/](http://namle.net/)
The NAMLE (formally known as AMLA) is committed to promoting media literacy education focused on critical inquiry, learning, and skill-building. This
national grassroots membership organization is key force in bringing media literacy education to all 60 million students in the United States, their parents, their teachers, and others who care about youth.

The teacher educator is a member of the Action Coalition for Media Education. As the earlier description suggests, ACME is an advocacy group lobbying for media reform. Therefore, the teacher educator may be teaching media literacy in a manner that aligns with her professional association with this group, which aims to reform media driven by corporations. Further, these professional ties suggest that the teacher educator is likely to touch less often on the role of government in media—the exception could be the ways in which the government might transform the corporate role in the media and encourage citizen journalism.

**Preliminary Interview**

Data from the interview prior to the first day of class offers additional information on the stakeholder emphases likely to be found in the media literacy course. For this analysis, each stakeholder group is covered separately.

**Media watchdog/activist organizations.** In discussing the visit to the Newseum, the teacher educator talked about how journalists were portrayed as heroes and are held up to be historians. However, the teacher educator contended that this portrayal is problematic, per the positions of several organizations, citing FreePress.org and and Bill Moyers (Interview 0, p. 1).

Other evidence of the role of media watchdog/activist organizations may be found in the guest lecture of Sr. Rose Picatti of the Center for Media Literacy. Her appearance as a guest lecturer pointed to a pedagogy that placed an activist lens on media literacy, since Sr. Rose is a proponent of media literacy in the interest of transforming the broader culture (Interview 0, p. 2). Discussions about the organization of the field of media literacy education led to discussion of organizations that anchor it, namely NAMLE and ACME, which the teacher educator cited as
advocacy organizations in post-class interviews. References to media watchdog activist organizations suggest that media literacy education *per se* would be a minor factor in shaping the classroom education of in-service teachers.

**University Teacher Education Program.** Interview data also shed light on the parameters of this particular teacher educator’s reading/literacy program. This information was important in that while other empirical studies in this area have focused on in-service teaching of media literacy in K–12 contexts or pre-service teaching at the university level, results from this study add context relating to the media literacy training of in-service teachers at the university level. For example, looking at the parameters of a specific university-based teacher education program, primarily the literacy/reading program, reveals the thinking that shapes the curriculum and pedagogy of media literacy. For example, while one course was an introduction to media literacy education, the program in one particular department listed RE 510: Foundations of Reading Instruction, RE 523: Emergent Literacy Development, and RE 531: Youth and Adolescent Literacy. The syllabus listed RE 510 and RE 723 (for RE students), as prerequisites. Students who were matriculating for a Masters in Reading, in contrast to the Masters in Literacy, were required to take the course as well in the second block, but the program website did not stipulate the same block sequence requirement. The teacher educator disclosed that while she did not meet with literacy people when preparing the curriculum, the course had to adhere to requirements of the literacy program. For example, the teacher educator preferred not to use a rubric as an assessment of her in-service learners’ knowledge of media literacy education but was forced to do so due to program guidelines.

Further, this particular teacher education program was located in a teaching rather than a research institution, even though research plays an important role in the institution’s intellectual
life. Accordingly, the teacher educator maintained that the type of faculty who are employed by the teacher education program tended to endorse teaching a critical stance and the idea of questioning, whether in teacher education or not. Neither GRE nor GPA were important for admission to the program. “True to [the university’s] religious roots, we focus on literacy as a social justice issue and a right for all children in public and private schools, with the knowledge that literacy is the focus of all educational endeavors” (field site website). Still, the location in a teaching rather than a research institution indicates that the teacher educator’s goal “…is different from someone at Harvard or Penn State; [we] can justifiably…take… [students] down the road a little further” (Interview 0, p. 4). In other words, one can expect additional attention to teaching versus research to play a role—even though research on teaching informs teacher education practice. That is, one can anticipate context-rich strategies to employ media literacy in K–12 schooling contexts.

**K–12 curriculum community.** When asked who in fact the stakeholders were, the teacher educator first touched on the teachers themselves. The challenge for the teacher educator was to engage and convince them that media literacy should be part of the literacy and reading curriculum, whether they were dealing with young children and their families, No Child Left Behind, diverse education contexts (e.g., private versus public school), or accountability issues. The issue of accountability in schools arose most often in interviews with the teacher educator—she had come to realize that her teacher students might only use media literacy in their personal lives due to the realities of the K–12 teaching context, which limits integration of media literacy with teaching. That is, the K–12 curriculum community may not allow actual teach of media literacy, making K-12 curriculum community a very powerful stakeholder.
The media industry. While much emphasis has been placed on media watchdog/activist organizations, the teacher educator revealed that the question was not whether the media industry would play a role, but rather what kind of role it would play. Professional ties to ACME, along with the institutional stance of the teacher education program, indicate a social justice and activist orientation toward the media. This evidence, coupled with class sessions on “alternative media,” with Chomsky readings and the McChesney video, suggest that the teacher educator had few corporate media ties and would teach media literacy in ways that aimed to transform corporate media to be in the interest of people and not profits.

The teacher educator’s ties to the media industry in fact are very localized and community-based, which could also have an effect on her teaching. When asked about media industry ties and professional preparation for media production, the teacher educator revealed that her ties were to local media—she looked for ways to connect with the local community, for action to take place. She was aligned with the Creative Alliance in Baltimore, an organization that had an open lab for digital media production. The promise of such access was to engage inservice learners (Interview 0, p. 2).

Corporate media would be used in the classroom but largely for critique and not as a means for developing professional media literacy competence. In discussing an activity on fandom, for example, the teacher educator described having groups put together skits on Jerry Springer, Harry Potter, and Oprah. The goal of this exercise was to review the history of media education, which started as a means of differentiating high from low culture (Interview 0, p. 3).

Government/policies. Of the six stakeholders identified for this study, government and policies were mentioned least often during the interview. Of course, as noted earlier the teacher educator touched on the constraints of teaching media literacy in K–12 schools due to No Child
Left Behind and the accountability movement. Net neutrality was mentioned as well, in line with current Federal Communications Commission trends. Although democracy and media ownership were cited, there was little discussion of the First Amendment or other statutes. The emergence/citing of policy in the preliminary interview had more to do with the capacity for media education research to influence policy.

All of the analyses to this point, including the analysis of interview data, showed that government/policies played a lesser role than other stakeholders, but were indeed present as part of the media literacy education of teacher students. The corporate media industry also factored in as a minor stakeholder, probably because the teacher educator was tied closely to alternative media. The media industry mainly played a role in media literacy education, as expected, for the purpose of critiquing the texts and institutions produced by it.

**Course Analysis**

With this background as context, more descriptive information based on observations of the teacher educator is provided below so that the reader has a richer idea of the issues involved in this topic.

**Curriculum Communities Employing the Teacher Students**

The first class session centered on introductions and included an overview of the K–12 curriculum community with which the teacher students were associated. After administering the researcher’s survey, the teacher educator employed an instructional activity called “Introduction—pair/share: name, school position/teaching situation and a current favorite piece of media (song, newspaper, TV show, movie, etc.).” Teacher students indicated their elementary, secondary, and grade affiliations to the class so that everyone had a clear, shared perspective on the unique class composition of in-service teachers. This exercise also gave the teacher educator
insights into whom she would be educating and the challenges she would face in preparing her
class to teach media literacy in their own classrooms.

After the class, in discussions with the researcher, the teacher educator commented on the
makeup of the class. More specifically, the topic of conversation was the role of the K–12
curriculum community in her teaching of media literacy education at the university, and the ways
in which she did so that would have applicability to her students’ teaching environments in other
contexts. In fact, for her, context mattered:

R: . . . I have altered my class as a result of the students who are in this class. And I
continue to do that on the fly to a certain extent. But I . . . learned early on in
teaching this class that many of the people who pursued master’s degrees in
literacy at … [this university] were early elementary teachers. And so I chose the
Vasquez book after learning that because Alvermann writes about middle school.
And quite frankly it’s not so much of a stretch to figure out how to integrate it
into middle school . . . when you’re talking to teachers about media literacy,
middle school and high school teachers are going to get it quicker (Interview 2, p.
3)

The conversation turned to the different counties—and school districts—in Maryland, such as
northern Baltimore county which has “a lot of very urban-like issues in the schools that are
surrounding the city” (Interview 2, p. 4) as does Prince Georges (PG) county, but the latter has
more resources because it’s a city. Contrast these with Howard County where “the schools have
everything they need…The teachers have a lot more freedom in terms of what they teach and
how they teach” (Interview 2, p. 4). Looking at teachers and resources, these districts had charter
school teachers, a Catholic teacher, and independent and homeschool teachers; resources were a
challenge in both wealthier and poorer districts. The teacher educator ended the discussion by
commenting on the current CEO of the Baltimore public schools, Andres Alonzo, whose
leadership challenged the Black-White tensions in Maryland through his Cuban American
heritage. All in all, for the teacher educator, “…the districts matter, the political context matters
and then the grade levels matter”—as a result, she must target her teaching of media literacy to
those involved in early elementary literacy as well as those working in a range of K–12 contexts that touch on Maryland state schooling realities.

The teacher educator also taught in-service teachers with diverse content focuses (e.g., art, Spanish language). While most were in literacy programs, many were matriculating from Curriculum and Instruction programs with doctoral degrees. All required some special attention to ensure that their degree program fully fit with the requirements of working in media literacy instruction. For example, with regard to the art teacher, the teacher educator envisioned utilizing her expertise to drive home how to become visually literate. In doing so, the teacher educator was expressing a constructivist epistemology in that she was using her students’ background to prepare teachers to teach media literacy.

Turning to questions of the impact of the school’s religious philosophy on her teaching, the teacher educator maintained that any influences would not be overt. Observations offered no indication that specific religious ideas were a factor, which called for further explanation given that it was documented in the syllabus as a cornerstone of her curriculum design. The teacher educator explained that at the undergraduate level, the tenets were more overt in the curriculum while at more advanced degree levels it was a lesser factor in coursework/course design. She viewed its presence in the classroom as more a way of being than an influence on instruction.

R: Just so you know. I mean I’m not, I’m no expert in [this particular religion’s] education but I see it as a way of being. It’s a way of thinking about you know learning for a purpose. And that purpose is for the betterment of society. So in a lot of ways it really has to do with social reconstruction and media literacy from my perspective and the way that I approach it, is that. So it’s all about that (Interview 2, p. 14).

Thus, any tensions in touching on the presence of the specific religious philosophy in the curriculum had less to do with its explicit manifestation in the class than in simple class management issues that could be encountered by any teacher. The teacher educator felt that there
was little need to be overt about specific religious beliefs in the graduate classroom because these were embedded in the graduate curriculum. The teacher educator also suggested that she advanced the goals of the school’s particular religion by teaching media literacy; the two, from the teacher educator’s perspective, were both concerned with social transformation. Put another way, instruction on media literacy naturally commingled with instruction in specific religious education—classroom practices thus were consistent with the stated beliefs of the educational institution as a stakeholder, even if this consistency was mainly implicit.

**The Teacher Educator and Media Watchdog/Activist Organizations**

Of the stakeholders in the third level of the tensions framework, observation 2 showed that the teacher educator was heavily influenced by media watchdog/activist organizations. As mentioned earlier, observation 2 covered Weeks 2 and 3 of the course; the Week 3 agenda included use of Cara Mertes, “Puerto Rican ID” and “the Political Dr. Seuss,” with the instructional goals of providing an example of the media memoir and of the socio-politics found in Dr. Seuss’s children’s literary texts, respectively. What stood out in these materials were the explicit influences of the Media Education Foundation (MEF) and the independent media industry—clear encouragements to teach others to perform media literacy education. The MEF’s Mertes film stimulated viewers to recall issues of representation, whereas PBS’s *Political Dr. Seuss* inspired viewers to interrogate popular children’s texts to unearth socio-political issues. What stood out was the teacher educator’s decision to call on media activists and the independent media to foreground an understanding of how to teach, and not to serve as texts for media analysis and criticism.

The second observation also involved the collection of data on the risks and rewards of teaching popular culture, which reflects some ambivalence about the media industry as a
stakeholder. The teacher students discussed feeling hypocritical about having watched or engaged in popular culture either recently or in the past while enforcing paternalism in class when their students talked about or repeated phrases from popular culture. The teacher educator was asked about the phenomenon—that is, how to advise teacher students who work with adolescent learners who have a proclivity for certain media. How do teachers teach texts that are not acceptable within certain contexts but of which they are also fans? Particularly within the context of the K–12 community, how does one wrestle with this conundrum? The teacher educator stated that,

\[ \ldots \] [There is] a lot that K–12 teachers simply can’t do. You know they can’t bring in something you know, for example, is raunchy and raw to talk about you know the way that it’s . . . these things are portraying women for example. You know they, they just can’t do that. And so their rights are limited because they work with minors.

She further added:

R: And so the goal should be first and foremost to be an educator . . . which means to me we’re instilling some sort of critical thinking abilities within their students. And so . . . if you come in as an educator to your classroom and you express a lot of paternalism in your ideas and beliefs certain students, adolescents in particular, will most likely not be effectively educated that way . . . it has to do with their own rebellious nature. And so I think then you know once again I think rights are really kind of irrelevant and what’s first and foremost are you know educational needs and, and educational responsibilities (Interview 3, p. 5).

This question about the “rights of the teacher” was particularly germane to the teacher educator’s teaching because of her pedagogical agenda hidden in the inclusion of the Mertes documentary film. The teacher educator admitted that she wanted to problematize representations of race that were often cast as Black and White by the media industry with a film on Latino identity. This pedagogical decision, of course, was directly influenced by the fact that she herself was a Latina. But she was aware that she had much more latitude than did most of her students, who were teachers in public schools with external pressures that influenced the types of materials teachers
used in their classrooms. Still, one could argue that the teacher educator was also under pressures from the K–12 curricular community to make her teaching relevant to her students’ teaching realities. Preference for one media text over another must offer immediate pedagogical value or run the risk of sidelining media literacy as an important branch of literacy to be included in an already crowded curriculum (Tyner, 1998).

**Teacher Professional Organizations and Government/Policies**

Discussion of the history of the field of media literacy education exposed the role of teacher professional organizations and government/policies as stakeholders. The Week 4 agenda included the instructional activity of Media Literacy Instruction/Explanation. The presentation included a power point slide that revealed critical information. See Figures 6.2 and 6.3.

*Figure 6.2. Slide 5 from “Media Literacy in the US”*
Figure 6.3 outlines, as discussed by the teacher educator, the founding of media literacy education in the United States, with originators such as Thoman, Tyner, and Pugente, around the same time that a Nation at Risk was published and the accountability movement began to take off. The teacher educator maintained that “accountability” was a major reason that media literacy was ultimately sidelined in K–12 curricular agendas.

Figure 6.3 (slide 6) shows that the NCTE as a professional organization was instrumental in advancing media literacy in teacher education. However, the teacher educator drew on guidelines from the International Reading Association, which were in many ways aligned with, but distinct from, those of the NCTE. This decision was due in large part to the teacher educator teaching to literacy and reading specialists, as opposed to students who would teach English.
Figure 6.4. Slide 7 from “Media Literacy in the US”

1990’s Expansion

- Renee Hobbs’ teacher training (Billerica, MA)
- Channel One
- Goals 2000 (voluntary)
- Media literacy concepts in arts
- Collaboration with substance abuse prevention programs
- Partnership for Media Education (PME)

Figure 6.5. Slide 8 from “Media Literacy in the US”

The 00’s Split

- Protectionism continues…
- 1999 Channel One Controversy
- ACME vs. AMLA
Figure 6.4 (slide 6) shows how media literacy first entered into public policy with Goals 2000. Goals 2000 was a Clintonian era education policy designed with an ambitious call to have each student achieve proficiency in several subjects, including communication (Yates, 2004). The teacher educator used these slides to capture political movement (Yates, 2004), and a climate in which media literacy began to make inroads in U.S. education. While Goals 2000 was the one actual policy cited above, all of the items in Figure 6.5 (slide 7) can be viewed as part of the larger media literacy “movement” terrain that led to the current state of media literacy education in schools. The teacher educator narrated a story about the backlash against Hobbs’ involvement with Channel One—corporate media intended for classroom use—in the Billerica, Massachusetts schools. Many media literacy education proponents voiced opposition to profit-making corporate media sponsorship of media literacy activities in schools and professional organizations (Yates, 2004). These events led to a climate in which media literacy education taught in schools and professional organizations is, in some ways, divorced from the media industry—much of which is based on corporate sponsorship in the United States.

The class discussed the experience of teaching in a Channel One-sponsored school and the Partnership for Media Education. This situation, the teacher educator explained, led to a split in the AMLA and the formation of the ACME. The teacher educator pointed out that the Canadian model was much different and allowed for collaborations with the media industry in ways not possible within the U.S. In a later interview, the teacher educator commented on the Media Awareness Network, which is a Canadian organization:

. . [Y]ou can kind of cut to the chase in a way that you can’t here and whereby we have to provide all this justification about why it’s important . . . you just go deeper in the analytical aspect and the materials are there and the lessons are there in a way that they don’t exist here. So it’s, I think that much more of an opportunity to be deeper and more robust about it. What we do there. So you know that’s the main thing. (Interview 7, p. 8)
The tension for teachers in the United States in teaching media literacy not only involved the absence of direct ties to the media industry, but also the value of media literacy as a subject to teach at all. The nature of schooling in the United States did not, as seen in the description of competing forces outlined in the teacher educator’s power point slides, lend itself to sensitivity to media literacy until a much later stage in the development of the learner. Those introduced to media literacy in the United States are at the early adult learner stage at best. The challenge for the teacher educator was to convince a cohort of teachers to take this literacy area into their classrooms when they had no prior schooling or exposure to it, nor peers who taught media literacy.

Teaching Learners New Ways of Reading and Writing Texts

One of the tensions already noted about teaching media literacy had to do with teaching learners new ways of reading and writing texts. To accomplish this, the teacher educator needed to provide students with a little extra guidance and time. By Week 5 (Visual & Verbal Sleight of Hand), the teacher educator had made pedagogical decisions to include practice drill-like instructional activities that helped with methods for reading the media—in this case, magazine advertisements. As described in Chapter 4, the teacher educator had her art student teach a visual literacy lesson; the rest of the class then had the opportunity to apply their learning from the art teacher’s lesson to various ads ranging from those for a Volvo car, to TagHeuer, to the Marines, to Only One Diamond Will Do?, and Toyota. Afterwards they shifted to allow time for work on their advertisements papers. The media industry as a stakeholder was clearly present, but presented in a critical light.
One tension described by the teacher educator involved teaching her students new critical skills in viewing media from alternative perspectives. After those initial lessons, she believed further pedagogical demonstrations would prod them along in learning and applying these skills.

R: At the end of the class . . . I gave them some time to work independently . . . one group . . . had chosen initially this Firestone tire commercial with a beaver. But it’s the idea that the beaver was kind of repeating this act of kindness to the man who avoided hitting him before ‘cause he kind of winks at the man after he had cut down the tree to be able to help save him and it’s a tire commercial . . . I really went to Sister Rose’s framework that she uses for media mindfulness and thought this is a great kind of humanistic ad because it really shows this compassion to animals and the animals having compassion for human beings . . . their first response was that there’s enough there to write about. So immediately I thought talk about assessment . . . they’re not quite getting this yet because even though I’ve only seen it once I quickly got that extra message that Firestone was trying to convey . . . a kind of higher moral purpose or about saving animals. And they obviously didn’t really get that. (Interview 5, p. 2)

The problem was that, after having spent an entire lecture on art and the image, coupled with the demonstration about analyzing the commercial from the expert guest lecturer Sr. Rose—who represents media watchdog/activist organizations—at least one group just did not get it, even when allotted additional time. The group missed the mark, from the humanist perspective, on seeing how the beaver’s act and likewise the human’s was a metaphor for not only humanist, but also animal rights. Adhering to the de facto cultural mandate of the teacher education program to allot more time for out-of-class assignments can be frustrating when the learner does not deliver.

Besides such pragmatic curriculum parameters as class management, media literacy teaching materials can be, as already shown, a direct consequence of the teacher’s professional organizational affiliation. When asked about the use of Unspun, the teacher educator revealed that use was based on her attendance of a NAMLE conference:

. . . I actually got introduced to the book by the media literacy, national media literacy organization a few years back when they had one of their conferences they gave the book out for free. So I first got it from that conference. And I read it and I just found it to be incredibly accessible and palatable. So at the same time it
conveys a lot of the ideas that I was trying to convey within the class” (Interview 5, p. 7).

The teacher educator rationalized the use of Unspun further, maintaining that her course was not a theory course, but in fact one for practitioners. The most important thing was to make sure that any material—whether theory or practice-based—was “accessible and palatable.” While her teacher students might find Frankfurt School readings interesting, it would be difficult to make a case to in-service teachers about how knowledge regarding the “Culture Industry” was applicable to literacy teaching in their K–12 classrooms. The NAMLE-driven Unspun text could touch on theory to help them develop a media literacy education praxis.

Practicality was paramount not only with regard to the materials that provided strategies for media analysis, but also to materials that served as media analyses themselves. Observation data revealed that the teacher educator used materials ranging from the cutting-edge e-tool Prezi to the more mundane print media material of magazines. For the teacher educator, use of both had to do with the material realities of diverse schooling environments:

. . . [W]e want to ideally expose the students to some really cool tools and everything the reality is that schools often . . . or not all, often . . . still don’t have access to the cool tools . . . while some schools get all kinds of flashy technology and of course are not using it at all appropriately, other schools still just simply don’t have access to this stuff. So I am very well aware of that reality. And so I often try to present stuff that’s still accessible . . . next week I have this really old power point that I still show because it also conveys very simple kinds of production that can take place in a classroom with no equipment. And then it moves to more sophisticated types of ways of using production . . . there’s also the fear of, of handling new technologies and stuff. (Interview 5, p. 13)

For in-service teachers, a major challenge was less about an introduction to new forms of production and analysis and more about simply “handling new technologies and stuff.” The National Council of Teachers of English (2007) underscored this phenomenon in a policy brief, maintaining that 21st century literacies demand that teachers—who are often of the low- or non-tech generation—face their anxieties with technology. Such a call does not necessarily mean
change will come. The challenge in this class was not only about teaching to diverse school realities, but also addressing the media tech anxieties of many older teachers.

**Critical Media Literacy**

By the second to the last week, the teacher educator has already established her pedagogy of choice—critical media literacy—and had such pedagogy front and center on the agenda for week 12 (Critical Media Literacy: How Can this Be Actualized?). However, the reality was that only so much critical media literacy can be taught. An examination of her teacher student posters from the critical literacy activity revealed that some students were quicker to understand the principles than others. The teacher educator recalled during the interview that teaching critical (media) literacy required having not only a lot of time, but also the institutional and professional space—or power—to teach media literacy. The realities of critical media literacy are often unsettling for both the learners and the teacher educator as well.

R: That’s where, that’s where it comes down to . . . I mean that’s where it crosses over into the critical realm and you have to look at how critical educators have written about that, and that’s why you know I have written about that to a certain extent in terms of the negotiations that I’ve had to make and the kinds of ways that I’ve seen students understand the critical ideas and the discomfort it’s caused and the learning that’s resulted from certain people. So it’s a reality that’s complicated. (Interview 9, p. 20)

One of the major tensions in teaching media literacy at the university level involves going into those often uncomfortable spaces about ideology, race, class, gender, and other media representations that call on viewers to interrogate themselves and the ways they might view the other (Said, 1980). After all, if media literacy is deemed as transformative, as it should be according to Sr. Rose, then one will have to broach topics that are often left outside of the classroom walls. While media literacy can be liberating, the process of getting there can raise a host of emotions for which the teacher or teacher educator will be held responsible and potentially and eventually punished. Teaching media literacy must be done in ways that probe,
but perhaps not push, since reprisal can have real world professional ramifications for the educator who dares to teach media literacy in a raw, critical way if, for example, students complain to university administrators, or the teacher students invite backlash from their school administrators to the extent they bring uncomfortable content or processes into their classrooms.

**Observation 10**

The final class involved each teacher student discussing the curriculum units. During these conversations the predominance of the K–12 curriculum community as the major stakeholder in teaching media literacy, and government/policies as the least influential stakeholder, was confirmed. One teacher student re-visited the Baltimore City-adopted Health Unit and created the Body Shop, which includes germs and diseases and uses a YouTube video to discuss the topic. Another teacher student designed an 8th-grade civil rights unit, inspired by Maryland state standards, to explain how laws are meant to protect individuals. Other teacher students who were middle schoolteachers advocated for the teaching of media literacy earlier than the 3rd and 4th grades. The same teacher who voiced concern about teaching media literacy because doing so might rob children of their childhood, celebrated having the space to implement her media literacy curriculum unit in her school.

Further underscoring the heavy influence of the teacher educator herself was the way that she designed her syllabus and then found standards that supported what she wanted to teach:

I designed the course and then we just talked about standards, so I designed the courses I wanted to and then found the standards that fit it . . . the IRA really dictates more of what we do in our classes…and I don’t think NCATE really looks at this particular course when they do their evaluation of our unit. (Interview 10, p. 29)

While previous comments on the NCATE and IRA indicated that the required grading of media literacy assignments made rubric assessments necessary, the teacher educator maintained that the IRA and NCATE had no real power over her classroom teaching. Nor then did it seem that any
other teacher professional organization held sway, other than perhaps the NAMLE. ACME, on the other hand, had a stake in what occurred in the course. In the end, the teaching of media literacy arguably had more to do with the teacher educator’s professional ties, than with the university program or institutional guidelines.

Last, but not least, was the question of the effect of the university’s religious leanings on the teacher educator’s teaching of media literacy. As the teacher educator outlined early on, the teaching of media literacy via religion was not overt. The question remained: when and how does the teacher educator actually fulfill the university’s religious vision as a pedagogical goal? For the teacher educator, her objective was to realize her goal of viewing media literacy education as the transmission of culture:

... [M]y specific educational objectives were to point specifically to the third point, appreciate the power of the media to transmit culture, which is definitely a critical idea... one could say it is a component of [religious] education in that you are looking at the world around you, the world surrounding you, in new ways... and seeing that there are injustices. It’s about engaging in the process of asking questions. And that too I think corresponds quite well with the aims of [religious] education to be wide awake in the world and understand again what’s happening around you” (Interview 10, p. 17).

For the teacher educator, the religious teaching objective was fulfilled via problem-posing teaching. Each time the teacher students used the five-question media literacy framework, they engaged in religious education. One could argue that the values represented in the mediated text were in alignment with the university’s religious tradition. Moreover, the teacher educator’s leanings toward the critical were consistent with that tradition because both aim to address issues of social justice. In this way, the teacher educator experienced no tension between teaching media literacy and fulfilling the mission of the university’s particular religion.
Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to address the extent to which stakeholders from the third level of the tensions framework played a role in the teaching of media literacy in a teacher education program at a university. Initial evidence suggested that government/policies would factor least among the six competing and complementary camps. The data also showed that media watchdog/activists played a role in limiting how much and the ways in which government/policies factored in the teacher educator’s teaching of media literacy. Professional ties to ACME in particular were very influential in the specific segment of the media industry that the teacher educator drew upon to educate her class; alternative media professionals helped with actual instruction, whereas commercial media served almost exclusively as the subject of critical analysis.

Teacher professional organizations played less of a role than anticipated (evidence from the syllabus suggested the possibility of a direct influence from them). The operational realities on the ground showed that the teacher educator drew on them mainly to validate and not necessarily dictate the kind of media literacy education she applied in her classroom. The teacher education university program, while present in such markers as prerequisites and rubrics, had limited influence in certain ways; in others, though, the teacher educator walked a tight rope while engaging the students in critical media literacy for fear of disrupting certain learner sensibilities.

The data also showed that of the six stakeholders, the K–12 curriculum community factored most heavily in the teaching of media literacy in teacher education. The teacher educator was consistently held accountable to the day-by-day realities of Maryland public and private schools in which her students taught. The need to make her teaching applicable to the
learning environments of the teacher students shaped the design of her teacher education
curriculum and affected many of the pedagogical decisions involved in helping her students learn
how to read and write the media and to develop associated pedagogies.
CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

The previous chapter centered on an analysis of the teacher educator’s teaching of media literacy through the lens of the third level of the tensions framework, Stakeholder Pressures. That is, that analysis focused on how the teacher education program offered in universities, the K–12 curriculum community, teacher professional organizations, media industry, media watchdog activist/organizations, and government/policies influenced preparation of the literacy educator population. Government/policies factored least out of the various stakeholder groups, but such stakeholder effects were nonetheless present. According to Observation 3, History of Media Education here and abroad, the teacher educator zeroed in on the 1980s accountability movement and A Nation at Risk as currents that paralleled, and ultimately sidelined, media literacy education in the United States. While there was a growing need to educate students about the impact of television and popular culture on youth development, the government was concerned about having K–12 schools concentrate on basic math and reading/literacy skills—hence the “Back to Basics” mantra that would privilege core content areas such as math, reading, and science, while undermining broader definitions of literacy education. Beyond this, though, government/policies were seldom part of the media literacy teacher education conversation in the course.

Further, the teacher educator and her in-service students rarely referenced No Child Left Behind in terms of how this federal policy might slow the integration of media literacy education across the curriculum. Ironically, one reason for the absence of No Child Left Behind in class discourse and teacher educator pedagogy may stem from the fact that the policy itself sidelines media literacy by never so much as referencing it (Center for Digital Education, 2009). As a result, these and other teachers are not held accountable for teaching media literacy via No Child
Left Behind or other federal mandates. The state of Maryland has English language arts standards under the umbrella of Common Core, which call for media literacy education, while the development of Assignment Media Literacy reflects the state’s commitment to media literacy. Still, with the in-service literacy population under pressure to make sure all learners reach proficiency in reading and math by 2014, and the crowded curriculum problem, one would have anticipated that such pressures would be reflected in class discussions regarding the limited possibilities for media literacy education. Those discussions rarely occurred.

By contrast, the K–12 curriculum community’s voice was very much present in the classroom. The teacher educator consistently inquired of her teacher students regarding the extent to which her teaching and pedagogy met the on-the-ground realities of the students’ K–12 teaching curriculum contexts. For a teacher from a Title I school, the time and resources for media literacy education would be limited while, for a teacher at a service-learning private school, such media literacy education would be welcomed. For another teacher, avoiding media literacy education was simply a developmental concern; children deserved to be children given that childhood lasts for a short, finite period of time, and media literacy education shortens childhood by pushing children to read mediated texts in the sophisticated ways of adults. As a corollary, Disney and various fairytales need not, at an age when the learner is just beginning to grasp the grammar of a text, be challenged. These and other K–12 curriculum community voices heavily influenced the teacher educator’s curricular and pedagogical decisions about media literacy education.

What also stands out from the analysis of stakeholder influence is the role of the media industry. As mentioned in Chapter 6, the corporate media industry often played a role as the subject of analysis, whereas alternative media were often used to help with actual teaching
methods and served as the lens of analysis. This phenomenon can be understood as the result of the teacher educator’s educational philosophical leanings in support of critical media literacy and her own media education professional ties, namely to ACME, which steered her toward alternative media as a model for teacher students to utilize in constructing their own media literacy pedagogy for the K-12 classroom.

**Purpose of Tensions**

*Tensions of Teaching Media Literacy in Teacher Education* is a case study. As described in the introduction, the purpose of *Tensions* was to inquire into the pedagogical challenges of teaching media literacy in a teacher education program. Research into the teaching of media literacy was based on the tensions framework of (1) critical and/or new/21st century literacies pedagogy, and pedagogy for skills or for practices; (2) content or process; and (3) competing and complementary stakeholder pressures. From this conceptual framing arose the following questions that guided the inquiry:

**R1a.** Which media literacy pedagogical approach does a teacher educator employ (critical and/or new/21st century literacies), and why?

**R1b.** In what ways does media literacy teacher education nurture teacher student pedagogy for skills or pedagogy for practices or both?

**R2.** In what ways does a media literacy teacher educator employ media literacy as process or content, and what are the implications of either or both approaches for teacher student learners?

**R3.** To what extent and how do stakeholders influence the teaching of media literacy in teacher education?
As shown in Chapters 4 through 6, the teacher educator employed critical media literacy more often than new/21\textsuperscript{st} century literacies pedagogy in her education of the in-service literacy population. This phenomenon occurred in large part because her educational philosophy of media literacy education was grounded in critical theory. In addition, she had only minimal training in New Literacy Studies. The teacher educator admitted to being much more familiar with critical media literacy than new/21\textsuperscript{st} century literacies, although in the interview data the teacher educator discussed the significance of new/21\textsuperscript{st} century literacies in relation to critical media literacy. Her understanding of new/21\textsuperscript{st} century literacies and critical media literacy was consistent with the \textit{Tensions} conceptual framework found at the first level, where there are two concentric circles overlapping one another (see Chapter 4). The teacher educator’s framing of these two dominant pedagogical approaches suggests the importance of both critical and new/21\textsuperscript{st} century literacies for the teacher educator herself, although observation data show that the teacher educator employed critical media literacy more than new/21\textsuperscript{st} century literacies.

The teacher educator also employed socio-cultural practices-based pedagogy more than cognitive skills-based approaches in the preparation of her media literacy teachers. This phenomenon is not surprising in light of the teacher educator’s critical stance on media literacy. The teacher educator admitted to shying away from references to behavioral forms of media literacy education. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the observation data from the first class session revealed that the teacher educator did raise relevant questions, ranging from: “Does the violence we see encourage violence in society?” to “How do our brains process media visual/images?” However, there is scant evidence beyond Week 1 that the teacher educator utilized cognitive and behavioral media literacy pedagogy. Regardless of that emphasis (or de-emphasis), she often taught as much for technical skills as for socio-cultural understandings of media literacy. Indeed,
it is possible that the teacher educator herself was not aware of the times when she employed such media literacy pedagogy. If so, a possible reason for this is that, for the teacher educator, teaching techniques of media literacy were only meaningful and relevant to the extent that they helped her in-service educators better understand the mediated culture. Indeed, she may have believed that technical teaching clouded the message of the socio-cultural teaching she tended to employ while implicitly using technical teaching to carry that same message.

As far as media literacy learning was concerned, the teacher educator created a curriculum in which media literacy was viewed as both content and process. However, media literacy as a process for teaching core subjects became more pronounced in the second half of the class. This phenomenon makes practical sense, as the first half of the course was designed to introduce in-service teacher students to the overall field of media literacy education, to introduce concepts, history, debates, and to allow media literacy to be presented as a distinct literacy field. The second half of the class was designed to introduce learners to methods for integrating media literacy into their own classrooms. As a result, there was a shift from learning what media literacy is and how to do it, to learning how to use media literacy in lesson plans that will enhance the learning experiences of K–12 students.

Data from the in-service students revealed that they viewed media literacy mostly as a process for teaching core subjects in their classrooms, as evidenced in their curriculum units. Few among the in-service sample displayed conceptual and content knowledge of media literacy. That is, the data suggest that teacher students showed little understanding of media literacy from a media studies/communications perspective, and relied on surface-level knowledge of media literacy to develop lessons.

This situation can be explained from at least three vantage points. First, Media Literacy
Education is an introductory media literacy course, and there is only so much conceptual and content knowledge that can be mastered during a single course during a single semester. Unless students entered the class with prior knowledge of media literacy through education, training or professional experiences, there was little chance that they would exit with a deep knowledge of media literacy education. Second, the curriculum unit assignment was designed for in-service learners to integrate media literacy into already existing units. While the teacher student population represented a range of K–12 schooling institutions (e.g., public, private, Title I, expeditionary learning), none of them were in the process of teaching or had taught media literacy prior to taking the course; and, as the curriculum units showed, Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies content dominated. Perhaps media literacy was easier to integrate in these fields, and the teacher educator may have effectively prioritized language arts content curriculum more highly in constructing her pedagogy, and found it an effective way to draw students into the subject through appeals to traditional notions of literacy. Third, the teacher educator herself taught media literacy more as process than as content. While the teacher educator introduced her students to some content from the field, the data showed that the teacher educator taught media literacy more as an analytical tool and less as a communications subject to be mastered. In this sense, the teacher educator cast media literacy learning mostly as a process.

**Implications of Findings**

Regarding tensions between critical and new/21st century literacies pedagogy, the educator studied identified most closely with critical media literacy. At a theoretical level, critical media literacy and new/21st century literacies pedagogy are distinct though overlapping forms of media literacy education, although as a practical matter critical media literacy was emphasized. As revealed in the interview data, the primacy of critical approaches to reading and
writing media stemmed in large measure from the fact that the teacher educator was trained and educated in critical approaches, and was lacking some of the technical expertise that facilitates use of a new/21st century literacies pedagogy. By implication, had she been trained in new/21st century literacy education as much or more so than in critical media literacy, the results would likely be different. This is an important point to address, since the teacher educator, like the broader population of educators, was exposed to, and immersed in, digital media. But the mere use of digital media does not lead to proficiency in media literacy. Use and exposure are necessary, but, in and of themselves, not sufficient conditions for media literacy education.

Related results appeared for socio-cultural practices-based pedagogy vis-à-vis cognitive skills. The teacher educator self-identified as a socio-culturalist media literacy educator, and rejected most cognitive and behavioral understandings of media literacy education. Interview data confirmed that, while a cognitive skills approach to media literacy education was shunned, the teacher educator had not quite resolved the issue for herself. Despite her socio-cultural preferences, the teacher educator opened the class with media effects-like questions to arouse her students’ analytical interest in the media. In the first class session, the teacher educator posed a series of questions such as, “How do our brains process media/visual images?” Such a question can be viewed as a cognitive one. Analyses of this and other questions (see Chapter 4) revealed that the teacher educator was concerned with media literacy education that tapped into theories of the individual mind, even if her broader approach emphasized social relations. From this vantage point, the tensions framework makes particular sense with regard to socio-cultural practices and cognitive skills: the two approaches clearly both exist and are viewed as distinct, non-overlapping and even diametrically opposed from the perspective of the teacher educator. Observation data confirmed this phenomenon, given that the teacher educator never utilized
media literacy pedagogy that simultaneously emphasized socio-cultural practices and cognitive skills.

With regard to the second level of the tensions framework, content or process, there may have been less tension than anticipated. Findings in Chapter 5 indicate that the teacher educator’s pedagogy lent itself to the use of media literacy in the process of teaching core subjects, particularly towards the end of the course. This phenomenon occurred because of the realities of the in-service population. In other words, the course needed to be structured for the on-the-ground realities of the teachers who were taking the class. Because media literacy did not exist beforehand within their curricula, it was incumbent upon the teacher educator to develop teacher preparation that was germane to what they were already teaching.

That being said, as an introductory course, the teacher educator was also charged with presenting a broad overview of the emerging field of media literacy, which included some conceptual content. The data did not show these pedagogical objectives causing a struggle for the teacher educator. Perhaps this lack of tension emerged because the teacher educator viewed media literacy as both content and process. Where the tension lay most clearly was not in whether to teach for media literacy learning as content or as process, but more in terms of the deeper questions of what is content and what is process. That is, what does media literacy content look like and how does an educator know that she or he is actually teaching for media literacy content learning? Literacy content—broadly speaking—has clearly delineated boundaries. But media literacy has yet to fully mark its parameters. Media studies and literacy scholars continue to theorize about what media literacy means for the field and teacher students at large (Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012). One might conjecture that media literacy content is best realized when the focus is from a media studies/communications perspective. The tension for
educators then regards when to bring specific media studies/communications content into their K–12 classrooms.

The finding that government/policies were the weakest stakeholder was not unexpected. The paucity of media literacy pedagogy policy in this graduate media literacy education course might have had something to do with the paucity of media literacy pedagogy policy itself. The mere fact that there were no direct references to media literacy education in No Child Left Behind, for example, means that teacher education will direct attention away from such conversations. However, touching on government/policies involves taking a political economy approach, which is part of the core of media literacy learning—the recognition that media have commercial and political implications.

While not completely absent, government/policies were in fact touched on the least of those stakeholders identified; they factored in least in the in-service learner analyses of media, and in their final curriculum units. The day-to-day classroom realities for this group of students tended to sideline government/policies when, arguably, the importance of the policies to longer-term realities should center them. As the teacher educator explained in one of the interviews, the accountability movement has hindered the growth of media literacy education in the United States. Given that accountability has stifled media literacy education in classrooms and with cash-strapped public schools turning to advertising (USA Today, 2012), one would have anticipated more analysis of the ways in which teachers are hindered from engaging in media literacy learning. The tension exists, but there is little acknowledgment of it in the data.

Limitations

Several limitations affect this dissertation. First, the population size was too small to generate statistically significant relationships beyond initial validation of the media literacy
scales from the survey. While a power analysis was not conducted, there is little doubt that the class size of twenty-three would have to be multiplied by at least three or four to yield significant relationships. However, class size could not be increased given that enrollments are capped, and that such increase in class size would not reflect the naturalistic environment of the classroom itself. As a result, this study was not able to utilize a quasi-experimental methodology for such statistical validation.

Second, analytical results generating implications for teacher student pedagogy were weak but not absent. The implications for teacher student pedagogy were achieved as a result of analyzing the curriculum units of the purposefully sampled group of teacher students from the media literacy education class in Chapter 5. As stated there, close analysis of the five teacher students’ final curriculum units shed light on the implications of media literacy teaching for content or process learning, finding that the course was richer in process than content learning, and that this emphasis likely made it easier for the teacher students to integrate media literacy across a broad spectrum of curriculum offerings. However, these results did not go much deeper in terms of implications for overall pedagogy.

**Future Research**

A study addressing the limitations just discussed could center on conducting longitudinal research, perhaps following the five in-service teachers studied here into their classrooms to see how in fact they implement media literacy into the learning environments of their K-12 students. In addition to an analysis of curriculum design, such a study might involve pre- and post-interviewing, along with sample interviewing at various intervals throughout the academic year or term, in tandem with observations of instructional activities, and an analysis of K-12 student artifacts generated by media literacy education. This type of study could generate richer
implications regarding the effects of Flores-Koulish’s pedagogical choices at the university level on the K-12 classroom and, with a broader research effort, the general effects of teacher education regarding media literacy.

That vision of future research stands in sharp contrast to the conclusions of Martens (2010). He argues that future research needs to better pinpoint the knowledge and skills needed by students, better delineate the explanatory factors driving student cognitive development (both individually and socially) and clarify linkages between cognitive development and behavior (pp. 14-15). The pedagogy developed and applied to teaching the teachers is, at best, of indirect relevance to those endeavors, but it is arguably of at least equal importance in terms of the effects on media literacy education. That importance is suggested both by the large number of K-12 classrooms affected indirectly by the teaching of teachers, and by the fact that the teachers participating as students in university media literacy education courses may use the perspectives gained over a period of decades, and for multiple generations of students.

Final Thoughts/New Insights

The initial impetus for this study was based on the researcher’s triumphs and challenges in teaching media literacy in an undergraduate English/Communications teacher education program. While the researcher entered with content knowledge of media studies, she lacked the pedagogical skills to address the media literacy learning needs of a student teacher population. With experience, media literacy pedagogy seemed to develop, despite the presence of few examples of how to teach media literacy within a higher education context. At the core, then, Tensions of Teaching Media Literacy in Teacher Education is about my efforts to understand the pedagogical content knowledge needed to teach teachers of media literacy. If media literacy is to gain a curricular foothold beyond communications courses, and specifically in teacher education,
then literacy scholars and educators should be able to identify distinct instructional strategies necessary for the teaching of media literacy. This work detailed many of these specific strategies as found in the course taught by Flores-Koulish, and placed these strategies in the larger context of teaching tensions.

Several centuries ago, a major question in literacy centered on who should be literate and have access to the printed word. Behind that question was the assumption that, to be literate, one needed to know how to read alphanumeric script. With the digital revolution, the parallel question today is: what does it mean to be literate? As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, youth often bring literacy practices to their schools that are markedly different from those studied and nurtured in formal K–12 schooling. Despite our media-based economy, many teachers are under-exposed to, unaware of, or unwilling to acknowledge this media-centric world and to alter their curriculum and pedagogy in ways that successfully address this shift. And while progressive educators may shun behaviorism, there is a multitude of research that shows that the media, as well as the broader culture, shapes ways of knowing and being – and behavior – among youth. In response, the education community needs to become more involved in efforts to help youth and the broader community evolve into discerning media consumers. Absent such efforts, literacy education may become increasingly irrelevant to the next generation, a generation who will live in a world where to view and represent are on par with historical understandings of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
APPENDIX A: SURVEY OF TEACHER STUDENTS

Media Literacy Teacher-Student Survey for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Tensions of Teaching Media Literacy in Teacher Education

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This is a survey of the role of media literacy in teacher education. All information provided will remain confidential.
Please respond to each question as concisely as you can.

I. Please provide the following demographic information:


2. Race: White (not Hispanic) Black or African American (not Hispanic)
   Hispanic/Latino—White Hispanic/Latino—Black
   Asian Indian or Pacific Islander Native American or Alaskan Native
   Some other race…………………………….. Hispanic (unspecified)

3. Gender: Male Female

4. Native Language: English Other____________________

5. Class rank (at the university): Graduate student Other____________________

6. What is (or are) your major(s)? ______________________

7. Years of teaching: _______

8. Subject/content area certification:____________________

9. Teaching level (e.g. primary, secondary):_________________

10. Place of certification (e.g. Maryland):_________________
II. Please designate, to the best of your knowledge, the amount of media you consumed for fun, as well as how often you used for leisure the following media yesterday:

1. Print (e.g., newspaper, magazines, books)
   - None
   - 5 min – less than 30 min
   - 30 min – 1 hour
   - More than 1 hour – 3 hours
   - More than 3 hours

2. Television (content) (e.g., live TV, On Demand, internet, iPod)
   - None
   - 5 min – less than 30 min
   - 30 min – 1 hour
   - More than 1 hour – 3 hours
   - More than 3 hours

3. Music/Audio (e.g., radio, iPod, iTunes, cell phone)
   - None
   - 5 min – less than 30 min
   - 30 min – 1 hour
   - More than 1 hour – 3 hours
   - More than 3 hours

4. Computer
   a. Social networking
      - None
      - 5 min – less than 30 min
      - 30 min – 1 hour
      - More than 1 hour – 3 hours
      - More than 3 hours
   b. Games
      - None
      - 5 min – less than 30 min
      - 30 min – 1 hour
      - More than 1 hour – 3 hours
      - More than 3 hours
   c. Video websites (YouTube)
      - None
      - 5 min – less than 30 min
      - 30 min – 1 hour
      - More than 1 hour – 3 hours
      - More than 3 hours
   d. Instant Messaging
      - None
      - 5 min – less than 30 min
      - 30 min – 1 hour
      - More than 1 hour – 3 hours
      - More than 3 hours
   e. Other Websites
      - None
      - 5 min – less than 30 min
      - 30 min – 1 hour
      - More than 1 hour – 3 hours
      - More than 3 hours
   f. Email
      - None
      - 5 min – less than 30 min
      - 30 min – 1 hour
      - More than 1 hour – 3 hours
      - More than 3 hours
   g. Graphics/photos
      - None
      - 5 min – less than 30 min
      - 30 min – 1 hour
      - More than 1 hour – 3 hours
      - More than 3 hours

5. Video Games
   - None
   - 5 min – less than 30 min
   - 30 min – 1 hour
   - More than 1 hour – 3 hours
   - More than 3 hours
Number of or time spent, in the last week watching:

6. Movies (e.g. in movie theater)
   None  2 or less  2 – 4  4 – 6  More than 6

7. Other ______________
   None  5 min – less than 30 min  30 min – 1 hour  More than 1 hour – 3 hours  More than 3 hours

Please provide the following additional information:

I. Is this your first course in media literacy? Yes  No. If no, which other courses in media literacy have you taken?

____________________________________________________

II. Do you possess additional training/education (e.g. summer camps, week-long institute sessions, day forums) in media/communications production, analysis, theory, research?

____________________________________________________

III. Which other professional experiences, if any, have you accrued—whether voluntary, internship-based, or more advanced—at any media companies (i.e. newspaper, search engine, broadcast, etc.) or in posts that are associated with media-related skills (e.g. public relations director, newsletter editor, product development manager, etc.)?

____________________________________________________

III. On a scale of 1 to 8, with 1 being the least familiar and 8 being the most familiar, please rate your level of familiarity (i.e. definition of, commonly used for, experience applying) with the following:

1. Phonics
   I……2……3……4……5……6……7……8

2. Discourse
   I……2……3……4……5……6……7……8

3. Syntax
   I……2……3……4……5……6……7……8

4. Genre
   I……2……3……4……5……6……7……8

5. Syllabication
   I……2……3……4……5……6……7……8

6. Alliteration
   I……2……3……4……5……6……7……8
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IV. In your own words, please define the following terms and respond briefly to the question associated with each term:

Literacy

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Which instructional activities, strategies, and practices do you associate with literacy learning? Explain

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Media literacy

Definition:

Which instructional activities, strategies, and practices do you associate with media literacy learning? Explain

New/21st Century literacies

Definition:

Which instructional activities, strategies, and practices do you associate with new/21st century literacies learning? Explain

Critical media literacy

Definition:

Which instructional activities, strategies, and practices do you associate with critical media literacy learning? Explain

Please provide an in-depth response (at least a paragraph length of five to six sentences) to address the following questions:

What do you think are some of the pedagogical and learning challenges teachers face in teaching media literacy in K-12 schools?

Thank you for your time.
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR TEACHER EDUCATOR

(Items from in this instrument were not read verbatim to the teacher educator. Rather, they served as notes to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant issues during the initial interview.)

1. How do teacher educators view/define media literacy pedagogy?
   a) How do you define literacy?
   b) How do you define media?
   c) How do you define pedagogy? Practice or praxis or both or neither?
   d) How do you conceptualize media literacy? (There are many conceptual understandings of media literacy, proposed by the likes of Potter, Silverblatt, Buckingham, Sefton-Green, Hobbs, Considine. Some emphasize the media aspect of media literacy by conceptualizing media literacy as a combination of media use and media analysis of codes and conventions [i.e. the inverted pyramid model, agenda-setting, sensationalism] and media production. Others may emphasize the literacy aspect of media literacy by looking at literacy and the science and art of literary criticism [e.g. intertextuality, plot, syntax] to inform conceptual understandings of media literacy. Many media literacy educators view media literacy as part of a literacy continuum).
   e) What do you make of the term media literacy pedagogy, as opposed to media pedagogy, media teaching, or media literacy instruction? If any differences exist between and among these terms, please clarify how you view their respective roles in media literacy education, particularly in media literacy teacher education?
   f) To what extent is media literacy a skill, a practice, both, neither, or something else?

2. What prior training/education, teaching philosophies, curricula, theories, professional development standards, and policies of media literacy inform how teacher educators educate teachers?

3. Please describe your teaching philosophy, particularly as it relates to media literacy curricula for pre-service and in-service teacher students and student teachers.
   a) Which theorists or theories inform your work of media literacy teaching and learning?
   b) Which standards (i.e. state/local curricula, professional teaching organizations, media activist organizations, policy, media industry, etc…) do you use to assess and ultimately evaluate your students who are developing curricular goals for teaching media literacy in K-12 English/Language Arts?
   c) Besides teacher educators and student teachers of media literacy, who are the major stakeholders (e.g., parents, media activist organizations, policy, media industry) of media literacy in English/literacy education?
   d) What might these camps find at stake, when incorporating media literacy into teacher education?

4. To what extent does your academic/disciplinary training and professional experience inform the ways you use media literacy to educate teachers? (Consider backgrounds in English/Literacy Education or Media/Communications, other education and training, professional experiences in media companies [i.e. newspaper, search engine,
radio broadcast, etc…) or in posts that are associated with media-related skills [i.e. public relations director, newsletter editor, product development manager etc.]

5. Please address the importance of scholarship on the relationship between media literacy and teacher education, particularly as it relates to your own classroom.
   a) How has research of media literacy in teacher education informed the teaching workforce?
   b) How can and should such scholarship inform teaching and teacher education practice for K-12 curriculum development?

6. How can and do teacher educators of media literacy assess and evaluate empirically the extent to which their in-service teacher students and pre-service student teachers are media literate and have developed some clarity on those pedagogical approaches ideally suited for media literacy instruction?
   a) What types of instructional strategies are best suited, based on your experience, for media literacy acquisition and why? (As we know there is no universal form of media literacy instruction, particularly within the fields of literacy and teacher education. Still, efforts to assess and evaluate not only the extent to which students are becoming media literate, but also the extent to which student teachers are developing pedagogical strategies to teach media literacy are the subject of much debate. Consider, for example, in the area of literacy education for reading comprehension, there continues to be a major divide between those who favor phonics-based versus whole language instruction. Then of course, there is Gee who would advocate situated learning).

7. Which activities do you generally employ with your student teachers within the classroom that speak to your philosophical orientation to media literacy?

8. What criteria do you use to assess and evaluate your teacher students’ media literacy learning and teaching?

9. What is your impression, based on past experiences, of how your teacher students or students teachers view your media literacy instruction and pedagogy for nurturing them for the teaching workforce?

10. How do you know when you are successful at teaching media literacy to your students?
   a) What do you hope to see from teacher students or student teachers, in terms of their professional development as literacy/reading teachers, as a result of taking your course?
   b) At a macro-level, how does or should the process of becoming media literate contribute to the professional development of impending K-12 English/Language arts teachers, literacy coaches, and reading specialists?
REFERENCES


VITA

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EDUCATION

- Ph.D. Curriculum and Instruction, Pennsylvania State University
- Data Analysis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Odum Institute for Research in Social Science (Atlantic Coast Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences Alliance, an NSF-sponsored program), 2010, 2011
- M.A. Media Studies, Pennsylvania State University, 2004
- B.A. African American Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 2001

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2012 - 2013: Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Calvin College
- 2011 - 2012: Survey Designer, Department of Special Education, Pennsylvania State University
- 2010 - 2011: Research Project Assistant, Penn State Learning, Pennsylvania State University
- 2009 - 2010: Programs Officer, Office of Multicultural Programs, Pennsylvania State University
- 2008 - 2009: Technical and Administrative Coordinator, Tufts University School of Dental Medicine
- 2007 - 2008: Project Specialist, Internet Marketing Services, Kaiser Permanente
- 2005 - 2007: Media Literacy Instructor/Consultant, Pennsylvania State University
- 2002 - 2004: Teaching and Research Assistant, College of Communications, Pennsylvania State University
- 2001 - 2002: French Teacher, Black House Institute of Education
- 2000 - 2001: English Teacher, American Language Center, in affiliation with American Embassy in Yaounde, Cameroon

AWARDS and SCHOLARSHIPS

- 2011 - 2012: Research Grant, Phi Lambda Theta
- 2011 - 2012: College of Education Research Initiation Grant, Pennsylvania State University
- 2010 - 2012: Holmes Scholar, Pennsylvania State University
- 2010 - 2011: Burdett E. Larson Fellowship, Pennsylvania State University
- 2004 - 2005: Bunton-Waller Fellowship, Pennsylvania State University