THE MEDIA EDUCATION IMPERATIVE:
A Case Study of the Effect of Media Studies 120 on Media Literacy

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In the Graduate Academic Unit

Of

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK
February, 2000

Dedication

Many hands have contributed to the writing of this thesis; if not for the ongoing support and of my family and friends, it might not have been possible. Thanks for always knowing when to lift me up or talk me down from my manias.

Abstract

In 1965 Marshall McLuhan wrote, "Just as we now try to control atom-bomb fallout, so we will one day try to control media fallout. Education will become recognized as civil defense against media fallout." To date this has not happened. Only now is the subject of media education gaining some legitimacy, and although it is a relatively new curricular addition in most Canadian provinces, it is far from entrenched.

Previous international studies show that lessons in media education can be effective in helping students recognize and deconstruct media messages (Hobbs, 1998b). But few empirical studies of this kind are specific to Canada. My research was intended to determine if the subject, as taught in New Brunswick, is achieving similar results to those undertaken elsewhere.

This research was designed as a qualitative case study of a unit in a grade 12 Media Studies class. Chronological data revealed a consistent development in students' factual knowledge and critical viewing skills over the course of the unit. Results also suggest that the standards of best practice in media education are not consistently followed. Structural conditions such as funding and professional development intended to promote best practice are also absent, indicating that media education remains on the curricular fringe.

Recommendations for future research include more empirical studies in this field, especially those specific to New Brunswick as there is a need to understand the daily experiences of media education classes.

Acknowledgements

In the immortal words of Alfred Lord Tennyson, "I am part of all that I have met." Thus, to all the individuals from Ontario to the Maritimes that have shaped my intellectual growth, I thank you. Many people have contributed to this work. Special mention goes to the social studies "triumvirate" of Drs., Gerry Clarke, Andy Hughes and Alan Sears; your passion for the subject and your belief in my abilities was truly inspiring. Thanks for giving me the confidence, the means and the opportunities to excel--I hope to surpass your expectations. Additional thanks to Carolyn King for all that you've done to make my graduate school experience organized and pleasant, and to my friends in the program for providing the supportive environment necessary to complete my research. Finally, I extend my gratitude to "Mr. Smith" and the students of the Media Studies 120 class who welcomed me into their classroom and so graciously participated in my study. I hope that our collaboration contributes to the betterment of media education in New Brunswick

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Contextualizing

It has become a familiar refrain. "We have just learned that there has been another school shooting". As visions of besieged school yards spring to mind with names like Jonesboro Arkansas, Littleton Colorado, Taber Alberta, and now, Fort Gibson Oklahoma we question if it could happen in our school, and then consider what went wrong in these others. The long-dormant debate over media violence has been catapulted into the spotlight. In Canada and the United States, politicians have been quick to accuse television and video games for inciting the murderous vengeance of these students, because in the wake of such tragedy, the promise of quick, simple answers that will prevent this from happening again, are our only comfort. Our worship of rationalism limits the discussion, for we cannot fathom the possibility that the answers are not to be found, that perhaps these children were born that way. Instead we insist, something in our environment must have corrupted them along the way. That villain is mass media. His legions are a miscellany of lethal tools, and a lack of parental and spiritual guidance.

Would these murderers have remained innocent children were it not for the onslaught of fantastic media messages? Maybe. Maybe not. While a direct cause and effect relationship between media and violence cannot yet be supported by research, evidence suggests that children, like adults, are vulnerable to mass media's influence, and they too experience symptoms of "information overload." Psychologists are predicting an increase in violent behaviour among our youth due to their overexposure to information

and lack of requisite wisdom to analyze and process it maturely (Globe and Mail, 1998). As fantasy and reality collided in these children's world, information and knowledge collide in ours; and, although adults, we are often no more able to behave sensibly than they did. This confusion becomes even more problematic with "new" media. Schools install the Youth News Network (YNN), computers, and the Internet in classrooms on the premise that children will be smarter if they have greater access to information. Simultaneously, to protect students from unwanted information, governments promote technological devices, the V-Chip for instance, to censor media. The blatant irony seems to escape us all.

Little rational debate followed these acts of violence. Media coverage focused on reconstructing the event, psychologically analyzing the perpetrators, extolling the virtues of gun control legislation, and emphasizing the importance of good parenting. While these discussions may be valuable, they were never treated comprehensibly or objectively enough to address the fundamental underpinnings of these issues. Instead, they were oversimplified and sensationalized for the purposes of solving in a week. Solutions needed to be found before the audience grew tired of the story. As concerned as we may have been initially, we have been programmed to expect a consistent diet of new issues presented simply and entertainingly in our media. In the words of Neil Postman (1979), society has succumbed to the culture of "instancy":

> [There is] a rapid emergence of an all-instant society: instant therapy, instant religion, instant food, instant friends...Instancy is one of the main teachings of our present information environment. The new media are more than extensions of our senses. They are ultimately metaphors for life itself, directing us to search for time-compressed experience, short-term relationships, present-oriented accomplishment, simple and immediate

> solutions. Instancy is one of the main teachings of our present information environment. Constancy is one of the main teachings of civilization. [We are] being taught contempt for complexity (p.77).

By reducing events to sound bites and snapshots the media foster our infatuation with the "new" while inhibiting our ability to understand our world. James Donald argues that "Media provide selective and fragmented knowledge in well-established and comprehensible codes that are crucial in the formation of one's perception of reality" (www.media-awareness.ca). Postman (1977) contends that they negate analysis and appeal to emotion. And this format attracts audiences. Time magazine's portrayal of Arkansas gunman Drew Golden as a toddler in cowboy costume with rifle in hand was frighteningly ominous, and an issue that received considerable public notice (Lacayo, 1998, p.26). One year later, using the footage of students streaming out of Columbine high school as station-identification, CTV NewsNet (1999) extolled viewers "to stay tuned for the latest update" (April 21).

Some would argue that these outlets are offering more than an analysis of the problem of juvenile delinquency. By choosing to mediate issues in certain ways they are implicating themselves and fueling the fire of this debate. Almost all of these attacks have encouraged copycats with the fallout being felt in communities across the continent (and as far away as New Brunswick). Those involved admitted they got the "idea" from the media.

The polarities of overexposure and censorship saturate this debate. In the 'infotainment' industry, issues are painted in black and white for reasons of simplicity. However, most answers lie in the gray areas in between. And for the simple reason that

they undermine media agendas they have received much less attention, yet some are far more feasible, promising and permanent solutions to managing information than giving media with one hand and taking it away with the other. Media education is a middle ground that was completely omitted from the debate. It is not flashy, nor polemical, and cannot easily be summarized in a thirty-second news flash. Nor is it a panacea. Rather, it purports to be a complex, time-intensive, and solid defense against the persuasion of the mass media (Hobbs, 1998b).

Focusing

My research approach was a qualitative case study of the "Advertising" unit in a Media Studies 120 class at an urban New Brunswick school. Three research questions guided my study. The first was, Is there evidence of student progress towards the outcomes of Media Studies 120? The second question was, To what degree does the actual practice of Media Studies 120 conform to best practice? And the third and final question was, Are the conditions necessary for best practice in place?

To understand and gain context for these questions, I immersed myself in the class, needing to understand the actual curriculum, the taught curriculum and the learned curriculum. I sought evidence of student progress towards Media Studies 120 outcomes as prescribed by the previous New Brunswick Media Studies 120 (1992) curriculum document, and the newer Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation English Language Arts (1998) curriculum guide. These documents were also evaluated by the standards of best practice according to content, design, and pedagogy as prescribed by media

education experts. Finally, I compared the existing media education infrastructure in this province to that recommended to facilitate best practice.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to contribute--however modestly-- to the study of media education in Canada. Although more prominent now in provincial curricula, the status of media education is as Alice Yuet Lin Lee (1997) says, a byproduct of "a new social movement" (p.ii), but far from entrenched. The challenge is to ensure that it is not perceived as a trend, but as a necessary academic study essential for children. But even in this climate, funding pressures are threatening its existence and effecting levels of best practice.

Case study findings are rarely applicable elsewhere, and thus are not intended for generalization. This does not mean that they are not beneficial. Cases have formed the theories on which practice of law operates, and they have much to offer other disciplines. However, each case is a unique entity. It describes the events of a particular place at a particular time, a suitable approach for a novice researcher wanting to understand the essence of media education, but an approach that precludes broad application.

The succeeding chapters describe my study and are organized in the following manner. Chapter two provides an extensive review of the literature in five key areas: media and violence, media and socialization, media and technology, media and learning, and best practice in media education. It also includes definitions of terms, profiles of Canadian and International approaches to media education, and an overview of the historical roots of the subject. Chapter three discusses the research methodology,

explaining the characteristics of qualitative approaches and case studies, and chronicling my attempts to project the life of this classroom on these transcripts. Chapter four reports my findings. Corresponding to the three research questions, this chapter begins with a report on the evidence of progress towards learning outcomes, compares instructional design and pedagogy to best practice, and ends with an analysis of the existence of factors affecting best practice. The final chapter discusses the implications of these findings for present and future practice of media education and suggests avenues for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

What is Media?

Media literally means "in the middle" (Oxford dictionary, 1964, p.90). It implies an intermediary between the direct experience and the representation of that experience. As Barry Duncan (1989) of the Ontario Ministry of Education explains, "Almost all information beyond direct experience is mediated". Media includes anything that conveys a message (Lorimer and McNulty, 1996), from printed texts such as books, magazines and newspapers, to electronic texts like television and movies, and now, to the digital texts of the information age. Media is subsumed into the larger field of communications and it is highly reliant on technology. In fact, with every technological advance, the influence of media grows as it gains more power to disseminate information. Our knowledge of popular culture and social norms have been shaped by mass media--media that conveys hegemonic values and ideologies (Lin Lee, 1997, p. 3). As Avner Segall (1996) writes, "Media texts are never neutral, objective or unbiased. Rather, they are always ideologically positioned and positioning, always embedded in particular ways of seeing and representing the world" (p.228). In other words, mass media constructs our reality:

> [It brings] the world into our homes. From them, we learn about war and peace, the environment, new scientific discoveries, and so on...almost everything we know about people, places, and events that we cannot visit first-hand comes from the media (Tyner and Kolkin, 1991, http://www.screen.com/mnet/eng/med/bigpict/happen.htm).

In New Brunswick Media Education (or media literacy as it is termed) is defined as,

> the ability to understand how mass media, such as TV, film, radio, and magazines, work to produce meanings, and are organized, and used wisely...media literacy is a form of critical thinking that is applied to the messages being sent by the mass media (APEF, 1998, p.173-175).

Media Education is grouped together with Information Literacy: "the ability to access, interpret, evaluate, organize, select, produce and communicate information in and through a variety of media technologies and contexts to meet diverse learning needs and purposes," and Visual Literacy, "the ability to understand and interpret the representation and symbolism of a static or moving visual image" (ibid, p. 173). All of these "literacies" are "critical elements of high school language arts" in New Brunswick (ibid).

Media Education is not to be confused with technology education, specifically, the Broad Based Technology Program currently offered in the province which teaches basic computer skills, not critical analysis. Renee Hobbs (1998a) explains that this difference in definitions is commonplace in this study, and that many teachers themselves cannot define media.

Media Past and Present

Media is a necessary component of Western existence. In the great expanse that is Canada, media has been an invaluable asset for fostering a common identity among diverse populations across very different regions. Although we have little contact with many of our fellow citizens, messages conveyed through our communications systems lead us to believe we share a similar determination.

According to Lorimer and McNulty (1996), the press is considered the fourth estate, a discrete institution not compromised by the corruption of government and/or business, a "voice raised in the interests of the people"(p.209). However, the reality of a society driven by profits and power undermines this concept. Mass media is, and always has been a business. Over a century ago, the novels of Charles Dickens' were published in chapters to accumulate more revenue, and newspaper empires supported public education drives to ensure that they had customers to read their newspapers (Froese-Germain, 1998). While these efforts may have been self-serving, they pale in comparison to today's media industries. Never before has the media seemed so unaccountable for the content it purveys. Drawing on earlier studies of British newspapers, Noam Chomsky (1989) indicts the industry for forgetting their raison d'etre:

> There is a remarkable growth in advertising-related editorial features and a growing convergence between editorial and advertising content reflecting the increasing accommodation of national newspaper managements to the selective needs of advertisers and the business community generally (p. 23).

Our cultural sovereignty is only one of a plethora of serious issues at stake (Lorimer and McNulty, 1996). Financial pressures are triumphing over societal good, a not-altogether new problem, but one that should continue to elicit concern when purveyors of information are involved. How will the quest for profit affect the media's role as a socializing agent responsible for telling us "who we are, what we believe, and what we want to be?" (Tyner and Kolkin, 1991 **www.screen.com/mnet/eng/med/bigpict/happen.htm**).

Information is power, thus, whomever controls the information holds the power to shape society. Nowhere is this consolidation of media power more evident than in North

America, where the few independent media outlets that continue to thrive are at risk of being swallowed up by larger conglomerates. With names like Microsoft-NBC, Disney-ABC, Westinghouse-CBS and AOL-Time Warner, they are virtual Goliaths attempting to extend their hegemony to every corner of the market. The same phenomenon is at work in Canada, although on a less dramatic scale. As Dylan Reid (1998) notes,

> Canada has only a few newspapers and magazines which can be considered both 'serious' and 'national'. The problem with this situation is that all of these publications (the Globe and Mail, The [National] Post, and Saturday Night magazine) share the same perspective on national issues: conservative and business-oriented. Furthermore, they are all based in Toronto (www3.sympatico.ca/dylan.reid/post.htm).

In excess of 60% of all newspapers in Canada are controlled by three rich, white men: Conrad Black, Paul Desmarais, and Ken Thompson (Lorimer and McNulty, 1996). Since they belong to the financial and business elite, their perspectives may not reflect the concerns of a good proportion of our multicultural country (p.228). They publish stories with a narrower range of opinion than is typically reflected in popular discourse, emphasizing those stories that are consistent with their point of view. And yet, many Canadians continue to believe in the "truthfulness" of newspapers, as objective, or at least, more objective mediums than visual media. Couple this fact with the reality that we spend a great deal of time studying American culture, primarily through popular television programs, and the question begs, "How do we understand ourselves as individuals, as a society?" "Where does our identity come from?"

Chomsky (1989) holds this convergence of media and business responsible for the convergence of "coverage and interpretation" in national dialogue. The result is the shrinking of the bounds of the expressible, a process hastened by the demise of the

radical and independent press, organizations that were once entrusted with "amplifying and renewing the dominant political consensus" (p. 23). Condemning the consensus among major U.S. dailies of events in Central America in the 1980's, he indicts the media as an accessory in the U.S. government's "fabrication of necessary illusions for purposes of social management"(ibid, p. 45). He says that until we learn to read between the lines, we will fall prey to these tactics for "the primary targets of the manufacture of consent are those who regard themselves as the more thoughtful members of the community, the intellectuals, the opinion leaders" (ibid, p. 47).

The implications of this convergence are far-reaching and frightening. How can true democracy exist when the public are pawns to government policy? Will this censorship of opinion transform our discourse into versions of Orwellian Newspeak? Who will champion the rights of the oppressed? Marshall McLuhan (1964) prophesized years ago about the impact of technologically driven media. He said, "We shape our tools; thereafter our tools shape us" (quoted in Lorimer and McNulty,1996, p. 32). Even the Internet, once believed to be an unassailable bastion of independent information, is being bought up by government and corporations (Gutstein, 1999, cover). Jacques Ellul (1964) reasoned that all technological progress exacts a price, and the new media is no exception (in Lorimer and McNulty, 1996, p.278).

What is Media Education?

Media education or media literacy (the two terms are used interchangeably) is "the study of theory, criticisms and debates about the mass media" (Lin Lee, 1997, p.33). It is a "recognition of the way elements such as" presentation, "lighting, sound, and mise

en scene carry and convey meaning" (Pungente 1989, www.screen.com/mnet/eng/med/bigpict/keycons.htm). And it is a field

> that is concerned with the processes involved in learning about the mass media and communication technologies, including the skills of managing the use of media in the home, critically analyzing the content, format and structure of media messages, understanding the economic, social and political context in which media messages are constructed, appreciating the impact of media and technology on individuals and society, and gaining the skills of creating media messages using technologies (Hobbs, 1998a, http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/FA/mlhobbs/html).

Designed to empower individuals, media education helps people recognize and question the impact of mass media on their lives, equips them with the requisite knowledge to understand how media work, how media are organized, how messages are produced, how this production changes meaning, how media construct reality, and how to live with and enjoy the benefits of media. Additionally, teaching students how to create media products is often a component of this study (Duncan, 1989). To be effective in conceptions individuals derive from mass media, media education must be implemented and taught properly, that is, in a way that empowers the learner. The Ontario Association for Media Literacy and the New Brunswick Media Studies 120 (1992) curriculum guide both insist that students should learn "by experiment and exploration; the course must be practical and activity based" (p.2).

Historical Roots of Media Education

Before graduation, most Canadian high school students will spend almost twice as much time watching television as attending school (20,000 hours to 11,000 hours), a gap that widens greatly when other media are included (New Brunswick Department of

Education, 1992). And, of the 24.2 hours of TV watched per week, only 8.4 of these feature Canadian content (Lin Lee, 1997, p.203). The chronic and profound influence of this information on children led two scholars in the early 1990's to "[refer] to students as aliens in the classroom" (ibid, p.3). The previous challenge of restricting children's access to information was compounded by the explosion of digital technology. The medium was different, the message the same. Schools needed to acknowledge this "critical socializing context" (Lin Lee, 1997, p.4) or "hidden curriculum" (Postman, 1979, p.49). These concerns gave rise to the early media education movement (ibid, p.3).

Research on media education prior to the 1950's is sparse. However, it did exist. Alice Yuet Lin Lee (1997) has uncovered evidence of early media education attempts in 1930's Britain and America. These were conceived as protective measures against the influence of motion pictures on children (p. 4). This aim--"to arm" students--prevailed for several decades until the United Nations Education Scientific and Culture Organization panned the inoculation model and promoted a more critical approach (ibid).

UNESCO's involvement in media education stemmed from its work in development education. It emphasized the importance of media education as a force for change in developing countries, and supported its integration into educational curricula in Latin America and Europe "as a strategy to help eradicate the social inequalities that result from unequal access to information" (Hobbs, 1998b, **http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/FA/mlhobbs/australia.htm!**).

Education's concern with the influence of mass media grew almost entirely from the appearance of television as a social phenomenon, and consequently, the bulk of this research focuses almost entirely on that medium. The leaps and bounds society has made

in the last fifty years deem many of these studies no longer relevant for we now have greater understanding about cognition and socialization. Moreover, while television continues to be a dominant force in children's lives, the creation of new media coupled with more participation in extracurricular activities, means that while television continues to be an influence, it is not as dominant as it once was for it is only one of several competing interests (Lorimer and McNulty, 1996).

Britain, Australia and South Africa adopted media education in the 1970's as part of a program of education reform, and many American States have discrete media education programs. In England and Wales, it is currently a subject for standardized examination (Lin Lee, 1997, p.7). In Canada, media education exists, but it is a subject on the curricular fringe. Many of the programs that exist have been developed from the grassroots level, that is, to reflect the concerns of school boards, teachers and/or parents. The bulk of these "initiatives have been based on the efforts of a single teacher in a school or district, working alone" (Hobbs, 1998a, **http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/FA/mlhobbs/instpractice.html**). In the last few years, media education programs have suffered from government fiscal policy and many of the support networks have been disbanded.

Media Education in Canada

Most Canadian provinces offer some form of media education, although there is little consistency as to how this study is organized and what emphasis it holds in the curriculum. Presently, Ontario is the only province in Canada that has developed mandatory and elective media education courses ranging from early elementary to

secondary school (Segall, 1996). This study is a component of the English Language Arts curriculum from grade one to grade twelve, but it is also offered as an elective in secondary school. The Media Awareness Network (1999) reports that "the ministry is expected to cut the existing stand-alone Grade 11 or 12-2 credit and create a new grade 10 Media Arts course focusing on analysis, appreciation, and production of media art within the Arts curriculum" (www.mediaawareness.ca/eng/med/bigpict/meinca.htm).

Saskatchewan follows the Western Canadian Protocol for English Language Arts. In middle and secondary school, media education is integrated in the core curriculum. Additionally, several elective courses on media and media-related topics (journalism for example) are offered in grades 10-12, and media and perceptions are the topics of several units in the middle school health curriculum (ibid). Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba also belong to the WCP but have slight variations in their approach to media education. Aside from the media education offered through the core English Language Arts curriculum, Alberta intends to develop an elective media education course at the senior high school level in the near future (ibid). British Columbia has developed a more cross-curricular approach by including elements of media education in supplementary Integrated Resource Packages from K-12 and is considering a new media-education inspired social studies framework for 2002 (ibid). Manitoba has no stand-alone media education courses, but gives teachers the option of developing curricula, and then submitting it to the department of education for approval (ibid).

In Quebec, media education was not mandated, although electives were offered in both languages at the secondary level. Where students received media education was determined by their mother tongue. For Anglophones, media studies fell under the

English Language Arts curriculum; for Francophones it was contained in the Visual Arts. Quebec is currently undergoing "massive curricular reform" (ibid) and media education is slotted to be one of five cross-curricular threads in the new documents.

New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland all follow the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (1998) English Language Arts curriculum. Neither of the latter two provinces offers a stand-alone media education course, but Nova Scotia is in the process of developing a film and video production course at the senior high school level, and suggest courses in Mik'maq and African Studies as potential areas for integration. PEI offers an elective course in media education in grade 11 (ibid).

Media Education in New Brunswick

In New Brunswick, media education is subsumed under the Atlantic Provinces Educational Foundation English Language (1998) Arts curriculum. Additionally, an elective course is offered in grade 12 at most urban secondary schools, and this also follows this document. According to the APEF curriculum (1998),

> English language arts encompasses the experience, study, and appreciation of language, literature, media, and communication. It involves language processes: speaking, listening, reading, viewing, and writing and other ways of representing (p. 2).

It defines this approach as "integrated." Based on holistic philosophy, the Foundation maintains that language concepts are best learned in context, and that "language processes are interrelated and interdependent" (ibid, p.3).

This curriculum is a pot-pourri of literacies and theories, reflecting recent "literary, feminist, business and economic challenges" (Canadian Centre for Policy

Alternatives, 1997, p.118). Post modern in outlook, it aims to be "inclusive" and "meet the needs of all students" (p. 3). The introductory pages were pulled directly from current best practice literature, featuring notes on subjects from Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences, to gender-inclusiveness, to recognizing social and cultural diversity, and accommodating Second Language, Special Needs and Gifted students. Traditional unit plans have been replaced by "key concepts," "suggestions for teaching and learning," "suggestions for assessment," and "activities". For instance, Media Literacy is listed as "a program component", along with Visual, Information, and Critical literacy, Drama, Technology, Speaking, Listening, Reading, Viewing, Writing, and Other Forms of Representing (ibid, 127). It is in fact, presented in a section entitled, "A Note on the Role of Information, Media, and Visual Texts" (ibid, p.173). The few pages devoted to the subject are comprehensive, detailing key concepts such as "Media consists of narrative with identifiable texts" (ibid, p. 174). However, in attempting to be everything to everyone, this curriculum falls short on specifics.

The curricular outcomes are organized in six prominent strands: Speaking and Listening, Reading and Viewing, and Writing and Other Forms of Representing.

How Media Affects Us

Due to the volume of the literature on media influence, the effects of media on individuals will be discussed in four parts: violence studies, socialization and political studies, technology studies and media, teaching and learning. In her doctoral dissertation on the process of legitimizing media education in Ontario, Alice Yuet Lin Lee (1997)

identifies these four factors among those used by media education activists to justify the subject to the Ontario government (p. 216).

Violence Studies

The Mass Media as "a school for violence and a college for crime" (Graber, 1980, p.117).

> Perhaps it is not even too much to say that the increase in what are called 'senseless crimes' is part of the consequence of the replacement of reality with symbolic experience. For the 'sense' in senseless, has two meanings, one of which refers to thinking, the other to touch, smell, taste and so on. Is it possible that senseless crime has its origin in an acute deprivation of real sensory experience? (Postman, 1979, 84).

Violence is indubitably the most topical theme of mass media studies in contemporary times. Many of the questions probed thirty years ago continue to invade the discourse today, yet the answers seem no closer. We still cannot prove that there is a causal relationship between television viewing and physical violence, although research does suggest a formidable correlation (Lorimer and McNulty, 1996). Recent studies have indicated a link between television violence and children's behaviour, in that heavy viewers are more likely to engage in aggressive play, often mimicking the actions of the characters (p.127). Highly publicized crimes involving a "smoking" television have led researchers to contend that aggressive children often become aggressive adults, and even members of the criminal element. According to child psychologist Stanton Samenow, "Television and the movies have never turned a responsible youngster into a criminal...but a youngster who is inclined towards antisocial behaviour hears of a particular crime and feeds an already fertile mind"(Lacayo, 1998, p.26).

During the 1970's researchers first believed that television influenced children's social behaviour, primarily in negative ways. Whether this behaviour is a result of the content, the medium or a combination of both is not known; however, studies show that the physiological arousal created by television causes restlessness, dysphoria, fear, aggression, and sedentary activity in children (Singer, 1986). Graber (1980) suggests that children are more likely to imitate violence portrayed on television when the "aggression was left unpunished or was rewarded and when the countervailing influences from parents and teachers were lacking" (p.145). Whether this implies that children should no longer watch cartoons is not clear, for unlike adults who can easily detect violence in these programs, children often see these events as funny but fantastic, and can determine that they are not "behaviour models for action in the real world" (p.145). It will be many years before researchers can determine if these programs are harmful or benign. Two significant impediments are that television cannot be separated from other media influences (or extraneous social influences for that matter), and media does not influence every child in the same way and to the same degree (Lorimer and McNulty, 1996). Much depends on psychological and social maturity.

How media affects us individually is determined by four elements: our current state of mind, the social situation in which our viewing takes place, our personal and psychological makeup, and the content itself (ibid, p146.). To these factors I would add education. Effects research tells us that isolating media contribution from other societal stimuli is virtually impossible at this time, thus preventing television from being blamed for inciting personal and social ills (ibid).

The influence of media on adult behaviour is similar to that measured in children, with one exception. According to Graber (1980), social norms play a greater role in determining adults' actions (p.146). Using the reports of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, Graber found that "exposure to aberrant sexual behaviour led to comparatively little imitation [and may even reduce it, but] exposure to criminal behaviour encourages imitation"(ibid). The types of materials used in this study were not listed.

Socialization Studies

In 1977, the conscious media exposure of the average American adult was thus: three hours watching television, two hours listening to radio, twenty minutes reading the newspaper, and ten minutes reading magazines (Graber, 1980). More than twenty years and a digital revolution later, these patterns have changed somewhat. While the average adult watches less television today, she spends more time with new media such as computers, VCR's and video games (Lorimer and McNulty, 1996). When unconscious media exposure is included, such as billboards, t-shirts, product placement in film, or (my favorite) the advertisement for ABC's new television program on grocery store-bought bananas, the numbers may be startling. (Kluger, 1998).

Researchers have suggested for decades that the mass media affects the socialization processes of children by gradually shaping their roles, influencing their perceptions of society, and in turn, eventually changing their behaviour. For various reasons, the most significant of which is limited reading ability, television, more than other media, is responsible. The political power of television comes from its "ability to reach so many instantly," a limitation of print because of the degree of functional

illiteracy in North American society (Graber, 1980). As early as the 1970's, Walling (1976), and Gutierrez and Wilson (1979), blamed television programming's portrayal of women and ethnic minorities for reinforcing certain majority values among the general population (in Splaine, 1991). The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) fury over the "whitewash" in new television programs this past fall suggests that TV executives have yet to heed the message (Telegraph Journal, August 27, 1999, p.A2). The accusation then, and now is that these programs which feature minorities in minor, subservient roles, (or not at all), provide poor role models for these communities. By nature of the fact that it is broadcast in an electronic, and not a print medium, this type of programming inadvertently targets minority groups whose socioeconomic status limits their range of media choices. Consequently, they tend to watch more television than their white counterparts. Newspapers were (and some would argue still are) equally culpable. They promote values of industry and dominance, individuality and authority to a white-middle-upper class audience while limiting the coverage of minority groups.

It is difficult to discern which came first: did newspapers realize that their audience was primarily white and hence present issues of relevance to them, or did minority groups turn off print media because their concerns were often absent? Regardless, the facts are that individuals in lower socioeconomic classes tend to prefer television and radio over newspapers because the former focus on community events, retail specials, and other topics of interest to them, while providing escapism. Conversely, print media focuses on politics, business and other less practical topics (Graber, 1980). Hence, it should not be surprising that print users tend to be better politically informed

than non-print users. Television is a "more potent stimulus than print for stirring emotions and creating politically relevant mental images"(p.118). Yet, these messages can be very misleading.

Researchers contend that these issues are especially relevant to educators. Social studies teachers in particular need to understand the nature and content of messages conveyed through the media because they influence citizenship participation. Citizens receive most of their political information through a 'news funnel' that is, in incoherent pieces that have been watered-down to simplify and politicize issues (Splaine, 1991). Some researchers argue that there is an agenda here, and it is not to inform, but rather to obscure the broad perspective and negate understanding (Graber, 1980). As mass media gains more power, the process worsens. For example, media coverage of political speeches before 1940 ran sixty minutes on average; in 1988, it averaged fifteen to thirty seconds (Splaine, 1991). Citizens are highly reliant on mass media for political information, yet information about bills, debates and voting behaviour is mysteriously absent. Instead, scandals, political infighting and international relations dominate the media. By focusing on the latter, the media is undermining citizens' faith in the political system, a serious problem in a democratic society. As Graber, (1980) writes, the citizenry must believe in the "legitimacy and capability of their government and [should feel] strong emotional ties to it...if citizens hold government in contempt or regard it as illegitimate, civil disobedience, revolution, or civil war may result" (p.119).

Encouraging citizen participation in elections is a key concept of democratic states; however, the amount of information the media purveys, coupled with the inherent cynicism of it, has contributed to the creation of apathy and distrust in the American

public. For instance, in the 1992 senate elections, negative campaign advertisements depressed individuals incentives to vote (Jacobs and Shapiro, 1996). This is especially resonant in the young. The political apathy among those under 30 years of age is at an all-time high, and is partly due to their impressions of politics as corrupt and self-serving (and this research was conducted before the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal). Researchers cite media coverage of Watergate, Vietnam and sex scandals as pivotal issues in the development of this cynicism. In a 1994 poll, only 22% of youth (under 30) regularly follow the news; among those over 65 years of age, the percentage is 64%. Other statistics show that this was not always the case. In the 1950's, when asked what most about America made them proud, 90% of youth listed some aspect of the political system (Bennett, 1997).

"By creating wants and expectations, as well as dissatisfactions and frustrations, the media may become powerful stimulants for social change for the society at large, or for selected individuals within it" (Graber, 1980 p.142). But as much as media influences voting behaviour, so does education (Bennett, 1997). High school graduates are less likely to vote, university graduates most likely. The media are most successful in influencing political opinions on issues in which the viewer has little or no knowledge, but are rarely successful in changing established opinions and beliefs (Graber, 1980). This would be welcome news if the public was knowledgeable and informed, but by most accounts, it is not. Encouraging youth (and adults), who feel so disenfranchised from the system, to vote could undermine the nature of democracy because many of these people will not have a sufficient grasp of issues or candidates. In fact, Greenawald (1996) argues that voting in these circumstances does little to uphold democracy "and may actually

create a [further] sense of alienation from the process" (p.333). Graber (1980) seconds this. She foresees elections becoming mere "mockeries by politicians to manipulate an ignorant electorate" (p.120).

Media coverage of politics shapes public perceptions. Televising parts of the Vietnam war was a great mistake for the Johnston administration for it enabled citizens to see the carnage for themselves, and changed their position from one of strong support, to one of shock and embarrassment (Roberts and Eksterowitz, 1996). The salience of certain issues in the media determines their importance in the public mind, a practice which can affect policy. After the failure of the Democrats' Health Care Reform bill in 1994 (a highly televised event), 31% of Americans polled selected it as their most important concern. Eighteen months, (and little media coverage) later, only 9% continued to feel this way (Piroth, 1996).

The following example is more illuminating, but also illustrates how media stories on specific events prompt audience members to assign individual responsibility, while broad context reports such as "Crime" encourage them to blame social factors (Case, 1996). After two adolescent women were brutally murdered in Texas in 1993 by gang members, media outlets across the United States featured 400% more stories on violent crime in the months following the attack (Chiricos, Eschholz, Gertz, 1997). Shortly after, polls showed Americans' concern about crime skyrocketed to 49% from 9% (in the months before the murders), making it the country's biggest perceived problem (ibid, p.342). Politicians vowed "war on crime" and proposed solutions such as "castration and caning" to "fingerprinting schoolchildren"(ibid). As Case (1996) observes, "The view of criminologists and other scholars who have researched crime trends and their causes is

often sharply at odds with media reports which often attempt to shock and titillate readers in the interest of boosting circulation" (p.151).

The Canadian research on this topic shows that in Canada, crime levels are not rising, despite fears to the contrary. Seven in ten Canadians believe that the level of crime in this country is greater than or close to the level of violent crime in the United States, but as Case (1996) illustrates, this is not so,

> In terms of murders in major cities, there is a huge difference between the Canadian and American crime scene: in 1991 reported murders (per 100,000) were 77.8 in Washington D.C. and 44.3 in Oakland California compared with 3.9 in Vancouver, and 2.6 in Toronto (p.154).

In fact, the level of violent crime in the country today is comparable to that of 1850 America (p.152). The changing perspective may be a result of increased media exposure to crimes and more people reporting crime.

Fear and perceived inability to control crime precipitates the public's harsh reactions to criminals, and cries for more severe punishment. Like a threatened animal, we become defensive, and because this reaction is innate, it is not always logical, or scientifically sound. Case (1996) explains how calls for tighter gun control are based on the shaky premise that fewer guns mean less gun-related crime. He cites three flaws in this reasoning. First, statistics show that most violent crime occurs predominantly in urban areas, yet the majority of guns are found in rural environments (p.161). Second, gun control advocates believe that screening, or background checks, will prevent criminals from accessing firearms. This too is a faulty assumption. Those who want guns will find a way to obtain them, by illegal means or otherwise. If these individuals want guns, they can easily cross the border and buy them in the United States (ibid). The third

assumption is that screening will detect those most likely to commit violent crime. As Case (1996) notes, a high proportion of these crimes are "crimes of passion," that is, those committed against a friend or family member by gun-owners with no previous record (ibid).

The media is partly responsible for fostering these fears. Violent crime comprises only a fraction of all crime (0.2%), yet it is over represented in the media. A study of a large newspaper in a mid-west city confirmed this, as violent crime was factored in 26% of all stories. "If it bleeds, it leads" could be the industry motto (Case 1996, p.155). This does not reflect reality. According to Gerbner and Gross, "The leading causes of real life injury and death—industrial and traffic accidents—are hardly ever depicted" on television programs or news (quoted in Splaine, 1991, p.304).

Many studies have indicated a correlation between media coverage of crime and perceived fear in the public. White women who felt an affinity (a likeness or similarity in socioeconomic position and age) with crime victims depicted on television news or entertainment programs tended to feel more threatened by crime on a daily basis, despite the fact that white women are some of the least targeted victims. Gerbner (1980) illustrates the consequences of this fear on women's place in society. He says, "it is in them that 'fear', 'insecurity' and 'dependence' are cultivated, and it may be for them that TV news serves as an instrument of social control" (in Chiricos, Eschholz and Gertz, 1997). All this "infotainment" has consequences. We may be more aware of our citizenship in the global village, but as it enters our living rooms night after night, we may come to feel less capable of participating in it:

> When we put the nonlinguistic bias of the media together with their bias toward one-way communication, the result is something more than maladjustment symptoms. We may have a near-lethal problem in social psychology... What is the effect of making people aware of many things over which they have no control? I would suspect it leads to anomie and an increasing sense of impotence (Postman, 1979, p. 80).

Technology Studies

"The only thing that can be done quickly in education is damage"
(Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 1997, p.59).

The Phillips Company's new advertisement sings, "You've got to admit it's getting better, it's getting better all the time." Corporations spend millions trying to convince us that these advances, interesting as they may be, are all for our benefit. Each one of these new items is a new "symbolic environment within which we discover, fashion and express our humanity in particular ways" (Postman, 1979, p.186). Cumulatively, they will create a "radical shift in the structure of [our] environment [that] must be followed by changes in social organization, intellectual predispositions, and a sense of what is real and valuable" (ibid, p.31) . In other words, a paradox of the digital age could be that the rapid spread of information will leave people feeling more overwhelmed and isolated than ever before. Not only is technology displacing human interaction, but "stress" and "data smog" have become buzzwords for this generation, and perhaps with good reason. Private time is diminishing. Cellular phones, faxes, portable computers, email, and now, television in cars collude to ensure that we will never be alone with our thoughts. The promise of a consumer utopia is thinly veiled rhetoric designed to win over converts to the digital revolution.

As this mass of information continues to grow, so does our quest to gain access to it. The latest, and most alarming, example can be seen in any public school in New Brunswick all of which are now wired to the Internet. There seems to have been little thought given to the myriad political, economic, social, cultural and technological effects that will result from introducing computers in classrooms. Bernie Froese-Germain (1998) a researcher for the Canadian Teachers' Federation explains: "Current discussions about education and technology too often seem to revolve around an overly simplistic issue: the ration of computers to students, the assumption being that more is better" (CTF News Service, 1998, www.ctf-fce.ca/e/press.htm). Partnerships with Apple or IBM are common in school districts across Canada, the idea being, you introduce my computer to your children (who will likely remain brand loyal or as corporate leaders term them "future consumers"), and we'll pay a part, or all, of the cost of getting you started (Shaker, 1998). Have education ministers stopped to think that this could be a Faustian bargain? What is the philosophy behind this move? Where will the money come from? Will teacher to student ratios rise? How will children cope with the barrage of "over-information" that adults are already suffering from? Will children be taught to critically analyze their new roles as "information managers" or "knowledge workers?" And most importantly, what makes them think it will work?

In Tech High, a publication of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (1997), Marita Moll argues that these questions were never thoroughly addressed. She contends that schools should remain an environment for social and emotional development, not a laboratory for churning out knowledge workers:

> As machines replace people in numerous routine tasks, the classroom may soon be one of the few spaces left that is still based on thousands of daily face-to-face human interactions. It may be the only space where 'common sense' and the 'unified image of the mind' can be nurtured, where future citizens can be given an opportunity to put together pieces of their fragmented world. Yet, even here, the attempt to reinvent education as a technologically delivered service is relentless (p.10).

This drive to "connect every classroom" is beneficial to politicians, business leaders and multinational trade partners, but it is not necessarily so great for students. The hype that has accompanied the digital age encourages the public to believe that their children need computers to stay competitive, and that these skills must be taught in school. While school programs may give poor children access they would not otherwise have, most children and adults have learned computers skills in their own spare time ibid, p.100). Computers are a political windfall, the quick fix solution to what ails the public school system. Moll calls it a 'diversion' that has enabled provincial governments to drastically cut education budgets. However, the enormous costs associated with wiring the classrooms (although somewhat offset by corporations) and continuously upgrading equipment could be much greater than implementing the more permanent solution of hiring additional teachers (Froese-Germain, 1998).

Globe and Mail education writer Andrew Nikiforuk (1997) supports this view. In "The Digerati are Bluffing", he argues that computers arrived in schools on "three lies and a threat," or what Jacques Ellul would call "computer terrorist discourse." The first lie is that children do not have sufficient access to information. Nikiforuk believes that "schools have never been about getting access to information...that's the job of libraries" (p. D3). Rather, schools' mission is gatekeeping, or helping children to manage that information and translate it into knowledge. Lie number two is that computers will

improve performance and make children more intelligent. The fact is, no machine can do this, at least not without the help of qualified teachers proficient in instructional design. The third lie is "very handy if parents and teachers don't swallow the first two: kids love computers and therefore computers can only be good" (ibid). This statement may contain some semblance of truth, but as everyone knows, children love lots of things that are not good for them. It remains difficult to measure the learning outcomes promised by computers at this early date, for computers are still novelties in most schools. Results that initially seem positive could be due to the Hawthorne effect, not actual learning outcomes. Nikiforuk's final point is the 'threat' of the digerati. For those among us who remain skeptical of the first three lies, this fourth point makes us listen. It is the threat of unemployment and the digerati's 'trump card'. And, on many of us it works, but it is a tenuous claim at best. History proves that rather than creating new jobs, technology often eliminates jobs by displacing people from their source of employment. The Canadian Centre for Policy Studies (1997) explains that even today, political and corporate elites are unwilling to believe this lesson:

> The connection between technology and growth is so uncertain that 100 economists from around the world meeting in Ottawa on April 11, 1997, were unable to come to agreement on the cause of the so-called productivity paradox—why official productivity growth has collapsed when computer and other advanced information technologies are revolutionizing work...One explanation advanced was the possibility that information technology's potential for improving productivity has been exaggerated (p. 34-35).

There seems to be no attempt to educate students about the implications of becoming wired. The introduction of computers in the classroom have not, for the most part, been accompanied by any sustained media education courses, although there

remains strong support for further science and technology initiatives (NB Department of Education, 1998). The Broad Based Technology Program, New Brunswick's largest educational computer initiative, begins in middle school, and is part of the core curriculum. Conversely, the independent media education course, is not offered until grade twelve, and then only as an elective (although, as will be further explained, elements of media education are subsumed under the APEF English Language Arts high school curriculum and are promised for the new elementary curriculum) (www.mediaawareness.ca/eng/med/bigpict/meinca.htm.). Why are students being taught to use the technology before they are taught to understand it? Why aren't these skills being taught in context? Perhaps, because by hooking them when they are young, governments and businesses are ensuring the perpetuation of the information economy.

In a speech to Canadian business groups, Industry Minister John Manley said, "The contest for markets in the 21st century is being fought right now in the classrooms of the world"(Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 1997 p.7). But, we cannot all be 'knowledge workers'. Some of us will not have the inclination, even if we all have the know-how. Nor can the economy function with such little diversity. Therefore, wouldn't it make sense to give every child the right to a liberal arts education that will instill in her the ability to learn, problem-solve and critically think, rather than pigeonholing her into the training curricula lionized by the government? As Postman (1998) says, schools are denying our children their "right to choose or refuse technological innovations, because we are being taught to accept them as inevitable" (p.A13).

To date, there is little conclusive proof that computers make better students. Even Steve Jobs, founder of Apple Computers, recently agreed that computers should not be

considered educational tools (ibid). Yet, it is difficult to think of many institutions that would agree to overhaul their entire systems to accommodate such a theory. It is a poorly planned initiative that will eventually cost more—educationally and financially—than governments can envision:

> The notion that Internet access is somehow an educational issue comparable to national standards, classroom size, teacher quality, appropriate curricula and the ability to read represents an abdication of political leadership, not a charismatic vision. Network technology is what you invest in after you have some idea of what you want an educational system to do and be—not before (Michael Schrage, 1997. www.ctf-fce.ca/e/press.html.

Media, Teaching, and Learning

This information overload has implications for teachers who must remain vigilant in preserving their classrooms as human environments for learning. In this section, the links between pedagogy and media will be explored, with various suggestions for classroom practice.

Just over one year ago, the following incident occurred in Japan, and the story was reprinted across the globe. It confirms that the medium, that is, the way in which content is presented, is of equal importance to the message itself; parents and teachers learned that they must monitor not just content, but carriage as well. The fast-moving, bright-blinking presentation of a popular children's television program sent over two hundred children to hospital in 1997 with epileptic-type seizures triggered by the images. The program was a cartoon. But like most media, presented images too quickly for individuals to see, let alone understand. Often, both children and adults do not have time to reflect or digest the information they are receiving, and the result is that they fail to

consider the greater implications of television viewing on cognitive and emotional processes. Teachers should have a vested interest in these findings because the concentration, logical and linguistic skills necessary for learning and processing information are being undermined by a medium that is "fundamentally hostile to conceptual, segmented, linear modes of expression" (Postman, 1979, p.74). And, research indicates other consequences:

> The highly compressed TV learning modules, especially those of ten to thirty-second commercials, are affecting attention span. Many teachers have commented on the fact that students, of all ages 'turn off' when some lesson takes longer than, say, eight to ten minutes. TV conditioning leads to the expectation that there will be a new point of view or focus of interest or even subject matter every few minutes... (Postman, 1979, p. 73).

Many television viewers passively absorb the content on the screen without analyzing, deconstructing or reflecting on the message therein. Additionally, the combination of pictures and narrative can confuse the message, and reinforce or negate the central idea (Drew and Reese, 1984 in Splaine, 1991). Even Sesame Street, long hailed as an educational program, required little mental effort by children to grasp (Hawkins, Ibok, and Pingree, 1983 in Splaine, 1991). The concern here is that viewing patterns established in children can affect how they learn now and in the future. Conversely, to understand text requires mental effort, although again, the quality of the text is a factor. Children who are heavy viewers of television tend to possess weaker reading skills and read lighter, less academic material than those who watch little television (Morgan, 1980, in Splaine, 1991). These results are more pronounced in Hispanic and African-American children, who tend to have less access to print media.

All media conveys messages, and with the pervasiveness of it in our society, it is difficult to determine where exactly influence is coming from. Therefore, all media must be suspect. In this age of highly visual media, we do not subject printed texts to the same scrutiny as we do television, film, video games and computers, because we regard them as less malignant forces. (Splaine, 1991). This should concern schools, educators and parents who often fail to scrutinize textbooks and other printed material with the same zealousness they apply to visual media. (ibid). In fact, there is somewhat of a false dichotomy established between visual and non-visual media; reading is good, viewing is bad. The content seems irrelevant. While it may be true that "television ...is inferior and less likely than print to cultivate higher-order, inferential thinking", it would be irresponsible of us to screen one medium and not another (Postman, 1985 in Splaine, 1991, p. 303).

The previous discussion was written to emphasize the importance of media education, and should not be taken to imply that media is entirely a negative entity. The intention of studying media education is to teach individuals to enjoy it critically and thereby, to raise the standard of media fare. There is some disagreement between researchers concerning how to implement media education. Many argue that it should be integrated into English, Social Studies, other "critical skills" curriculum, for purposes of establishing context and ensuring that every student will encounter the subject at some time during her schooling. Others advocate a cross-curricular approach, that is, integrating media education in virtually every subject from health to geography. David Considine (1994), an authority on media education, supports this approach because it treats the subject as a skill and a competency to be used continuously, not merely a finite

course. This model is the most widely used for integrating media education into the curriculum. But it does have its shortcomings.

The most obvious problem with this approach is that it may overburden the already crammed curriculum. With the introduction of Provincial Achievement Exams, larger classes, and less preparation time, teachers are challenged to complete the existing curriculum. Furthermore, most teachers do not have the necessary training to teach this course, precipitating the need for expensive in-service training in an era of fiscal restraint. Adding another component to the curriculum will complicate this situation, and it is probable that something will be left out. Media education should not be included at the expense of Shakespeare, yet, teaching both topics comprehensively is an unrealistic goal. Writing for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (1997), Barry Barrell argues in Tech High,

> It is important to understand that for instructional time purposes listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, [and] representing...are all treated as equals in the curriculum. However, nowhere in the Atlantic Canada English curriculum documents are there discussions of increasing the time allotted to the discipline nor are there separate courses for media and electronic text studies (p.122).

The second, and less celebrated approach is that adopted by New Brunswick. In addition to the media education components sprinkled throughout the new APEF English Language Arts (1998) curriculum, the original media education course (1992) continues to be offered as an elective to be counted towards an English/Language Arts credit. Available only at the senior high school advanced level, the original Media Studies 120 curriculum suggested that this course be reserved for "students mature enough to meet the high level of independence, reliability, and responsibility required of them " (New

Brunswick Department of Education, 1992, p.2). While this curriculum is no longer in circulation, the policy is virtually the same.

Does Media Education Work?

As is evident here, the bulk of media education research is advocacy literature. There is a dearth of empirical studies, and those available do not involve Canadian subjects or educational conditions. These studies do suggest, however, that media education can positively affect students' abilities to analyze media messages. Research conducted on Australian adolescents revealed that those exposed to media education lessons in school were more able to critically analyze media messages than students who had little or no training in media education (Hobbs, 1998b). In particular, five skill areas were identified. Media education students were more able to:

- Detect sexism in advertising;
- Name several steps in the media production process;
- Identify the target audience in advertisements;
- Identify various techniques used to attract and hold audience attention;
- Determine similarities and differences between media texts.

http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/FA/mlhobbs/australia.html).

In another study of eight-year-old students, Austin and Johnson (1997) discovered that brief training in media education can positively influence children's attitudes towards alcohol commercials and products. The presence of an adult (teacher or parent/guardian) as a co-viewer of television programs will affect children's attitudes towards and understanding of the medium, and help the child to better distinguish between reality and

fantasy (Desmond, Hirsch and Nicol, 1985 in Hobbs 1998b http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/FA/mlhobbs/australia.html).

Best Practice

The following criteria, assembled from the literature, will be used to evaluate the degree to which Media Studies 120 conforms to best practice. They are presented here in point form and will be discussed in more detail later.

- Media education classes should include media analysis and training in media production (Hobbs, 1998, http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit.html).
- Teachers should be knowledgeable of media structures and be trained in media production.
- Instruction should be student-centred; direct teaching is not condoned. Teachers should be "partners in negotiation" with the students, rather than the classroom authorities.
- The course must be practical and activity based (New Brunswick Department of Education, 1992, p.2, APEF 1998, p.175).
- Standardized or external exams should not be used in evaluation. The decision to use internal exams is not recommended, but left to the discretion of the individual teacher (New Brunswick Department of Education, 1992, p.2).
- Materials should be predominantly teacher-assembled from available mass media sources, rather than off-the-shelf (Pungente, 1989 www.screen.com/mnet/eng/med/bigpict/happen.htm,).

- Parents should be involved in their children's media education (Hobbs,1998b, DeGaetano, 1998 http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit.html)

The following practices must be established for media education programs to be properly implemented:

- Unconditional support from various educational sources including Education Departments, school districts, and school administrators
- Consultants trained in media education to supervise the implementation and progression of media education courses
- In-service training
- Support networks for teachers, staff and parents interested in media education.
- Faculties of education to train new teachers in media education (Pungente, 1989 www.screen.com/mnet/eng/med/bigpict/happen.htm).

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design and Methodology

Context of the Case

Fredericton is one of the few settlements in New Brunswick large enough to be called a city. Nestled between the banks of the meandering St. John River and the wilderness of encroaching forest, it is a well-off community, even affluent by Maritime standards. Powered by the twin industries of government and university, the city combines charming Victorian architecture, with modern facilities and a vibrant cultural life.

At the time of this research, Fredericton High School was an exceptionally large school, the only English language high school in this city of 45,000 people. Locals say that everyone knows everyone here, and while perhaps an exaggeration, there's some truth in the fact that as an alumnus of F.H.S. you graduated with approximately 1000 of your peers, or the majority of the seventeen-year-old population in the city. The pale yellow brick walls occupy a space the size of a city block, struggling to contain a bustling community of 3000 students, grades 10 to 12. A lone police officer keeps watch over the crowded halls, providing protection, or at least the illusion of protection, for students and staff alike. The property's perimeters are peppered with adolescent eye-candy from fast-food outlets and retail stores to an enclosed shopping mall, all of which have a love-hate relationship with students. Like the community from which it draws, the school's population is predominantly middle to upper class, yet social stratification still occurs.

Jocks, nerds, goths, preps and other teenage archetypes coexist under the domed roof in relative harmony.

Although many of the usual trappings of high school life are found here, F.H.S is unique. For one, the school occupies unusual prominence in the city. As a formidable employer in the community, and home to the some of the best student talent in the province, including its often indomitable sports teams, not a day goes by that the local media fails to mention some aspect of daily life at the school. For example, the recent dismissal of several coaching staff was headline news in all media outlets.

I first entered this prodigious school in November, 1998. I was in the process of writing my literature review and had not yet begun to contemplate data collection. Ironically, I had been called as a substitute teacher for Mr. Smith's Media Studies 120 classroom as he was in Ottawa for the Terry Fox awards, one of a plethora of extracurricular activities. His room was located in the heart of the English wing on the third floor. It was a cluttered but pleasant environment. Of average size, the room contained approximately thirty desks, two of which were exceptionally large and far too traditional-looking to be intended for student occupation. These mammoth wood structures anchored the classroom, one at the front corner facing the class, the other at the back behind the rows. The room faced west, the ample windows overlooking the football field and absorbing the afternoon sun like a greenhouse. Various electronic equipment was scattered throughout the room, a television here, a compact disc player there, a VCR and even a yellow-tinged computer in a back corner that harkened back to days before the Pentium processor.

This opportunity provided me with a glimpse of a Media Studies 120 class and precipitated my need to understand what was happening there. Thus began the case study. I contacted Mr. Smith several months later and we met over coffee at Tim Horton's. He extended a warm welcome and was excited to meet another educator who shared his passion for media education. His wife, also an educator at F.H.S. joined us, and I offered up my literature review containing the bulk of my research to date. We talked about our backgrounds, current issues in the field, and our favorite media authors. We also talked about the necessity of establishing a media education network in New Brunswick and whether we could find time to run it. We agreed that our collaboration could be beneficial for both of us, and most importantly for the students of media education in this province.

I made several visits to the school in the weeks following this meeting, primarily to assess the feasibility of data collection methods, to collect consent forms, or to finalize details. By this time, spring had begun. The case study needed to commence soon so that it could run its course and still conclude before final exams. During these successive visits, I was often mistaken for a student. This is more due to the magnitude of the student body and the faculty's inability to recognize every student than to my youthful looks. Nonetheless, this ability to blend has served me well and enabled me to establish an open and friendly rapport with the students who participated in the case study.

My classroom observations were conducted daily over a six week period from April to June, 1999, and roughly correspond to the length of time required to complete the "Advertising" unit of study. More intermittent visits took place during the preceding months and successive weeks, providing a more rounded view of life in this classroom. Ms. Jones, a Bachelor of Education student at a local university, taught the "Advertising"

unit as part of her internship, and thus, her teaching methods, and not those of Mr. Smith, were my primary focus.

Qualitative Approach

> Qualities are candidates for experience. Experience is what we achieve as those qualities come to be known. It is through qualitative inquiry, the intelligent apprehension of the qualitative world, that we *make sense* (Eisner, 1991, p. 21).

My research is qualitative. It takes the form of an "intrinsic" case study--a case we study not so that we can generalize to other cases, but one we are "intrinsically interested in because we need to learn more about this particular case" (Stake, 1995, p.3). It is difficult for me to imagine a case study as anything but qualitative, partly because I have never been good with numbers, but primarily because case studies do not seek to predict, measure or quantify variables. Rather, they "concentrate on many , if not all, of the variables present in a single unit" (ibid, p.7). Elliot Eisner (1991) attributes the following six features to qualitative study:

i) it is field focused and non-manipulative or naturalistic;

ii) it employs the self as an instrument;

iii) it is interpretive in character;

iv) it uses expressive language;

v) it pays attention to particulars;

vi) it is about coherence, insight and instrumental utility

(ibid, pp. 32-39).

The Social Scientist as Case Researcher

> Every critic, like every artist, has a predilection, that is bound up with the very existence of individuality. It is his task to convert it into an organ of sensitive perception and of intelligent insight, and to do so without surrendering the instinctive preferences from which are derived direction and sincerity (John Dewey, in Eisner, 1991, p. 85)

My predilection is born of my background in social science and humanities. I am drawn to the interconnectedness of phenomena and the ways in which an understanding of one part can help us better perceive the whole. Moreover, I trust that language will accurately represent my experiences. As Eisner (1991) says:

> The kind of import that emerges in any portrayal of a situation is shaped by the kind of schema that is employed. If anthropologists study a village...rite, ritual, kinship and the like are likely to be salient schema for providing focus. Historians will pay attention to other matters, painters still others (p.36).

I was the "primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). All understanding of this phenomena was absorbed, processed, and interpreted by me. As a social scientist, I am fascinated by groups--as large as countries, or as small as a family, and the intricacies and consistencies of their existences. Case study is a fitting extension of this interest, for it is also "An examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group" (Merriam, 1988, p.9). This research approach is also concerned with the study of moments in time, and the essence of phenomena, seeking to understand events in context. Case studies can "concentrate on many, if not all, the variables present in a single unit" (Merriam, 1988, p. 7).

Considering that media education is a relatively new subject in Canada, and one that has not been consistently integrated or comprehensively evaluated in education curricula, case study seemed an appropriate method for understanding the myriad phenomena at play in these classes. Sharon Merriam (1988) explains that "Case study plays an important role in advancing a field's knowledge base" (p.32). Robert E. Stake elaborates on this thought when he writes that, "Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case." Borrowing from Louis Smith, Stake explains that the case is not a process, but an object, "a bounded system" (p.xi-2). Here, the object is the advertising unit of the Media Studies 120 class at Fredericton High School. The challenge for the researcher is to investigate the case thoroughly to understand and capture its uniqueness, but not so thoroughly that she is overwhelmed by inconsequential details (Stake, 1995).

Three fundamental questions determined the research design.

i. Is there evidence of student progress towards the outcomes of Media Studies 120?
ii. To what degree does actual practice of Media Studies 120 conform to best practice?
iii. Are the structural conditions necessary for best practice in place?

Each of these questions begets more questions. What is student progress for example? What is best practice? Defining the terms was a prerequisite step to selecting the assessment instruments.

Student progress was defined in terms of goals suggested by the literature. As previously mentioned in the review of the literature, the APEF (1998) English Language Arts curriculum contains broad learning outcomes organized around three general

strands: Speaking and Listening, Reading and Viewing, and Writing and other forms of representing. These serve as the outcomes for all English Language Arts components from Literature Studies to Drama and Media Literacy. Due to their breadth, other documents were consulted to supplement the information, as the section on Media Literacy is brief. In her study of Australian adolescents, media researcher Renee Hobbs (1998b) identified five skills areas, all associated with critical analysis that were enhanced after studying media education. These are:

i) ability to detect sexism in advertising

ii) ability to name numerous steps in production processes

iii) ability to identify the target audience of various advertisements

iv) ability to identify techniques used to attract and hold audience attention

v) ability to determine similarities and differences between media texts.

The previous New Brunswick Media Studies120 Curriculum (1992) also contributed specific learning outcomes, such as, "The student will be able to recognize that advertising is a business and has a corporate structure" and "The student will be able to explain the impact that advertising has had historically on social values and subsequent human behaviour patterns." (New Brunswick Department of Education, 1992, p.33).

The components of best practice in Media Education were remarkably consistent, despite the fact that they were assembled from numerous traditional and on-line sources. The Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (1998) curriculum and the previous Media Studies 120 (1992) curriculum, provided the framework for best practice while contributions from the Media Awareness Network, the Media Literacy Online Project and

several prolific authors such as Renee Hobbs, Barry Duncan, David Considine, and Len Masterman rounded out the list.

Assessing the existence of those external factors affecting best practice was not difficult, the answer being simply yes or no. However, considering that the media education program is relatively new by subject standards, and that its place in the curriculum is uncertain, the question became not whether these factors exist presently, but the degree to which action has been made towards establishing or eliminating them. In other words, while some are in their infancy (support networks), and others in their twilight (financial support from school districts), do they all continue to be acknowledged as elements of best practice?

Participant Selection and Ethics

The data concerned and was collected from human participants. Although clearance for the study was granted by the university and the relevant school district, a consent form, detailing the parameters of the research was distributed to each participant, requiring the signatures of both the parent/guardian and the student (fig1). Because I would be observing, interviewing and assessing them, I wanted to ensure that they--not simply their parents--felt comfortable participating. On several occasions, I stressed that they were not bound to the study, could withdraw at any time, and reserved the right not to participate. My initial concern about how to avoid observing students who declined to participate without disturbing the natural environment of the classroom became moot. All thirty students were enthusiastic, and many expressed interest in my work. One student in

particular regularly referred me to media-related programming on television, clipped newspaper articles for me, and frequently shared his perspective on current issues.

Data Collection

Long-Term Observation

Case study researchers are "non-interventionist," that is, they try to see what would have happened had they not been there" (Stake, 1995, p.44). Because I wanted to observe the "ordinary," not the exceptional phenomenon, I had to spend sufficient time in the classroom to determine what ordinary for this case meant (ibid). To ensure that my presence did not disrupt or alter the daily routine of the class, I wanted the students and teacher to get accustomed to seeing me. So I attended the class daily for approximately six weeks, observing the end of one unit, the entirety of another and the commencement of a third. Periodic visits continued for the remainder of the school year and enabled me to see term projects.

Field Notes

"Words form the thread on which we string our experiences" (www.cp-tel.net/miller/BillLee/quotes/Huxley.html).

While case study research does not prescribe any specific data collection techniques, some are more popular than others. Field notes, for example, seem to be an indispensable part of any qualitative case study that relies on induction and observation. The field in most cases is usually a school or classroom, structures and environments which appear similar on the surface. But the details make each unique.

> All empirical inquiry is referenced in qualities. These qualities and the meaning we assign to them constitute the content of our experience. The word empirical is derived from Latin, *empericus*, which comes from Greek *emperikos*, "experience." Neither science nor art can exist outside of experience, and experience requires a subject matter. That subject matter is qualitative (Eisner, 1991, p, 27)

Thus, to capture the individuality of this case, thousands of details were transcribed. These included the lesson topic, the teacher's pedagogy, interactions among groups of students, and interactions between students and teacher. Quotations were transcribed whenever possible, to enrich, and lend authenticity to the reports. Characteristics of individual students were also included when relevant, although names have been changed to preserve some degree of anonymity. Additionally, details such as weather, time of day, interruptions, assemblies, school activities, and political and social contexts were recorded.

Pre-Assessment

The importance of determining students' prior knowledge before teaching them further has been well documented in education (Ausubel, 1968). The pre-assessment served as a baseline measure of students' knowledge of media content and structure, especially that related to advertising. Developed with the assistance of Dr. Alan Sears, the assessment included factual, rote and analysis questions. The first section was comprised of 17 short answer questions, the second section was designed around the deconstruction of a graphic print advertisement. I administered the test to each student present on April 20, 1999. Twenty-six papers, out of a possible thirty, were collected.

Focus Group

Some students participated more than others in the data collection. For instance, a focus group and three clinical interviews supplemented the pre-assessment data, giving me greater insight into students' prior knowledge of advertising and understanding of media in general. But only six students (or 20% of the class) participated in these sessions. The individuals chosen were intended to be representative of a cross-section of the class.

One week following the pre-assessment, the focus group of three females and three males was convened. It was conceived as a follow-up to the pre-assessment exercise, a chance to elaborate on certain questions and probe others that may have been omitted. (Ideally, it should have transpired immediately following the pre-assessment, but I was reluctant to sidetrack Ms. Jones any further, and she was wont to allow any students to leave her first few classes.) Students had received six lessons on advertising when the focus group finally occurred.

I wanted to discover how students felt about his course, and whether they had formed any opinions from the content studied. Again, the questions were both factual and analytical. The hour-long session was audio recorded and transcribed in print, more to preserve the natural, conversational tone than to document their exact words. As Stake (1995) says, in a case study, it is "what they mean that is important" (p.66).

The students were selected by Mr. Smith to represent a cross-section of the class. Three of them were exceptionally vocal and opinionated, having thought about many of these questions before now. With strong reasoning abilities and a healthy degree of confidence, they engaged in an intellectual game of tag-team, playing off each other's

comments, as if old debating partners. They seemed to thoroughly enjoy the session and monopolized the conversation. Conversely, the other three students were much more introverted, and the few comments uttered forth from this reluctant camp were brief. Unlike the first group, these students were not close friends, and had little in common outside of this room. My few attempts to engage these students were relatively successful, but did little to change the overall group dynamics. After answering a question, or stating an opinion, they would remain quiet until explicitly asked.

Individual Interviews

The focus group was intended to supplement the pre-assessment information by offering another chance to test the validity and reliability of the students' assertions, and to raise additional questions. My initial plan was to convene the focus group twice: once at the commencement of the unit, and a second time at its end. However, this implied removing the six students from class for a minimum of two periods, or as long as it took to answer all the questions. Ms. Jones was reluctant to permit students to miss her lessons, especially in the early days of the unit, and I was sensitive to this need. But as a result, five days passed before the group could meet, and then only for an hour.

Interviews were conceived as a compromise. Here, only one student would have to leave the room, minimizing disruption to the class. These would substitute for the second focus group, and take place in the latter stages of the unit. Three of the students from the focus group participated (Catherine, John and Jennifer--not their real names), enabling me to compare their earlier comments to those made three weeks later, to engage them individually and to query them about their personal thoughts on media-

related issues. As Stake reminds us, "The interview is the main road to multiple realities" (1995, p. 64). Additionally, in contrast to the self-propelling nature of the focus group, these one-on-one sessions gave me more control over the content and structure of the conversation.

I had intended to interview Mr. Smith and Ms. Jones to better understand their respective teaching philosophies and backgrounds. Only one such interview took place, and this occurred in March, 1999, prior to the commencement of the study. In the first days of the advertising unit, Mr. Smith presented to me his curriculum vitae, detailing his education, training and employment record, one of many incidents which illustrates his willingness to contribute to and facilitate the course of my research. We conversed daily about sundry issues, and consulted each other on aspects of media education. Any questions I had were promptly answered, eliminating the need for formal interviews.

Post Assessment

Similar to the pre-assessment, the post-assessment contained two parts. Section one comprised of questions about advertising based on the actual curriculum (APEF, 1998) and the taught curriculum, and various affective questions, such as have you enjoyed this course? Section two involved the deconstruction of two advertisements--one adapted from the Calvin Klein Obsession photograph by the Adbuster's association, and the second an advertisement for Kahlua liqueur featured in a popular men's magazine.

A written post-assessment, including several affective questions, was administered two days before the conclusion of the advertising unit. Twenty-five students completed it, some taking time the following day to do so. All remained anonymous.

Data Analysis

Stake (1995) writes, that in case study research there are persuasions for data analysis but no recipes (p.77). As I sat overwhelmed by the amount of information I had collected, I repeatedly hoped he was wrong. Perhaps there is a formula that would enable me to plug in my data and spit back results, like a computerized exam? No. Qualitative research is about interpretation, and for this, there is no magic formula.

My challenge was to preserve a balance, "to reveal those essences [of the case] with sufficient context, yet not become mired trying to include everything that might possibly be described" (Wolcott, 1990 in Stake, 1995, p. 84). I would be compelled to sift through the data, separating the important from the inconsequential, which is not always apparent immediately.

My primary approach to data analysis was through the direct interpretation of classroom phenomena. Despite the advent of instruments to facilitate this process, the approach itself never waivered. Daily observations were documented as field notes in my journal, then transcribed on a word processor into narrative form following each visit. This routine preserved the "story" as it occurred that day, with its context intact. Each week I would reflect upon these notes, looking for patterns, themes, and recurring issues. From these regularities, questions arose: is this important or simply a conversational trend?

The focus group and interviews were tape-recorded to preserve the natural rhythm of conversation. These were then transcribed onto the word processor, and analyzed using a computer software program for qualitative research. NUD~IST (Version 4) as it is called, is an acronym for Non-Numerical, Unstructured, Data Indexing, Searching, and

Theorizing. It is not the magic formula I sought, but it facilitated my analysis by grouping themes, searching text, and testing theories. After using it for the focus group and interview data, I subjected my field notes to it too.

Triangulation

NUD~IST is perhaps best used for triangulating data. To triangulate means to tap a variety of sources for the purpose of making the findings more valid. For instance, in my research, an emerging theme would be subjected to scrutiny by myself, my supervisor, and critical friends. It might then be tested in NUD~IST, by quantifying the frequency of its appearance, or comparing it against like themes. The numerous data collection techniques employed in this study encourage triangulation; they are not simply intended to confirm observations, but to ensure that alternative interpretations have not been overlooked. As Denzin (1970) explains, "The rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies" (Merriam, 1988, p. 69).

I am attempting to determine the true essence of the case. Only by discovering if "the case remains the same at other times, in other spaces, or as persons interact differently" will I gain this insight (Stake, 1995, p. 112). In other words, will the interview data adequately reflect the cognitive and affective characteristics that I observed during lessons? If not, is this due to my instruments or my perception?

"Thick description" best describes the transcripts of my observations. They are rich with detail, painting a virtual environment into which the reader is invited. The

sterile diction of scientific study is anathema to this world, and I have tried to write with warmth to preserve the vitality of the case as I saw it. "The kind of detachment that some journals prize--the neutralization of voice, the aversion to metaphor and to adjectives, the absence of the first person singular--is seldom a feature of qualitative studies" (Eisner, 1991, p.36).

The field notes are factually based, the interpretations of these transcripts were completed later. This process ensured that the facts, not my interpretations of those facts, were triangulated. Additionally, descriptions of essential aspects of the case were scrutinized by other researchers. This is what is known as "investigator triangulation," and its purpose is to keep my interpretations honest. By presenting the raw data (that without interpretation) to my "critical friends," we acknowledged the existence of alternative interpretations, and lessened the possibility of biased or hasty judgements.

Triangulation takes time. Thus, only important data, or that which could be disputed was triangulated. "If it is central to making the case, we want to make sure we have it right" (Stake, 1995, p.112). The following chart served as my guideline.

Data Situation	**Need for Triangulation**
Uncontestable description.....	needs little effort toward confirmation
Dubious and contested description.....	needs confirmation
Data critical to an assertion.....	need extra effort toward confirmation
Key interpretations.....	need extra effort toward confirmation
Author's persuasions, so identified.....	need little effort toward confirmation

Reproduced from Stake (1995), p.112

Notes about Validity and Reliability

Qualitative researchers argue that their studies are based on "different assumptions about reality," and therefore, "should have different conceptualizations of validity and reliability" (Merriam, 1988, p.166). The most significant question for my research is, "Does my study measure what it purports to measure?" I have attempted to assess what I believe is reality in this particular classroom, to take a temporary snapshot of life in this educational setting. Case studies "rarely explain why things were the way they were: rather [they will] describe in depth how things were at a particular place at a particular time" (Stake, 1995, p.38). Naturally, my conclusions reflect my role as the interpreter, but this does not necessarily affect the validity. As Ratcliffe (1983) points out:

> Data do not speak for themselves; there is always an interpreter or translator; One cannot observe or measure a phenomenon/event without changing it, even in physics where reality is no longer considered to be single-faceted; and that language and digits/numbers are all abstract, symbolic representations of reality, but not reality itself (Merriam, 1998, p. 167).

The interactions between the phenomena of the case and the personality of the researcher "are presumed unique and thus are not necessarily reproducible for other cases and researchers" (Stake, 1995, p. 135). That which I have tried to understand is not a static phenomenon, but a dynamic living thing, a classroom climate that changes from day-to-day and year-to-year, as do most human environments. And for this reason too, my case is unique. If a similar study were to follow mine, it may be just as valid, but may not arrive at the same conclusions.

Merriam (1998) notes that while validity can be strengthened through qualitative research, the same is not true of reliability. The traditional meaning of the word is not easily applicable to qualitative educational research simply because human subjects are involved. For example, research studies in the physical sciences can be replicated without much difficulty under lab conditions and controlled environments. It is not impossible for two scientists to reach the same conclusions at different times. Conversely, qualitative case studies are difficult to replicate exactly because so much is determined by human elements of class interaction--student personalities, student-teacher rapport, and perhaps above all, the personality of the researcher.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that case study researchers aim for "consistency" and dependability" in their results, rather than questing after the elusive and "fanciful" reliability (ibid, p. 172) This means that given the data, the results are accurate and dependable (ibid). Stake (1995) explains further, "the quality and utility of the research is not based on its reproducibility, but on whether or not the meanings generated are valued" (p.135). For these reasons, I have presented visual details of the more significant interactions occurring during this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings
Part I: Best Practice

> Schools also have moods, and they too display scenes of high drama...The means through which such knowledge is made possible are the enlightened eye--the scene is seen--and the ability to craft text so that what the observer has experienced can be shared by those who were not there" (Eisner, 1991, p30).

In rendering my observations of Fredericton High School, I am mediating my experiences, using words to paint the scene for you. The challenge is to portray the scene with such vitality that the reader is swept into it, while preserving the authenticity of the environment. For language, like any other medium constructs reality, and we need to appreciate that "the map is not the territory and the text is not the event. We learn to write and to draw, to dance and to sing, in order to *re*-present the world as we know it" (ibid, p.27).

This chapter is divided into three distinct parts. The first section compares standards of best practice as outlined by the field literature and the relevant curriculum guides to the design and pedagogy of the Advertising unit. The second section evaluates New Brunswick's media education infrastructure using the criteria established by media organizations, and the third section illustrates evidence of progress towards media education outcomes.

In The Art of Case Study Research, Robert E. Stake (1995) explains that "using issues as conceptual structure and issue questions as primary research questions" enables the researcher "to force attention to complexity and contextuality" (p.16). In this section,

I have appropriated Stake's use of *ℐ* the Greek symbol iota, to identify the issues of best practice in media education, and to use these as the framework for my findings.

ℐ 1. Media education should be integrated into the existing curriculum.

There are some compelling arguments for this form of organization. Research shows that students demonstrate better "recall" ability and higher-order thinking skills when media education permeates other subjects (Hobbs, 1998a). Additionally, every student gets access to this information in some capacity, and knowledge transfer between disciplines is facilitated.

In New Brunswick, Media Studies 120 is a discrete course, although elements of media education permeate the new Atlantic Provinces Educational Foundation (APEF) (1998) English Language Arts and Social Studies curricula at the secondary level. This curriculum states that

> Learning experiences should be planned to help learners think critically about a wide range of written, oral and visual texts, including literature, media images, speeches, non-verbal communication, and objects or artifacts that have social or cultural meanings (such as toys, clothes, CDs) (NB Dept. of Ed, 1998, p. 177).

Integrating Media Studies 120 into these subjects seems a natural fit, and a move that could make learning in English and Social Studies more relevant for students by expanding the definition of what it means to be a literate individual in a mediated world. And yet some researchers will argue that this does not go far enough, but that we should be adopting a cross-curricular approach in which media education is integrated into every subject from Mathematics to Fine Arts (Considine, 1994, www.media-awareness.ca).

According to Mr. Smith, this is the future of media education. The subject will eventually be entirely subsumed into English Language Arts, but for now, it remains an elective course. He says that under the new curriculum guide

> I can see Media Studies 120 being phased out and literacy of this kind being stressed throughout the whole English [curriculum] to the tune of 30% of the curriculum, since there are three literacies specified: writing, reading and viewing for negotiating meaning...Of course I hope it is never done away with but offered twice, once through the regular English courses and then [as an] enrichment [class that will] help to provide focus on the media in Media Studies (M. Smith, personal communication, 17/08/99).

Currently, Media Studies 120 is offered once each semester to students entering their final year of high school. It can be counted as an English/Language Arts credit and has a designation of "0" meaning open to all students, regardless of academic level.

However, this is the ideal, not the reality. Despite the public concern with media content and accountability in recent years, the status of media education in the school curriculum remains low. Funding cuts in provincial education budgets have hampered the ascent of media education across the country, and in Ontario, jeopardized the only "stand-alone" credit course (www.media-awareness.ca/eng/med/bigpict/meinca.htm). In New Brunswick, the Media Studies 120 course seems safe for the time being, but it is far from accessible to all. It resembles the status of political science examined several years ago by Conley and Osborne (1983), an "elective...taken by only a few students" (p. 74). Their concern at the time was that because "political science courses are usually offered during the final two years of high school...those students who leave school at the legal age of sixteen are never encouraged to develop political skills, attitudes and knowledge" (ibid). While few students leave school anymore at 16, the pressures to excel in their final year might make

some reluctant to enroll in a more "experimental" course. More significantly, is one course of media education in the final year of high school sufficient for a generation of students raised on television, video games and school-sanctioned programs like the Broad Based Technology Learning program?

Unlike most political science courses, media education is popular among students and they clamor for admittance. But an interest in the subject is not a guarantee of admission. For example, last year there were approximately 1000 students in grade 12 at Fredericton High School. From this pool, one hundred and twenty-five applications to enroll in Media Studies 120 were submitted, and of these, less than half were chosen. Unfortunately, there is only one teacher, and a maximum of sixty seats available each year, so space is limited. This seems consistent with Media Studies throughout New Brunswick. While there are 71 schools at which senior English/Language Arts classes are offered, (39 secondary, 7 grades-7-12, and 25 Kindergarten-grade 12), only 23 of these schools offer stand-alone Media Studies classes. And of these 23, only five schools offer more than one class in the subject--Moncton, Fredericton, Oromocto, Riverview and Harrison Trimble high schools each offer two (New Brunswick Department of Education, 1999).

The application for admission into Media Studies 120 at FHS explains that students are "expected to contribute to group discussions, projects and productions," and because attendance is important, those students who have missed more than 5 days that semester must include their homeroom (or English) teacher's recommendation. Moreover, students are required to list their final mark in grade 11 English, cite background experience, and provide a brief explanation of their reasons for taking the course. All this

is done to ensure that the coveted space goes to those who sincerely want to be there. But while this process may weed out those students simply looking for a "bird course," it may also have the collateral effect of discouraging students who are academically-challenged, keen but shy, or inexperienced. Paradoxically, many of these students are those most in need of media education. Studies indicate that not only is "the influence of the media on psychosocial development of children profound" (Canadian Pediatric Society, 1999), but more specifically, there is a strong negative correlation between television viewing and reading ability (Graber, 1980). As Morgan (1980) has discovered, heavy television viewers, especially those belonging to a lower socioeconomic group, tend to possess poorer reading skills and choose lighter, less academic material when they do read than those who watch little television (in Splaine, 1991, p.303).

The selection process ensured that the majority of the students in Media Studies 120 were academic stream students (levels 1 and 2 in New Brunswick), many of whom had already gained admittance to university by the time this case study began. There were several students who seemed to belong to this group but lacked the reading and writing skills of the others, as was revealed during pre and post assessments, and on individual assignments. However, according to the regular teacher, only two or three students would be considered below average in both cognitive and skills ability.

"Stephanie" was different. She possessed strong skills but was considered by her teachers to be a "selective mute", a disorder resulting from some ambiguous childhood trauma. During six weeks of daily visits to this classroom, I did not once see her speak aloud or to any peers Her example is notable because she would not qualify under the application guidelines for admittance into the class, and was excused from some of the

oral assignments. She attended class regularly, listened attentively, produced quality work, and seemed to thoroughly enjoy (and benefit from) the course. If applied consistently, the strict criteria for admission into this class should have excluded this "exceptional" student. The reason it did not was because the teacher had taught her in years past and was aware of her abilities. But how many other "Stephanie's" are denied entry because they are not fortunate enough to know the teacher?

More often than not, this streaming processes will discriminate against such students, a strong argument for allocating Media Studies 120 a greater presence in the secondary school curriculum. As a core element, every student, regardless of academic standing, would have some exposure to the issues inherent in media education. Factors such as teacher training would have to be addressed, however, the integration itself would be relatively seamless, for these issues--power, ownership, reality, etc.--are an intrinsic part of disciplines from Arts to Commerce.

2. Lessons should include both media analysis and media production.

Research suggests that the synthesis of both components produces more media-saavy students than approaches that concentrate on one dimension only (Hobbs, 1998b). Media Studies 120 attempts to fuse the two elements, but could go further by integrating production opportunities, especially those using current digital technology, in more units. For example, the advertising unit focused almost entirely on media analysis and not at all on media production. This format was inconsistent with that of the preceding and successive units which provided myriad opportunities of this sort.

I occasionally dropped by the Media Studies 120 class unannounced in the months leading up to the case study, primarily for the purpose of finalizing arrangements with Mr. Smith, but also to observe a "randomly" selected class. On one such occasion, I met several groups of students in the hallway with sophisticated video equipment. Their unit on "film" had just begun. Some were searching for the "perfect" spot against which to set their story, while others were struggling with angles and lighting. Teachers greeted them with quizzical looks, while peers jockeyed for position in front of the camera. Each group had prepared a "storyboard" to guide their filming and minimize the need to edit, something they were discouraged from doing anyway due to time constraints. Each day, several groups would present their work to their peers for critical review.

Although the results would not win any Oscar nominations for camera work, this activity was beneficial in that it gave students some control over their learning and an audience for their products. Equally important, it was a learning experience that enhanced their ability to view media, especially television and film, and enabled them to understand and recognize the conventions and terminology of visual production. For example, when studying the film Forrest Gump several days later, most students could identify techniques such as "pan," "zoom," "backlighting," dissolving," and "composition." Two of these students admitted when interviewed in the local paper,

> the way they look at various forms of media has changed since they started the course...they can't simply watch TV anymore. They are always noticing the cameral angles and wondering why certain things are presented as they are (Daily Gleaner, May 5, p.b2).

These results are consistent with Hobbs' (1998b) study of Australian adolescents' in which she linked media education training to the development of five skills areas, two of

which were "name several steps in the media production process" and "identify various techniques used to attract and hold audience attention" (http:/.interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/FA/mlhobbs/australia/html).

While these skills were further developed during the course of the "photography" unit, a third skill was added: "determining similarities and differences between media texts" (ibid). Students were introduced to basic elements of photography and instructed to tell a story with a photograph, using black and white film, and any location of their choosing. Car engines, friends faces and traditional still life shots were common subjects. My profile was also captured during a visit and presented to me as a gift. Due to time restrictions, film developing was done off school premises; anyone visiting when the photographs arrived could see that these students enjoyed these assignments and took pride in their work. Scurrying from desk to desk, waving white envelopes, and laughing, all students seemed anxious to share their accomplishments with others. So while they were learning the art of lighting, positioning and capturing images, these amateur photographers were also gaining further insight into the ways in which media conveys messages by attempting to do so themselves. Moreover, appreciating the differences between motion and still pictures would give them context for studying advertising in all its forms.

Providing practical experiences for students was a regular feature of Mr. Smith's teaching. The media and he were old friends. He knew how to use it to his advantage, to get resources and exposure for his students. During the first days of the "Journalism" unit (which followed "Advertising"), Mr. Smith had acquired class copies of old newspapers donated by the local distributor. He had students create a "new" cover page for the

newspaper, an exercise that required them to apply advertising techniques with a nascent knowledge of journalism. Traditional newspaper conventions, such as byline, deck and headers, appeared in these new versions, but by infusing their own media, such as drawings, photographs and the like, the messages had changed.

Integrating local issues into his lessons was another feature of Mr. Smith's teaching, and one that is consistent with best practice. Media education experts advocate the inclusion of teacher-assembled, local materials because they are often more relevant to students' lives than those that are mass-produced. To facilitate Ms. Jones' transition from observer to teacher, Mr. Smith had lined-up some preliminary resources. Aware, and anxious to take advantage of corporate generosity, Mr. Smith padded his lessons with authentic materials such as a current list of advertising rates in Canadian magazines and the following example:

Today he received a glossy, professional-looking portfolio from Chatelaine. Intended to woo clients, it contained complex demographic information on its subscribers, circulation numbers, and advertising costs. Reaching the Chatelaine woman is expensive: 37,400 will buy you a 4 colour, full page ad or four 1/6 of a page ads in consecutive issues! Even those students who knew something about advertising were stunned by the largesse of it all. Ms. Jones asked, "Who could afford these prices?" "Not Pete's Frootique," replied one student (field notes, April 27, 1999).

In another attempt to make his students more aware of local issues and media outlets, Mr. Smith arranged for interested students to volunteer at various locales, including the radio station, and the CBC on election night. In the days leading up to the election, he stimulated among these students some thoughtful (and some not-so-thoughtful) discussions.

Student: Mr. McKenzie is running in my riding (a teacher at St. John River High)."
Mr. Smith: "Which party is he with?"
Student: "Team Lord. It would be funny if Bernard Lord introduced himself as "Lord of the P.C.'s!"
Mr. Smith: "Why don't they call themselves The Lord Team?"
Student: "Because people could be offended."
Mr. Smith: "Look closely at those ads. There's a lot of things happening."
Student: "Are you allowed to put them on churches?"

Mr. Smith has also been in contact with the local community-based television station (TVNB) about a possible feature on media education and adolescents. The intention is to give Media Studies 120 students from around the province an audience for their productions. The Department of Education supports this venture, but not everyone is so keen. I overheard some students say that these opportunities are "lame." So while these activities are open to all, usually only those students interested in media careers volunteer.

I.3 Teacher has knowledge of media structures and training in media production.

Mr. Smith has taught Media Studies 120 in this high school for four years. He knows the curriculum well, is open to new ideas and new pedagogies, and devotes substantial energy to the school paper, the rugby team and the yearbook. A true believer in the importance of his subject, Mr. Smith takes his work home with him for the benefit of his two young children, monitoring their viewing patterns and helping them make sense of the information. Additionally, he is a voracious consumer of the work of John Pungente, SJ, the president of the Canadian Media Education Organization, and has taken

steps to establish a branch of this organization in New Brunswick. The ease with which students--both former and present--enter the classroom is a testament to this teacher's approachable and helpful character. Mr. Smith is valued for his advice, but also for his honesty. Like many teachers, he rewards hard work, but won't tolerate laziness; he will tell students frankly where they stand. He genuinely wants his students to succeed and will do his utmost to facilitate this, as was evident with Stephanie, by customizing assignments, providing rewrites on tests and other submissions and offering additional help.

Mr. Smith is familiar with and well qualified in this field, at least as it is defined in the ELA curriculum. Before becoming an English teacher, he worked as a journalist and reporter for various Canadian media outlets such as Broadcast News and Irving, and he continues to contribute regularly to the Telegraph Journal as a book reviewer. He also maintains close ties with the local paper. During the period of mass media obsession with schools and violence that followed the shootings at Littleton's Columbine High School, Mr. Smith invited a reporter from the Daily Gleaner to the school and arranged an interview with several Media Studies 120 students. His experience in journalism and his connections with the newspaper facilitated these opportunities. An inexperienced teacher may not have had the confidence or the knowledge to do the same.

Mr. Smith's intent was to promote media education as a relevant and important study for adolescents, but this interview would prove more educational than he originally conceived, giving students precious insight into the ways in which the media constructs reality. The students spoke of their growing critical literacy, their interest in media, and the content of their syllabus, while lamenting the non-compulsory status of the course.

"The media is such a big part of our lives...I can't believe only this one course deals with it", said Michael, a student currently enrolled in the course.

"The course is an eye-opener," added Gwen who took the course last year.

And George explained, "[The course] has taught me how the media is a business and a huge construction of reality."

During this interview, no student spoke of the media and current events. In fact, despite all that had happened in the previous week, there had been little discussion in this class about the media's role or responsibility. There was no talk of the situation in Kosovo or its media coverage, and most references to the Columbine shootings were on a more local level, concerned about "Goths" and the persecution of like individuals at this school, not guns. This is not to say that fear did not exist here. It did. But much of it was not overtly spoken of, and the references to it seemed to be sustained by local and national media. I know this because I was also invited to the interview.

I spoke to the reporter briefly about my own interest in media education, explaining that I viewed it as an important study in this "age of information" and one that should be more widely available. So we almost didn't recognize the story as ours when it ran on May 5, 1999 and was entitled, "Students Cast a Critical Eye on Media's Role: Colorado Shootings, Kosovo Coverage, Probed in Special Fredericton High Course." The experience proved educational. We all gained immediate knowledge of the process of conducting and publishing an interview, and the changes to information that occur in these stages. Some students were disappointed with the final result, for after talking to the reporter for more than an hour, only one or two sentences appeared in the article, often without the original context.

The advertising unit provided no real opportunities for practical study. Whether this was due to the curriculum, the pedagogy or the teacher herself is not evident. Ms. Jones, the B.Ed intern was responsible for this unit. She held qualifications in English/Language Arts and thus was familiar with some of the concepts employed in Media Studies, especially those relating to image analysis, gender construction, and symbols and semiotics. However, unlike Mr. Smith, she did not have specific training in media structures and media production, which may explain the total exclusion of production opportunities.

Most of her lessons were well planned, informative, and at times provocative. Moreover, certain issues, such as media construction of gender roles, seemed very close to her heart and her attempts to impress their importance on the students were evident. This is an excerpt from the class of May 7.

Ms. Jones distributes another ad. It is also black and white with the letters AX printed in the lower corner. No one knows what it is advertising, but like the previous one, it features androgynous male and female models.
Olivia: "You can see his ribs. That's gross!"
Catherine: "Yeah, but we like that on supermodels."
Lyn: "Only on girls. On guys it's gross."
Everyone is still trying to figure out what the product is or for whom it is intended. Students start guessing. They have begun to free their minds when thinking about these ads and some crazy notions start to pour out. Consequently, this brings more noise. Ms. Jones disciplines them again and returns to her questions.
Ms. Jones: "What is the man doing?"
Joe: "He is ignoring her."
Ms. Jones: "What image of sexuality are we getting?"
Olivia: "If you have the right clothes, you'll never have to wear them."

This was day thirteen of the advertising unit and the seventh lesson on the theme of body image and gender and sexual stereotyping. Indubitably, these were important messages,

especially for adolescents, but what other themes were being omitted simply because the teacher did not have adequate training in media education? This should be a concern as Media Studies becomes less of a discrete subject and more subject to the APEF (1998) English Language Arts curriculum. Evidently, Ms. Jones felt passionately about these topics, and her training in English gave her the confidence and skill to teach these lessons effectively Moreover. the critical comments made by these students here differ greatly from their attitudes two weeks prior, illustrating that while these lessons in deconstruction may have been abundant, they have also been successful.

4.4 Teacher refrains from excessive direct teaching.

> Media study is relevant to students. Media literacy deals with the culture and lifestyle of students. Students enjoy thinking and talking about media productions. For teachers, it is an opportunity to have students examine how they are influencing and being influenced by popular culture. (APEF 1998, p. 173).

This quotation is an excerpt from the APEF (1998) English Language Arts curriculum and may explain why traditional pedagogical approaches were most often used by Media Studies 120 teachers. While Masterman (1995) and others are championing a new pedagogical relationship, one in which "existing knowledge is not simply transmitted " by teachers or "discovered" by students, this approach has yet to be written into the APEF document (www.media-awareness.ca/eng/med/class/support/mediacy/edu/masterm.htm). Masterman (1995) explains that "Media education attempts to change the relationship between teacher and taught by offering both objects for reflection and dialogue" (ibid). This "distinctive epistemology," as he calls it, alters traditional power structures in the classroom by including the teacher

as learner and partner in negotiation rather than subject authority. In this light, media study "is an opportunity to have students and teachers examine how they are influencing and being influenced by popular culture (ibid).

Mr. Smith's Style

On the few occasions I saw Mr. Smith teach, he was a study in contrast to Ms. Jones. He seemed relaxed but in control with a much more informal rapport with students. Additionally, he was an animated speaker who used personal inflections and humour to stir his students. However, much of his teaching seemed direct. The following examples are intended to manifest his pedagogy and highlight his confidence in moving off topic.

During the provincial elections, Mr. Smith tried to highlight the connection between media and politics while piquing the students' interest in social activism. This entry into the social studies realm was not usual for him for he seemed to be a literacy teacher through and through. Nonetheless, it was a relevant addition to the class.

On May 10th, he temporarily resumed teaching so that Ms. Jones could attend her convocation ceremony. I walked into the class two minutes late, but few students were distracted by my arrival. They seemed so focused on what he way saying. Mr. Smith was lecturing about the "Employability Skills Profile," a chart developed by big business and provincial government found in every classroom in New Brunswick. In the corner of the chart is the New Brunswick Department of Education's stamp of approval. As I take my seat on the opposite side of the classroom, Mr. Smith holds the chart high for all to see and begins reading from it. His tone is sarcastic, mocking:

Mr. Smith: "Employees should be personable and uphold company values." Would you like fries with that?"
Students: (Laughter)
Mr. Smith continues: "Did you know that the Royal Bank made more money last year than many small countries? Your employer won't let you be an individual. You can't wear an earring if you're a guy. Where does this leave the Salvador Dalis of the world? The Van Goghs? They wouldn't be able to work for the Royal Bank, McDonalds, etc. Usually I would have a sign on my lawn for the Liberal party, but listen to Theriault (party leader). In the next 27 days you will hear jobs, jobs, jobs. What kind of jobs is he promising?"
Student: "Call centres."
Mr. Smith: "Yes. Who are these for? College graduates? I don't think so. Do you need a college degree to answer the phone...Hello?"
Students: (Laughter)
Mr. Smith: "Maintain a positive attitude. Doesn't Bill Clinton have a positive attitude? "I positively did not sleep with that woman."
Students: (More laughter)
Mr. Smith: "It's all advertising. There's a reason for all these posters. Keep in mind that they show someone's agenda."

While somewhat superficial in that it did not address any particular issue in depth, it was popular with the students and encouraged them to look closely at their surroundings. This episode was intended as a demonstration of critical thinking, but it was also an example of direct teaching. The Socratic method occasionally crept in to these classes, but most of the time, Mr. Smith was the predominant speaker.

In the following example, Mr. Smith gives the students some background information on journalism because he feels it's necessary that they have some idea of the conventions of the profession before they can discuss how it affects politics, society, advertising, and the like. He begins with notes on Tom Wolfe.

[A] professor at the university of Chicago. He was the first journalist to publicly acknowledge his bias, and argued that all journalists have biases. He

wanted them to declare their bias first, then tell the story. I don't know how you cannot be biased. My bias is that I am a 43 year old white male living in an affluent city. Tom Wolfe started the "Chicago School of Thought. " The style was different--he wrote in the second person: "You are walking down the street, you meet a minister, you, you, you...Gets away from the tradition that frowns on you breaking the third person rule. He started this style during a time when breaking these rules was very unorthodox.

Rebecca: "The stuff we leaned with Ms. Jones...Is that going to be on the exam?"

Mr. Smith: "Of course. She was here as a practice teacher but it was all very relevant."

Victor: "I'm glad that she's gone."

(Mr. Smith ignores and continues) There's a writer in the [local paper] who clearly takes the side of the police, fire, etc. When you are aware of his position, you read his stuff much more skeptically...Gonzo Journalism, like Hunter S. Thompson. "Gonzo' for his shots of wild turkey, qualudes, bennies and the like before writing. If [local writer] was writing something about teenagers and police brutality, what side would he take?

Students: "Police."

(Field notes, May, 17, 1999).

Ms. Jones' Style

Much of the advertising unit was taught traditionally, with the teacher lecturing and the students writing notes. At times students complained of this routine and were told on one occasion that it was important that they learn this material. This had begun to imply note taking. I attributed two possible reasons for this: vast amounts of material to cover in a short time period, and the intern's fear of losing control.

The first possibility is somewhat valid, as Ms. Jones knew that her time in this classroom was limited. She had just four weeks remaining when she began the

advertising unit, and believed that the codes and conventions of the genre needed to be impressed before delving into critical discussions on business and popular culture. Therefore, many lessons transpired across an overhead projector as students copied "Elements of Graphic Design", "The Colour Wheel," "Canadian Standards for Advertising to Children," "The World According to VALS (1984)," "Techniques of Advertising," and "Gender Portrayal Guidelines (1994)," to name a few. Undoubtedly, these are relevant materials. But there are better ways of impressing their importance and ensuring they are effectively learned. This degree of note taking violates one of the foremost principles of media education which is to empower the learner and transform the power relations of the traditional classroom. As Len Masterman (1995) explains,

> Media Education is essentially active and participatory, fostering the development of more open and democratic pedagogies. It encourages students to take more responsibility for and control over their own learning, to engage in joint planning of the syllabus, and to take longer-term perspectives on their own learning. In short, Media Education is as much about new ways of working as it is about the introduction of a new subject area (www.media-awareness.ca/eng/med/class/support/mediacy/edu/masterm.htm).

In other words, "Content in Media Education, is a means to an end. That end is the development of transferable analytical tools rather than alternative content" (ibid). In other words, teaching a new way of thinking is paramount in media education; the need "to cover" the syllabus should be a subordinate concern. And because the regular classroom teacher admitted to having utmost freedom in planning and teaching, this should not have been an obstacle for the intern.

So perhaps it was a matter of control. Certain factors at play in the Media Studies 120 classroom make this theory plausible. For instance, the shootings at Columbine, which occurred on day two of the advertising unit, created a palpable environment of fear among students and teachers alike, and can likely be blamed for a stream of absences in the days following. These are excerpts from my field notes during the first week of my observations.

April 22: Catherine told me and Ms. Jones that the administration at [the high school] has rounded up all the "Goths" and forced them to remove their trenchcoats. Those that refused were sent home. This became a larger discussion as students trickled into the room, most of them zealously defending their rights to self-expression. Some students complained of parents' overreactions, others of the subsequent 'knee-jerk' reaction of the administration. Student reactions as classroom discussion ensues:

"Blatant mindless discrimination."

"What makes you what you are is not what you wear on the outside..."It's not fair to propagate the stereotype..."

"What if they were wearing Tommy Hilfiger?"

"Yeah. If you treat trenchcoats as symbols of murderers, then that is what they will become...ignoring the bigger problem of where they got the guns."

April 29: Another school shooting yesterday, this time in Alberta. This one crossed the Us-Them threshold and awakened in us the realization that we are not immune to what ails our southern neighbours. Quite a few students absent today. Students seem to be talking more about the upcoming assembly (tomorrow) and the rumoured bomb threats, rather than the advertisements.

April 30: Local newspaper reported that yesterday police seized bomb-making equipment belonging to a student. In the context of these events, Mr. Smith takes the opportunity to talk to the class about their fears.

Indubitably, as this issue preoccupied many students, it likely affected Ms. Jones too.

A second possible reason that may have influenced Ms. Jones' chosen teaching style was mother nature. The weather was unseasonably warm for April and remained so throughout the unit, contributing to the energy and lack of concentration among students. In her first week, Ms. Jones was faced with repeated calls "to move class outside." This environment, coupled with the fact that those students intending to enter university the following Autumn had already been accepted (and no longer needed to be concerned about marks), created an intimidating situation for any student teacher.

Third, the class was accustomed to a relaxed learning environment, one in which chatter, snacking and listening to CD's were permitted. Ms. Jones' demeanor and teaching style was much more formal than that of Mr. Smith, and many students had difficulty adjusting to her ways. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Ms. Jones lacked training in media education.

In The Enlightened Eye, Elliot Eisner (1991) asks, "To what extent is it likely that a teacher will have pedagogical grace if the teacher does not have a firm grasp on the content to be taught?" (p.134). He answers the question by using the example of William Bennett, former U.S. Secretary of Education and his nationally-televised foray into a Washington area classroom to teach a lesson on Madison's Federalist papers. Eisner's argument is that Bennett's background as a professor of philosophy, and an avid student of history makes him a formidable teacher of this subject, despite his lack of formal teacher training. He is able to extract the abstract notions of freedom, restraint, self-interest and majority rule from Federalist 10 and ground them in events meaningful to contemporary 17 and 18 year olds. Throughout the forty-five minute lesson, he links the past to the present using examples from the local newspaper, a Springsteen concert, his

own college days, and primarily because half the class is composed of Black students. the Civil war. His experience as an educator enables him to adapt easily to unexpected questions and reactions without losing his momentum. Teachers, such as Bennett, who know their "intellectual turf" have more freedom, greater self-confidence and better pedagogical tools at their disposal than teachers whose understanding and experience is minimal (ibid). Like Bennett, Mr. Smith knew his intellectual turf, knowledge that made him a better teacher. But also like Bennett, Mr. Smith relied heavily on direct teaching.

As is often the case with inexperienced teachers, Ms. Jones insistence on classroom control influenced every aspect of her teaching and interrupted many potential learning opportunities. My field notes are peppered with phrases such as, "Comments go forward, not among you, "There should be no talking," "Ms. Jones is intolerant of the noise and scolds the class," Ms. Jones is getting annoyed again," Ms. Jones has a tendency to cut the chatter off prematurely." One incident is particularly illuminating.

May 7: Ms. Jones university supervisor is here today. She has attempted to slip into the class unnoticed but has not succeeded. Students throw quizzical looks her way and chat among themselves. Neither they nor I have been introduced. Ms. Jones manner tells us she is being evaluated.The lesson will revolve around deconstructing more advertisements. Ms. Jones distributes a black and white ad with the words "Emporio Armani" on it. The models in the photo are sexually ambivalent, very close up and somewhat blurred. The students task is to get in groups of two or three and deconstruct the ad in a similar fashion to that done yesterday. Again, it is unseasonably hot and there is the level of noise associated with a group activity on any Friday afternoon. Mr. Smith is not here to support her, but has left the class to attend to paperwork. Ms. Jones is very intolerant of student chatter and repeatedly scolds the class.

To get a better understanding of what the groups were discussing, I join three male students. Unlike most of the other students who know the preliminaries of deconstructing an ad, these students are stumped and cannot get started. I prod them by asking about the obvious elements. Ms. Jones has decided it is too noisy again. She yells, "Claire! Do you mind being quiet?"

Ms. Jones fear of losing control has again precipitated a preemptive strike. This is not unusual. As Alan Sears (1992) reminds us,

> Most new teachers begin in the profession with a fair degree of commitment to the ideas and principles they developed in university. Stated simply, they want to make a difference--but their introduction to the complex and busy world of the classroom often brings with it 'reality shock' ...Teaching often overwhelms those who try it and they retreat to traditional practices to "survive" classroom realities (p.9-10).

Allowing herself to learn from the students seemed to imply relinquishing control of the discussion and admitting that she did not have all the answers. Ms. Jones rarely wandered into unknown territory. She chose topics with which she was familiar and could employ her skills. One of the few times Ms. Jones allowed herself to learn from the students was during her final week in the classroom. She asked them to answer two questions about her teaching following their completion of the unit test. These were, "What did I do well? And "What could I do differently?" I was not privy to their responses.

5. Teacher is a partner in negotiation, not the classroom authority on the subject.

Ms. Jones intended to teach specific concepts, and therefore emphasized some at the expense of others. And while many of the themes that arose from these discussions, such as body image, gender issues and sexual stereotypes were relevant to students' lives, there was little opportunity for constructing other knowledge. The class could not be called student centered; students did not participate in curricular planning, nor pedagogical decisions. They did however, have some control over their seating arrangements in that the seating plan was rarely enforced, and often only in the event of

disciplinary infractions. Student queries frequently sidetracked the planned discussion, but rarely did they ever assume control of it. Generally, Ms. Jones navigated and the students followed.

Curricular context

This standard of best practice is reflected in the structure of the APEF (1998) English Language Arts curriculum. It implies that the teacher renounce some control over the class, a challenge more likely to be taken up by an experienced teacher. Judging from its vagueness and lack of guidance, this curriculum was not developed with the novice teacher in mind.

Unlike the preceding Media Studies 120 curriculum (NB Department of Education, 1992), the APEF document is not organized according to units but composed of four sections. These are "Curricular Outcomes", "Program Design and Components," "Assessment and Evaluation," and various "Appendices." The curriculum subsumes Media Studies and Dramatic Arts into the ELA paradigm, virtually eliminating them as autonomous subjects. Four pages (out of a total of almost two hundred) are devoted to the subject of Media Education. They are organized into the following sections: 1)"The Role of Information, Media, and Visual texts," 2) a "Rationale for the Role of Media Literacy," 3) a list of "Key Concepts," and 4) vague suggestions of how to provide "Learning Experiences" (NB Dept. of Ed, p.173-175). The following paragraph is an excerpt from the "Learning Experiences" section. It is intended to demystify the subject and encourage teachers to embrace it.

> Many teachers are intimidated by the scope of media literacy and media education. It is not necessary to have a complete curriculum before starting. Indeed, most media literacy teachers have started with one small

> activity and gradually expanded it. Students should be encouraged to develop their own ideas and do their own investigating and producing of media products. Because of the pace of change in an expanding communication industry, teachers will have difficulty assuming an expert role; it is important that teachers not be intimidated by the technology. The media world is one in which most students are very comfortable; this can be an advantage if the teacher encourages reflection and examination of media without being negative or critical (APEF, 1998, p.176).

A plethora of activities are listed in the appendices, ranging from "Compare various visual technologies such as computers, TV, film, fax, photocopying, satellite, Imax etc, to "Investigate world music." Many of these seem imaginative, educational and designed as supplementary activities to an existing English program. There have no specified time frame, and they are sufficiently varied to fit one class or a whole unit, but their position in the curriculum implies that they are not the central tenets of any course.

The above mentioned paragraph seems to contradict Eisner's (1991) argument, implying instead that enthusiasm, not subject knowledge is all that's necessary. Ms. Jones followed these instructions, beginning with a small activity and building on recurring themes, but she was unable to move beyond these and connect her discussions with more technical or social themes. It is evident that this curriculum is not a formula for teaching Media Studies 120, nor should it be. Undoubtedly, those with expert subject knowledge would find it easier to implement than new teachers. However, with the number of new teachers forecast to enter the system in the next few years, some in service training seems necessary to render it manageable.

Conversely, Mr. Smith does not view this curriculum as a limitation but considers it an improvement on the highly prescriptive nature of the original 1992 document. In fact, he explains that the emphasis on "writing, reading and viewing for negotiating

meaning" has enabled him to enrich his non-academic level English classes by infusing elements of media studies. Perhaps due to his experience in the field, he relishes the "incredible freedom as to what and when and how" he teaches Media Studies 120, and admits to emphasizing "critical literacy, (not "cynical literacy") as the course's pervasive and unifying thread.

And yet many of the topics he teaches--popular culture, television, music, films, photography, violence, ownership, books, and advertising--seem to be pulled directly from those suggested in the 1992 Media Studies 120 curriculum, an advantage not readily available to new teachers. He cannot number the topics he covers in any given year, but says that "every year I have pushed more."

While the 1992 curriculum is not without fault, an advantage of using it was that it provided specific topics from which to build a course, ensuring that a myriad of discrete topics were covered. The freedom provided by the later document enabled Ms. Jones to restrict the scope of her lessons to topics with which she was comfortable, such as those involving particular types of analysis. In other words, she ensured that she was the class authority. The following excerpts show Ms. Jones very much in control of the class, and emphasizing similar themes. The April 29th class began as follows.

Ms. Jones presented the 1994 version of the Canadian Advertising Foundation's Gender Portrayal Guidelines to the class. They were subsequently discussed and transcribed by the students. At the end of the class, Ms. Jones had the students parade by a series of unrelated but provocative advertisements she had pasted to the blackboard. All revealed scantily-clad women in indiscreet positions. Students were required to guess in which magazines each was featured. The point of the exercise was twofold. First, it was meant to emphasize the connection between media venue (in this case a magazine) and advertising, and second, to highlight our desensitization towards these images in the

media, some of which were found in women's magazines.

The following day, Ms. Jones had the students watch selections from a National Film Board documentary on sexuality and sexism in the media. Here is the transcript.

Ms. Jones' lesson plan revolves around stereotypes. She uses a 1957 video about the training routine for airline stewardesses on Canadian airlines. In it a male narrator explains that " the women learn how to make the most of their features in cosmetic class," while "the more complex jobs are left to men." The students are initially surprised by the overt discrimination and obvious sexual division of labour that this 40 year old clip portrays, but it is Friday afternoon and many are quickly bored by the black and white footage.

Ms. Jones uses this film as a launching pad for a lesson on television's gender bias. She leads the class in compiling a list of products which are promoted almost exclusively by either women or men. These include hygiene, kitchen or cleaning appliances, cleaning supplies, food, especially wholesome or dietary products, cosmetic and hair products for women, and liquor, power tools/electronics, cleaning supplies for equipment (car wax for example) sports, insurance and junk food for men.
Ms. Jones: "What impression would this give children about gender roles?"
Female #1: "Kids aren't sitting around analyzing these commercials..."
Ms. Jones: "But they see them over and over again..."
Female #2: "But isn't the media just taking what's going on in society and reflecting it?"
Ms. Jones: "Who is setting these standards of perfection? Who is saying that these are perfect women? What is this saying to kids?"

Focusing on these themes is natural for Ms. Jones. As an English teacher, she is on familiar turf here, as this material showcases her powers of analysis and formidable knowledge of this subject.

I.6 The course is experimental and exploratory, practical and activity based.

If we learn best by experiencing phenomena ourselves, rather than living vicariously through the experiences of others, then too often these students were required

to sit, listen, and absorb information chosen by the teacher. With the exception of several incidents, the practical component of the advertising unit was absent.

It is likely that the practical nature of the course was simply covered in other units, for as was mentioned previously, I observed the students using the video and black and white cameras. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that the advertising unit is not representative of the course as a whole, for those classes that preceded and followed "advertising," (some for which I dropped by unannounced), were significantly practical.

However, because of the themes emphasized in the advertising unit--construction of reality, gender bias, sexuality, (and more subtly individual and social manipulation), students could have benefited further from learning the process by which ads are constructed to achieve specific effects, and aping this process themselves. Moreover, because several students indicated on their application forms that they were interested in pursuing careers in advertising, activities more varied than simply deconstructing ads should have been used.

17. There are no External Exams (Provincial Achievement Examinations) in this Course

This is true. The field literature advocates a larger curricular presence for media education to the extent of integrating it in virtually all subjects. However, to do so would practically guarantee it becomes a subject tested by standardized exams. Catch 22? Perhaps. While we media educators are envious of the political importance of Mathematics and Language Arts, to grant the same status to Media Education would be to subject it to the scrutiny of provincial authorities and thereby exercise greater control over pedagogy, resources, and content. As I have tried to emphasize here, to do so would

be to destroy the essence of media education as a grassroots, revolutionary and democratizing initiative.

J.8. Internal Exams are Optional

The internal exam is summative. It was developed and administered by the regular classroom teacher and was only one component of a series of evaluation measures. Written to test students' knowledge of course content, it was not intended to trick, but to enable all students to perform well by emphasizing cogitation over memorization. Students were told of the composition of the exam (multiple choice and essay) and some of the actual questions months before the exam was scheduled to occur, to allow each of them to sufficiently prepare. For example, one exam question was "How have you become more media literate?" It required them to use higher-order thinking, to synthesize all they had learned during the course and apply this information to the question.

J.9. Opportunities for Creativity

Writing assignments such as critiquing a book or a CD Rom, producing film or video, and developing independent projects offered other opportunities for creativity throughout the course. Student response to these assignments was positive. They provided the excuse to listen to music in class, to purchase a new bestseller, or to combine personal and social life with academics.

"John" integrated his love of skateboarding into most of his school work, reviewing "skater" music and deconstructing "skater" advertising. A precocious and

socially-concerned student, the skills he learned in this class culminated in his final project, a short documentary-style film reviewing the hypocrisy of attitudes towards skateboarders in the city. It was a brilliant piece of investigative journalism, and as could be expected, it was also pro-skater. John was the star, the interviewer, the producer, the director, and at most times, the cameraman.

Combining skills of analysis and production, John quoted by-laws and authority figures, filmed parents who revered skateboarding's athletic and social benefits, and captured police ticketing and "evicting" skaters from public areas. His film was persuasive. He painted a positive image of the local skater subculture as an alternative lifestyle, one founded on principles of non-violence and social awareness. A video trip into the East Coast Board Supply store, further supported this, revealing a respectful clientele buying t-shirts emblazoned with slogans of "peace" and "skate hard."

This project showcased John's talents, some of which were refined in this course. It was worth 10% of his course mark and there were few instructions as Mr. Smith liked to leave it as open as possible. The sole requirement was that it had to use or be about media. Not all projects matched the caliber of John's film, although the topics chosen were interesting. In past years students had produced a model of old Marysville, explained the importance of Picasso's Guernica as propaganda, created documentaries, plays, and picturebooks. John's skateboarding film was a recent example.

In the advertising unit a summative test was one of only two sources of evaluation and was weighted the heaviest. Forty multiple choice questions comprised Part I of the test; of these, 21 questions centered on advertising techniques, 9 were devoted to Values and Lifestyles/Metonymy, 5 addressed advertising guidelines, and the remaining 5 queried miscellaneous advertising facts. Part II of the test, valued at 60%, was designed around the deconstruction of a poorly reproduced print advertisement . Students were required to "include [their] general impression of the ad, the language and visual layout of the ad, the techniques and stereotypes used, and the effects of those stereotypes."

Unlike Part I, which was unduly weighted on advertising techniques (50% of this unit was not spend studying these), Part II should have been a valid and reliable measurement of students' ability to deconstruct advertising. At 60% value, it reflected Ms. Jones' emphasis of such concepts throughout the unit. But as is evident in the following transcript, dated May 12, 1999, technical impediments tarnished accurate results.

Ms. Jones: "The model is cutting tomatoes or some other pulpy fruit with a large knife. The original ad is black and white. The product is perfume. The ad was in GQ." This information is recorded on the blackboard for all to consult...."If anyone needs any other questions answered about the ad, please ask. Don't forget to use your time wisely. The essay is worth 60%, the multiple choice only 40%."
Student: "What?"
Student: Ms. Jones, do you have an overhead of this ad?"
Ms. Jones "No. It didn't come out properly. Is there something I can answer?"
Student: "No, not really."
Ms. Jones: "The background is grey on one side and fades."
Student: "Is she sitting on something?
Ms. Jones: "A bench."
Another student: "Do you have a picture of the ad?"
Ms. Jones: "No."
Student: "What colour is her outfit?"
Everyone: "Black!"
Melinda: "Oh, I just love the people in this class!"
Ms. Jones: "This is a test."
Jill: "Where is she looking?"
Ms. Jones: "She is looking directly at the camera."
James: "What is she sitting on?"
Ms. Jones: "A bench."
James: "Is the bench sexy?"
Ms. Jones: "It's a narrow piece of wood."
Craig: "So it is sexy?" [laughter]
Ms. Jones: "There should be no talking!"
Darcy: "Is her hair wet?"
Ms. Jones: "No, it's just kind of stringy."
Andrew: "So it's greasy?"
Ms. Jones: "Enough!"
Jack: "Is the knife that she's using rusty?" [laughter again]
Ms. Jones: "No, it's tarnished a little though. A bit old looking."
Jack: "It looks like there's a ceremonial piece of rope coming out of it."

Ms. Jones: "I don't think so."

The advertisement's lack of clarity undermined the test's worth as a measurement of individual student ability. Whatever validity this test was intended to assess was lost as the more academic students volunteered answers, and an unruly class facilitated cheating. Students took advantage of Ms. Jones' willingness to help, turning the test environment into a spontaneous "cooperative learning" session.

The other item used to assess student performance in the advertising unit was the formal deconstruction of an advertisement. An oral presentation (discussed earlier), followed by a written analysis were required from every student (save Stephanie).

J/O. Parents are Involved.

Research suggests that approaches which involve parents tend to be more successful. For example, parental involvement can enhance a child's understanding of media messages and enhance viewing pleasure (DeGaetano, 1998). A recent study by the Canadian Pediatric Association (1999) confirms this, and urges physicians to "make parents aware of the significance of television early in a child's life," and encourage families

> to watch television together and use this time as an opportunity to discuss the teaching value of the programs. Parents should help the child differentiate between fantasy and reality. This is particularly important when it comes to sex, violence and advertising (www.cpa.org).

Unfortunately, because of the students' ages and the perceived lack of benefit, parental involvement is neither required nor encouraged in this course. There is no

reference to this issue anywhere in the APEF (1998) English Language Arts curriculum, not even in the suggestions for "Media Literacy Activities" (p.219). When initially questioned about this subject, the few students who admitted to watching television with their parents complained of differences in programming choice, perhaps bearing out the assumption that parental involvement at this age is wasted. Upon further questioning, however, some worthwhile interactions are revealed during these periods.

Catherine: "When I do watch [T.V.], I'll usually sit down with my Mum. I don't usually watch with my Dad because we have much different tastes in what we like to watch. If I'm walking by and something she's watching looks interesting, I'll stop and sit down" (field notes, May 5, 1999).

Interviewer: "Do you ever talk about what you're watching, like deconstruct?"

Catherine: "We'll talk about what we think is going on."

John: "He [the relative] hates it because I do. I've always talked throughout these things, and he hates it because a movie will come on and I'll say, he's from that movie and she's from that movie and this is a very different role, and he started off in commercials and did commercials for a while and she was in a sitcom. You just notice where things were from when you deconstruct things" (field notes, May 8, 1999).

When asked the same question several days later, Jennifer recounts a discussion with her mother on this topic and its relationship to the shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado.

Jennifer: "My Mum and I had a big argument over this. It was kind of confusing. Because I didn't understand what she was saying, and then there were other things. It was like without the media, the newspapers, but more the t.v., nobody would have known about it [the massacre at Columbine] and it never would have gotten the publicity and the hype that it did and then we wouldn't have had all the stuff going on at this school [FHS].

Interviewer: "Like the copycat stuff?"

Jennifer: "So she [my mother] doesn't think that anything like that should ever be shown on T.V. She doesn't think that we should show things that are that upsetting and stuff on T.V."

Interviewer: "Okay."

Jennifer: "Yeah. I understand that, but the problem is, that if we don't see it, then we assume it doesn't happen, so we don't do anything about it. So maybe because we see it on T.V. it happens more, because people copycat it and you know, realize things are happening so they do it too. But you know they show those shows on Sunday, like that World Vision thing...unless they had the T.V. tuned in there, would we know about it and would we help it?"

Interviewer: "You're saying we need to be informed about it?"

Jennifer: "...If it wasn't brought home into our T.V's we couldn't do stuff to avoid it..."

Interviewer: "Or perhaps help it. Do you still stand firm on your position in the argument?"

Jennifer: "The longer we talked about it, the less I could stick to one exact argument, because she would say stuff, and made points that would contradict mine, but I still couldn't pick between the two of them, so I'm stuck somewhere in the middle now." (Field Notes, May 11, 1999)

Her initial comments notwithstanding, Jennifer's appreciation of this issue changed after entertaining her mother's perspective. The experiences of Catherine and John are not so dramatic, yet even they portray active-constructive viewers negotiating meaning. Perhaps our natural inclination to verbalize, and comment on these images is facilitated when we are in another's presence. At the very least, these examples manifest a basic analysis, and one that seems beneficial to both participants. Another possible explanation of these students' dislike of their parents programming may have more to due

to with the differences between one who has received media education and one who has not.

Best practice is affected by more than that which transpires in a classroom. Several factors external to the learning environment can significantly influence pedagogy, content, and resources.

Part II

Media Education Infrastructure and Best Practice

Good pedagogy is the result of many factors. The following conditions are identified as prerequisites to best practice in media education.

Support from Various Educational Sources

Mr. Smith has mentioned that he has substantial freedom to plan and teach the Media Studies 120 class. But how much freedom can he really have if the necessary financial and personnel support is not forthcoming from the Department of Education, or the school district? Media education requires a great investment of the teacher's time and money because the subject is constantly evolving. Staying abreast of technological innovations, media mergers and popular culture, while attempting to advance the status of media education is no easy feat in this rapidly-changing age. These teachers need assistance. Books, conferences, and in-services should not be expenses incurred by the teacher for the betterment of his/her profession, and yet, if Mr. Smith's example is the rule, they regularly are. He requested, and was refused (even partial) funding from the district to attend an international conference on media education this past summer. They simply didn't have the money, they explained. Mr. Smith appealed to the local paper, offering to cover the conference and subsequently write a series of educational articles in exchange for his passage and lodging. The familiar refrain was repeated: they didn't have the money. All channels exhausted, Mr. Smith stayed home.

Who is available to advance Mr. Smith's career? As the de facto media education consultant, he guides others, but there is no one left to advise him. He needs the resources to guide himself, to go elsewhere and establish contacts with like individuals. To attract, retain, and develop teachers like Mr. Smith, things must change.

Media Education Consultants to Supervise Implementation and Progression of Course.

Presently, there are no media education consultants in New Brunswick. Chronic funding shortfalls have negated consulting positions for all but core subjects, leaving one individual-- English Language Arts consultant Dawn Weatherbee-Morehouse--to handle related queries. However, Ms. Weatherbee-Morehouse is not Media Studies specialist and as she explained to me in a phone interview, she relies on a few experienced teachers across the province for guidance on specific media-related issues. One of these teachers is Mr. Smith.

In-Service.

Although an essential component of best practice, In-service programs for those teaching, or wanting to teach, Media Studies are still in their infancy. No standardized program exists to date and the initiatives taken are often piecemeal, dependent on the enthusiasm of individual teachers. For example, as part of the annual Summer Institute series offered by the New Brunswick Department of Education, Mr. Smith designed, organized, and taught a two-day seminar this summer for teachers interested in integrating media education components into their lessons, or teaching media education courses.

The Media Awareness Network (1999) explains that this situation is not unique to New Brunswick. In-service training for media education is a casualty of provincial cost-cutting initiatives, and is reflected across the country:

> Media education is being introduced at a time when funding for professional development and resources to support classroom activity is scarce. Again and again ministry officials told us that although media was strongly integrated into the English Language Arts program as another kind of text, there was little professional development activity attached to this new discipline, and no money for new resources (www.mediaawarenessnetwork.ca/eng/med/bigpict/meinca.htm#province).

According to Ms. Weatherbee-Morehouse, an advisory committee on Media Studies will be assembled in the coming year for the purpose of reviewing the Media Studies 120 curriculum. The committee's primary responsibility will be to consider methods of updating and expanding Media Studies 120 to include computer technology and advances in Internet-based media. Not surprising, Mr. Smith has been asked to participate.

Support networks for teachers, staff, and parents.

Mr. Smith has inquired about establishing a New Brunswick branch of the Canadian Association of Media Education Organization (CAMEO). He has received some feedback from the organization's founder and president, media guru, John Pungente, but presently there are no formal arrangements. With New Brunswick's growing reputation as a media production headquarters, myriad opportunities for collaboration between various community organizations, corporations and schools exist. These will however, require substantial time investment--something few teachers can

provide. As for parents, at this time there are few channels through which they can be involved.

Faculties of education

Although numerous American universities have offered media education courses for several years now, the only available course in Canada this year is at the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa (www.media-awareness.ca/eng/med/bigpict/meinca.htm).

During the early 90's, media education courses were offered through a handful of Ontario universities, but low enrollment led to their cancellation. The fallout from provincial funding cuts is to blame, according to the Association for Media Literacy:

> overwhelming curriculum changes, high demands for accountability and reporting, lack of resources, pressures to integrate new technology into classroom learning, and a relatively static work force have all contributed to a general unwillingness on the part of teachers to "go the mile" for additional professional development (www.media-awareness.ca/eng/med/bigpict/meinca.htm).

They argue however, that this situation is not without hope. The expected influx of new teachers will force governments to allocate greater funding to in-service in all areas. In provinces, such as Ontario, where media education has become a significant part of the English curriculum, resources and training should be more forthcoming (ibid).

While the status of media education in Ontario is not ideal, it is the most advanced of the Canadian provinces. There is no official media education certification for teachers in New Brunswick. Anyone wishing to teach Media Studies 120 must be certified as an English teacher however, any teacher can integrate aspects of media education into their

respective disciplines. Media education is not a concentration offered in either of the two New Brunswick faculties of education. Several discrete courses, however, such as, "Power of Images" (UNB), and "Multimedia in Education" (UNB), deal with aspects of the subject, such as constructing reality, and the meaning of being human in the digital age. And while the addition of the new Eaton Multimedia Centre may offer more opportunities for those interested in learning about media, becoming a certified media education teacher remains a remote possibility while the subject is subsumed under the English curriculum.

Part III

Evidence of Progress

In this chapter, my intention was to bring the classroom to readers by transcribing a lesson, a conversation or a day's context. I have tried to include various sources of data so that the readers can judge the validity of my claims themselves. This section attempts to answer the big question: **Is media education, as it is currently taught, successful in teaching students to think critically about the media?** The question can be answered by comparing the outcomes of the actual curriculum to the learned curriculum.

Actual Curriculum

In the previous stand-alone Media Studies 120 curriculum (1992), the learning outcomes for each unit were specifically listed. Officially, this document is no longer in use, although as previously mentioned, Mr. Smith's class organization resembles the discrete unit plans on which it is based. Recently, media education was incorporated as an element of English Language Arts and subsumed under the more general Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (1998) English Language Arts curriculum. The previous units have disappeared, for the underlying philosophy of this curriculum is that all knowledge is interconnected. Six strands--speaking and listening, reading and viewing, writing and other forms of representing--provide the organizing structure for grades 9-12 and various academic levels within each grade. There are no outcomes for media education listed, only those for English Language Arts as a whole. It is to be assumed that if media education is simply another form of literacy learning, then these general

outcomes should suffice for all literacies. Thus, out of necessity, broad statements were conceived by the APEF. With all these grades, levels and subjects involved (Drama and Visual Art are also subsumed into English Language Arts), ambiguity was imperative.

However, each outcome has several more specific subsections. These subsections are more relevant to the individual disciplines within the English Language Arts framework, such as media education. They better illuminate the standards by which to judge student progress and thus are presented here in conjunction with the general outcome. In the few pages of the APEF curriculum specifically devoted to media education, there is a list of "Key Concepts" of the subject. These are intended to encompass the broad ideas of the course but could more accurately be termed "understandings" for each is comprised of several concepts. Paradoxically, while not specifically phrased as outcomes, they closely resemble the named outcomes of the 1992 guide. For example, the previous outcome insisting that "The Student will be able to Recognize that Advertising is a Business and has a Corporate Structure" (NB Department of Education, 1992, p. 4), has been modified into the "Media has Commercial Implications" concept (APEF, 1998, p.174).

Regardless of the terminology employed, these "concepts" are in accordance with the literature of best practice and reflect the key principles of media education (Hobbs, 1998b; Media Awareness Network, 1998, www.screen.com/mnet/eng/med/bigpict/happen.htm.). In assessing students' cognitive development, two criteria were used. The first was evidence of progress towards curricular outcomes. The second was understanding of Media Studies 120 concepts.

This section continues to follow Ms. Jones and her teaching of the "Advertising" unit. It will demonstrate that generally, media education, as taught in Media Studies 120, is successful in helping students to think critically about media. Specific incidents organized around several APEF outcomes are intended to show student progress (but due to the range of outcomes, only several were included in this analysis). Evidence of progress towards these outcomes is not finite in that one does not simply "achieve" this learning; rather, one makes progress towards it, as if on a learning continuum. This section will also highlight cognitive differences among Media Studies 120 students, correlate student learning to time spent on topic, and illustrate that Ms. Jones' emphasis of certain concepts and themes over others resulted in greater proficiency among students in specific areas.

Concepts Addressed

For purposes of clarity, the "concepts" should be seen as broad, organizing ideas for this course, transcending everything else, including course outcomes. They will be written in parentheses. Because the outcome is usually (though not always) the means through which the concept is addressed, the two are often presented together. Outcomes will be highlighted using bold font. Finally, it should be noted that the outcomes addressed in each lesson were never made explicit by Ms. Jones, but were inferred through the data collected.

What will be apparent about the APEF outcomes is that most students can accomplish them to some degree, vague as they are. And in the examples that follow, a

range of abilities is manifest. Ms. Jones uses the following outcome to begin her teaching unit on advertising, to stimulate discussion, and to introduce and gain feedback on a concept central to media education--that "Media has Commercial Implications" (ibid, p. 174).

April 21, Day 2

Outcome: Students will be expected to speak and listen to explore, extend, clarify, and reflect on their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences; articulate, advocate and justify positions on issues or text in an convincing manner, showing an understanding of a range of viewpoints (APEF, 1998, p.102).

Ms. Jones distributes a brief article from the Adbusters' website (www.adbusters.org/magazine/24/zone.html) entitled, "My home is an Ad-Free Zone," by Nick Smith. It presents an unconventional perspective on advertising, depicting the author's resistance to corporate annexation of his home. He blacks out logos and buys no-name products, among other things. It is a humorous piece intended for silent reading and then class discussion. Initially some students think this author is overreacting to advertising, and characterize his actions as "stupid." Only one student (out of thirty) agreed with the premise that advertising in the home should be banned. He said that doing so would "be better for the human race." Thus began the discussion.

Joe: "Impossible to do because advertising reaches every corner of the globe...Covering the name up won't do anything."

Mary: "He's already bought the brand name...no point in covering it up."

Jeff: "If there's something wrong with the product, then he shouldn't endorse it. But if it's a good product..."

Heather: "He probably has all sorts of brand names in his house anyway, like his t.v....Besides, if consumers don't buy the name brands, then producers will stop making it."

Joe: "North America is a capitalist society...advertising is money. Not a rational thought."

Jeff: "We like our name brands. It's impossible that Adbusters can make a difference."

Ms. Jones: "They can't make a difference because they can't get their "uncommercials" on T.V."

Sean: "It's life. Someday these things will be important in supporting my business."

As this discussion shows, the majority of students possessed an uncritical view of the corporate world and an acceptance of the status quo. At this date, their understanding of this "concept" is unsophisticated. These results were also confirmed by the pre-assessment during which less than half of the class (40%) conceived of advertising as part of the corporate structure of television. Additionally, even fewer (38%) were able to explain why major networks have refused to air the Adbusters' "Uncommercial" promoting "Buy Nothing Day." In this lesson, their naïve reasoning is manifest in the comments of Mary and Jeff who regard brand names as status symbols to be displayed, not hidden. Moreover, their attempts to "advocate and justify" their points of view are superficial, not based on any prolonged thought about this topic. They see no harm in Smith's argument that corporations are using the North American home as the final frontier of advertising. To some degree, this exercise addressed the outcome in question ("reflect on their thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences and articulate, advocate, and justify positions on issues or text in a convincing manner...") and established a baseline against which to measure the development of these skills.

As was revealed during the focus group several days later, it was apparent that this baseline did not apply to everyone. If progress towards outcomes is measured on a continuum, then some students were more advanced than others. Moreover, several of the focus group students possessed a better understanding of mass media than the class as a

whole. Three of the six students chosen to participate in the focus group were precocious individuals. They were passionate about this subject and had invested substantial time in considering their relationship to mass media. For instance, when asked about the source of financial support for television, the discussion evolved from a consideration of media influence on the individual to a comparison of North American and European and Soviet Bloc advertising.

Catherine: "I think that if it wasn't a capitalist society, it would probably be privately funded, and I'm sure that the advertisements would reflect the private fundraiser. But I was in Italy in March and I watched TV over there, and it was very different...They had everything, they just had it all translated. Like the commercials and stuff, there weren't as many of them, and they weren't..."

Interviewer:" Weren't as good?"

Catherine: "They were just on a totally different level."

Michael: "Made up of information."

Catherine: "Yeah. There wasn't anything on TV that advertised clothing; there wasn't anything that advertised makeup. There were car advertisements, but only a few of those. Everything that was advertised otherwise was on Billboards. They didn't have a lot of advertisements. If you sat and watched an hour of television, you might have 3 minutes, maybe 4 minutes of ads."

John: "That would be enjoyable."

Catherine: "It was. The only channel that even advertises somewhat was MTV, and even compared to MuchMusic or MTV here, there was a lot less ads and I think it's because its' subsidized from somewhere else and not from advertising."

Measuring the progress of these students was more difficult, simply because they had a better grasp of most course outcomes and a better understanding of the "concepts". They were the exception and not the class norm. As is manifest in the preceding quotations, Catherine, John and Michael could already "articulate, advocate, and justify positions on issues in a convincing manner" demonstrating knowledge of the "concept that Media has Commercial Implications."

On the pre-assessment, the majority of students surveyed explained that rock videos were a form of entertainment, not advertising. At this point, few understood the "concept" that "Media has Commercial Implications." Several days later, it was explored using an advertising package from a women's magazine. Here is the transcript. No specific outcome addressed.

April 27: Ms. Jones sifts through the excessive literature from Chatelaine, showing the pains taken to make the dossier professional and profitable. It had classified its readers so well that the Chatelaine woman was defined entirely as a statistic. Accordingly, it explained how she was likely to be professional, earning approximately $50,000 per year, interested in home decorating, and so on. She was portrayed as a woman who knows what she wants, who approaches life with confidence and is successful personally and professionally. She was also however, a construction of reality so appealing that many women would see themselves in her.

To think that this company had compiled such specific, personal information made me uncomfortable. Unfortunately, privacy concerns were not the issue here. Ms. Jones' purpose in teaching this lesson was to emphasize that media is a business. And like other industries, magazines have benefited from changing social roles and the growing market of employed, salaried women. Chatelaine's large subscription base enables it to command the highest advertising rates among all Canadian magazines, rates that ensure that large companies will dominate mainstream media. Ms. Jones concluding questions addressed the implications of this domination for women and for the industry at large.

Although this discussion raised important points, it could have gone further. The price comparison chart distributed to students showed that advertising in the Canadian issue of Time magazine was approximately $5000 cheaper than in MacLean's. In contrast, to advertise in the American edition of Time cost $226,500 (Canadian), implying that the market that is the bread and butter of the Canadian periodicals, is no

more than gravy money for Time. Against the backdrop of the split-run controversy that was raging at this time, the implications for Canadian companies facing these conglomerates could have been explored.

Several outcomes were addressed in the following lessons. Ms. Jones was emphasizing the concept that "Media is Produced by People who are Following a Format for a Purpose," and showing students that advertisements are deliberately constructed to emit certain effects. The first outcome addressed is **Students will be expected to respond personally to a range of texts (APEF, 1998, p.112).** The second is **Students will be expected to examine how texts work to reveal and produce ideologies, identities, and positions and examine how media texts construct notions of roles, behaviour, culture and reality (ibid, p. 114).**

Again, the first outcome is so vague that the words "respond personally" do not necessarily imply great learning progress or academic discourse. But when combined with the second outcome and a specific concept, cognitive growth can be assessed by analyzing the depth of critical thinking brought to these tasks when presented chronologically.

Pre-assessment data revealed that the majority of Media Studies 120 students could identify basic advertising techniques prior to beginning the unit. Questions about product, audience, presentation and composition, purpose and worth of celebrity endorsements, and purpose and placement of logo, were answered successfully. Albeit, in many instances, this understanding was shallow and unsophisticated. For example, one of the best analyses on the pre-assessment came from "John" who deconstructed a black and

white advertisement for Apple computers featuring a close-up photograph of Picasso. An above average student, John identified the artist, and explained how identifying the subject was pivotal to the effectiveness of the advertisement. However, he overlooked some elements. John did not question the use of Picasso's image by this computer giant, or comment on such details as the inherent irony therein. After a week of classes there were signs of change in this particular student.

John was one of the vocal members of the focus group convened in late April. In a discussion on conglomerates, he made the following observation:

> I find it funny [that] they have the drink Fruitopia. I drink it, I love the stuff, but it's the biggest oxymoron...because it's called Fruitopia they're playing on [the concept of] Utopia, which is a society of people that live in communes and share with each other. And, it's owned by Coca-Cola! Utopians avoid all corporate patterns. (focus group, April 28, 1999).

Sensing Sir Thomas Moore's disapproval of the corporate perversion of his idea, John is essentially making the point he failed to make about Picasso's image on the pre-assessment. Several days of advertising theory during which students learned principles of graphic composition (colour, form, space), a brief history of advertising's evolution, and Values and Lifestyles categories, were sandwiched between the two examples.

The following day, John makes another connection.

From the overhead students copied the 1994 "Gender Portrayal Guidelines" produced by the Canadian Advertising Foundation. John, stealthily flipping through a MAXIM magazine, points out that the "Lucky Strike" cigarette advertisement he has just stumbled upon pushes the limit of these codes. In particular, he cites the Gender Portrayal Guideline which states that "Using or displaying a woman's sexuality in order to sell a product that has no relation to sexuality is sexually exploitative." The ad is undoubtedly risque in that it associates smoking with sexual conquest (field notes, April 29, 1999).

John was one of the "precocious" students of the focus group, and thus should not be seen as representative of the class as a whole. Not everyone was advancing at the same speed as he.

Keeping in mind that the major concept being addressed in these lessons is that "Media is Produced by People Following a Format for a Purpose," this advertisement manifests the willingness of advertisers to test the limits of these rules. And yet, several students are unwilling to cast a critical eye on them as yet. They think that these discussions are all too subjective, and that Ms. Jones is projecting her own concerns onto these advertisements and seeing things that are not there. Ms. Jones concludes by reiterating that all this is done for a purpose and asks the class to consider why this ad would not be found in a woman's magazine.

Acknowledging that media is constructed is an essential prerequisite to deconstructing advertisements. In the days that followed the preceding example, several lessons were devoted to learning this skill as students congregated in small groups and were assigned print advertisements. The following examples show a range of student abilities. Students are progressing and while their powers of deconstruction are still developing, most seem to have accepted that media is produced by people following a format for a purpose.

Monday May 3, Day 10: The weekend homework assignment has been for each student to find and deconstruct an advertisement from any media and to present it to the class today. Hot, dry weather, uncharacteristic of this time of year, has excited many students and robbed them of their academic focus. Even though it is Monday, their restlessness makes it feel like Friday. Many of them have forgotten the assignment, and others are ill-prepared. Ms. Jones is unrelenting. She has scrolled the names of half of the class on the board in random order, and insists that these students present something today. Frenzied students attack the class' magazine rack, desperately searching for an ad. Glossy pages

are violently ripped out and passed around. Not everyone is engaged in this mayhem. Those who are prepared, and those that refuse to improvise together comprise a small group. They sit silently at their desks. Students in the latter group have decided to take the penalty of 0 for refusing to improvise, rather than go through the stress of publicly deconstructing an ad they have just found.

Eventually, Ms. Jones wins this round and students begin presentations. Jane has chosen a print ad for Clearasil. She lists the source (Seventeen magazine) and identifies the ad's 'weasel words.'

Jane: [Reads] "The first step to clear skin is clean skin." It doesn't say what the other steps are. The people in the ad are beautiful and having fun. It's about acne and because we're teenagers, we're supposed to get acne. Is my time up yet?"

Ms. Jones: "No."

Jane: "The message is acne isn't such a big deal, so get on with your life. Any questions?"

The class prompts her to comment on areas she's overlooked, such as colour scheme, effectiveness, etc. She says little more and is given permission to return to her desk.

While not as sophisticated as John's previously-mentioned analysis, Jane has demonstrated an awareness of these outcomes. Her presentation has been brief and somewhat shallow, and yet to some degree she has "respond[ed] personally to a...text," and has "examined how media texts produce notions of roles, behaviours, cultures and reality" (APEF, 1998, p.114). The following presentations reveal the different levels of progress among students, as some have synthesized and applied what they've learned to date, while others struggle to begin. Here is an example of the latter.

Diana has chosen a print ad for Clairol Herbal Essences Shampoo from Seventeen. She explains that the colours used--whites and florals--are natural and fresh. She identifies the caption as "Work yourself into a lather" and takes it literally even as classmates are prompting her to see it in a more figurative sense. This ad is ubiquitous and yet Diana is

not grasping the overt sexual undertones inherent in it. Paradoxically, to conclude her presentation, she insists that the ad was effective.

Diana's understanding of this advertisement is highly superficial, although she identifies the symbolic techniques used to convey freshness. In fairness to her, she was one of the many students scrambling for an advertisement at the beginning of class, and thus, her lack of analysis could be attributed to her lack of preparation.

Jill is the next presenter. She is prepared, having taped an advertisement for Molson Canadian beer over the weekend. She plays it for the class before launching into an analysis. The advertisement is set to "Walking on the Sun, a popular song and features twenty-somethings experiencing the first rays of spring sunshine. The text explains further: "In Canada there are two seasons: Winter and ...Patio." Jill mentions specific incidences of camera work that she found catchy such as the icicle melting and the sunbather moving the beer.
Jill: "I thought it was very appealing but it doesn't make me want to go out and buy beer. They associate values with being Canadian and drinking beer. They skipped a line in the song because it refers to drugs. I taped it off Prime (channel 23) where anyone could be watching."

Jill is the first presenter to mention the moral dimension of advertising, suggesting that beer advertisements should not be shown on general channels. And while this analysis is not complex, she has gone further than most presenters by identifying some of the basic elements of the composition such as the various texts used, the intended audience (and the actual audience) and the concept of metonymy or Values and Lifestyles advertising.

Her issue with beer companies precipitates a discussion. One student asks why most of the commercials for alcohol are on pre-adult programming (MuchMusic for instance) if the audience for these shows is approximately 12 to 25 years old. Ms. Jones

seizes the opportunity to address this issue and extends it to other products such as concerts sponsored by beer (Molson Canadian Rocks Presents) or cigarettes. She is not particularly interested in the rationale, but wants students to emote, and to question the moral dimension of these practices. Some of the more advanced students grasp the marketer's intentions immediately and blurt them out, without discussing whether it's right or wrong.

John: "If you're programmed from a young age you'll associate drinking with certain activities and want to drink when you're able. You'll probably drink what you know."

Annie: "Besides, when you're young, and you have to ask others to buy booze for you, you need a name."

This association is an example of the concept of metonymy, or Values and Lifestyles (VALS) as it is called in this course. Students first encountered it on the pre-assessment in the form of a question. It asked, "If most of us cannot afford such products, why are advertisements for luxury items such as Jaguar cars, Tiffany jewellery and Versace clothing displayed in popular media?" At that time, slightly more than half of the students recognized the concept, and few understood it well enough to apply it to another situation. In the abovementioned discussion, these two students display a more critical view of advertising and the notion of creating a "need."

The next presenter is Tanya. Her experience is an ironic comment on students' learning thus far in that it reveals that most students have yet to transfer their knowledge into real-life situations.

She is dressed in a small tank top and shorts, a summery outfit, but nothing lewd. As she approaches the front of the class to present, one of her male friends sitting in the back whistles at her. She blushes and tries to begin. Ms. Jones preempts her.

Ms. Jones: "I take offense to that!"
[Most of the class laughs]
George (the whistler): "I apologize for offending you."
Another female student jumps in to defend George, belitting Ms. Jones reaction.
Female: "Why should you be offended? Girls do it to men all the time."
Ms. Jones: "If you want to know my reasons, we can discuss them later."
Female: "I think everyone here is taking things way too seriously."
Ms. Jones: "That's enough!"
Female: "No, I'm serious..."
Ms. Jones: Enough!"

This unidentified female student did not particularly like Ms. Jones, telling me on several occasions that she felt she was "too uptight." This characterization apparently justified her repeated challenges to the teacher's authority, for she was one of several students who believed that Ms. Jones over-analyzed advertisements. Her example notwithstanding, the fact that most of the class felt that there was nothing wrong with the whistle was disturbing. Most of these individuals were above-average advanced level students. More telling, they had been studying sexual stereotyping in advertisements for more than a week now. Only one student (Catherine) publicly sided with Ms. Jones.

May 4, Day 11: Stuart has hastily ripped an advertisement for Bacardi Rum out of the recent GQ magazine. It features an attractive and seductively attired young woman in a low- plunging red dress. She is holding a cigar close to her lips and appears to be laughing. He admits that he initially believed that the ad was promoting cigars, but now realizes it as an alcohol product. He identifies the intended audience as young men.
Stuart: They're trying to sell sex. She's a pretty girl. [Reading the caption]: "Politically Correct by Day. Bacardi by Night."

Michael: "What do you make of her mouth being open and her holding a cigar--is it representational?"
Stuart: [Doesn't answer. He doesn't seem to understand the question].
Georgia: "What is not politically correct about the night? What are they trying to say...like, can you whistle at night in a bar but not in the day?"
[This is obviously a reference to the whistling incident of the previous day].
Stuart: "I guess."

This advertisement is loaded with imagery, but Stuart has missed a great deal in his analysis to date and the class is anxious to point this out. As the class chatters about the symbolism in the ad, one student yells, "She's drunk!" This seems to be a revelation for Stuart, despite that it seems apparent to most others. The cigar motif and its political significance in the aftermath of the U.S. Presidential scandal is humorous to the group of students sitting around me, but they are not willing to share their interpretation aloud. Ms. Jones thanks Stuart and takes over. She devotes the remainder of the class towards a discussion of the subliminal messages in this advertisement and encourages students to probe deeper. She has not specifically mentioned the term "phallic imagery" today despite what I perceive to be a clear need for vocabulary.

There is a fine balance between educating students about these issues and dwelling on them. With students like Stuart who are unaware of the most primitive imagery, the balance is difficult to maintain because so much background must be provided. The class cynics or dissenters also complicate matters, as a certain amount of repetition seems necessary to convince them. The reasons notwithstanding, Ms. Jones emphasizes certain themes and issues, such as sexuality and gender construction, more than others. Here is another example.

Continuing with the same two outcomes (Students will be expected to respond personally to a range of texts; students will be expected to respond critically to a range of texts...), Ms. Jones explores a different concept. In the following lesson, she demonstrates how "Media Present a Construction of Reality" and yet, the familiar themes continue to emerge. Most students are demonstrating a growing sophistication in regard to these outcomes while grasping the meaning of the concept too.

May 6, Day 13.The class began as another hot, sunny summer day. It was now last period and tomorrow is a holiday. As a result, there are fewer students here. Ms. Jones begins by drawing a cross shape on the board. She asked students what it is. Words associated with it jumped forth from the class:
"War,"

"Klu Klux Klan,"
"Spirituality,"
"Christ,"
Ms. Jones then explains the difference between literal and figurative meaning. She probes to see if everyone understands, then distributes an advertisement and places another copy of it on the overhead. It does not have any trademark, logo or brand name. It is simply a black and white photograph of an attractive couple in a field. She is wearing a long dark dress and high boots, like Wellingtons. He is dressed simply in a nondescript manner. Her legs are wrapped around his waist, as if she has run towards and then jumped on him.
Olivia: "You like these sexual things don't you?"
Ms. Jones doesn't answer. Instead, she asks for words to describe the mood.
Teresa: "Romance because she's looking in his eyes."
Jack: "Freedom and loneliness, carefree...good and evil contrast in colours."
Martha: "Unity because her skirt blends into his pants."
Unidentified student: "Looks like she's a horse rearing up on him!"
Ms. Jones: "How does light work?" "How are they [the models] positioned?"
John: They're balanced diagonally, in order to get her dress in the picture. Looks like they might fall down, she on top of him."
Michael: "Gives it [the composition] movement."
Patrick: She's seducing him. What's [the ad] for?"
Ms. Jones: "Perfume."
(Students speculate which brand) "Stetson?" "CK?" "Guess?" "Ralph Lauren?"
Ms. Jones: "Why didn't they put the brand name in the ad?"
Unidentified student: "It would take the attention away from the models, and they're selling the ad."
Unidentified student: "Using sex to sell perfume."
Ms. Jones: "What would the verbal component say?"
[Silence]. They don't understand what she's getting at. She explains further.
Ms. Jones: "You know, product name, etc.?"
No answer.
Ms. Jones: "What is happening here? Must understand this to get the effect. What is this story?"
John: "It's a potential energy picture. When the camera stops, they fall and she overpowers him. This is a good thing."
Ms. Jones: "What does this say about female sexuality?"
Rebecca: "It's powerful."
Ms. Jones. "No. It's predatory."
The class debates the male model's look. They think he looks flushed, strained.
Ms. Jones: "Is he surprised?"
Some say that he's smitten, others that he's desiring her.
Ms. Jones: "Is this romance? Where are his eyes looking?"
John: "At her lips and she at his. This is not romance but lust."
Ms. Jones: "What do these images teach us about relationships?" Do you think that some of the problems that people have with their significant others are due to the fact that this is what we see constantly?"

Georgia: "A lot of people who are married get divorced because the passion is gone from their relationship and I don't think this is what it is all about."
Ms. Jones: "Is this the pivotal model of emotion? Do you want this from perfume?"
Several students: "YES!"
John: "Perfume isn't advertising gradual mutual relationships that blossom over time, but spontaneous attraction...men's perfume ads are about control. Since it's just perfume, it's an ideal and the models are perfect. [But] In "Making Love Better" (a couples-oriented video advertised on television) the models are attractive but regular looking people."
Ms. Jones: "I want you to do this with your projects (reference to the written portion of their project on deconstructing an advertisement). Especially, tell me what does seeing these ideals do to your perceptions?"
John: "I don't think these things are based on reality...they're catering to your fantasies and that's why its' less about romance and more based on physical. They're not selling reality. They wouldn't be able to sell anything using reality."
Michael: It makes people feel inadequate when you see these all the time."
Ms. Jones: "I've tried to tell you guys that over and over again. One ad is not going to do it. Eventually they change your beliefs."

As Olivia's comment shows, there are still some students who are reluctant to view advertising critically, preferring instead to believe that Ms. Jones is over-zealous in her deconstruction. However, there are signs of progress in that most students viewed this advertisement as a text, which like other more familiar texts, functions on various levels. And as John illustrates, some students were able to cite examples to support the point that the media is in the business of selling ideals through products.

But what if these ideals are dangerous? Ms. Jones did not go this far, but it had arisen in my interviews with individual students. Their responses are personal and their perceptions acute. I asked, "Should advertisers be held responsible for the implications of what they promote?" In her interview with me, Catherine replies:

Well, that touches on one of my biggest pet peeves. The ones that really get me are, just as another example, advertisers saying, 'its okay if you're not really thin,' and then they have a really skinny model. That's just being very blunt about it but they're very subtle. They say, 'It's okay to be different, its okay to be this and that,'

but then they'll have the same stereotypical person that all the other advertisements are using. I know this from a female perspective...but when a girl sees that advertisement, its not just about clothes per se, its about everything that goes with it, and they're playing on that person's feelings and whatever. I saw an ad the other day, I think it was for Escape. It was about the perfume, but it wasn't about the perfume. When I looked at the ad, I thought of the way she was dressed and I really liked that, and that influenced me.

Michael also echoed this point:

Michael: "It's exploitation. You don't get to fat people so let's work on you, change people's perceptions so we can make more money. That's the job of advertisers, to make more money."

Interviewer: "Do you think they do a good job at changing people's perceptions?"

Yes, especially when it comes to body image. Considering the number of people with eating disorders in the world today who might not necessarily have them because of advertising. I think it is very integral. It's an important part of why these girls and guys feel inadequate. A girl in my family is anorexic. It has a lot to do with media, but starts out with an idea. That's what advertising is, an idea being presented. It can be taken from the medium from which it is made and put into someone's head and then they view everything through that image. They'll ignore the people who don't fit that image and focus in on the people that do.

Interviewer: "Why does it work? Why don't we say this is ridiculous?"

Michael: "Because there's money thrown behind it. The other part is that because we're all insecure" (interview transcript, May, 1999).
Jennifer: "You can't really help it [your personal reaction] but you can't blame all your problems on advertisers. They may put the idea in your head but you're the one who builds it up and makes it what it is."

Interviewer: Can you give me an example?"

Jennifer: "Anything really. The family...just because they show you that it's the perfect family and you realize that there are families like this, you have to take it upon yourself to say, 'Mine's not like this. What did I do wrong?' Just because it's on T.V., doesn't mean its average, the person just assumes it is."

Ms. Jones' emphasis on deconstruction activities throughout the "Advertising" unit

resulted in significantly deeper analyses by virtually all students on post-assessment.

Juxtaposed against the pre-assessment results which focused primarily on identifying product, audience, and meaning, the post-assessment deconstruction activity included these items but went beyond superficial identification to consider issues such as social implication and construction of feminine ideals. Students were asked to deconstruct an advertisement for Kahlua liqueur, taken from a men's magazine. No specific instructions were given. Here is an example of the results:

> It is a pretty simple ad. There isn't very much text and I didn't see any weasel words. The designers of the ad use sex to try and sell the product. The girl in the ad is obviously supposed [sic] to look like this to catch the male viewers attention. She is probably supposed [sic] to represent what would happen if you got drunk or got somebody drunk" (post-assessment, May, 1999).

Basic elements such as product and audience are interwoven with more sophisticated analysis of the content and message presented. The student has followed a procedure, looking for obvious tricks such as the use of text and the presence of weasel words before moving onto more abstract meanings.

Concepts Not Addressed

Ms. Jones' in depth attention to some "concepts" is laudable and should be credited for the progress students made. However, this focus resulted in several "concepts" being neglected during this unit. The first was "Media Contains the Ideological and Social Messages of the Dominant Culture."

While it arose occasionally in the classroom, it was not addressed as a major issue in the advertising unit. Only two explicit references to it can be found. The first came in the lesson on advertising costs, previously mentioned in this chapter

during which a discussion about advertising fees in Chatelaine led students to conclude that such magazines inadvertently discriminate against small-businesses. However, the ideological implications of this were not explored, thereby missing an opportunity to explicitly connect discussion and concept.

The second reference to this "concept" occurred on June 8, during the "Journalism" unit that succeeded "Advertising." Mr. Smith had promised earlier this term to procure a list of media conglomerates, and distributed it now to illustrate a point about the lack of independent thought in the mainstream media. This list, reproduced from Mediacy, the official newsletter of Ontario's Association for Media Literacy, is entitled, "Trans-National Media Corporations: What They Own and How Much They Earn." It displays the extent of media domination by three conglomerates--Time-Warner/Turner, ABC/Disney and Viacom/Paramount. Mr. Smith also surveyed television anchors to emphasize the dominance of white, patriarchal, Western values in news stories at the expense of second and third world content.

This "concept" arose most frequently in my conversations with students. Unaware of the extent of the students' knowledge of media, I had queried the focus group about the meaning and implications of certain media terms. Here I asked about "conglomerates."

Michael: " McDonald's, Coca-Cola and Disney, they are the triumvirate.

Catherine: "Yes. McDonald's and Disney are affiliates of one another. I work at McDonald's and we have a radio station that is predetermined for us. We can't change the music. They played about 8 Disney songs that night--one from the Lion King, one from Hercules, one from Mulan..."

Michael: "And you know what the only drink you can get at Disneyworld is? Coke. It's the only thing there."
Catherine: Because McDonald's sells Coke, not Pepsi.
Interviewer: "So what are the implications of these conglomerates on our access to information?"
Catherine: "It would be really biased."
Michael: "Irving."
Catherine: "[Irving was at fault] but the Gleaner had to print the story because it is owned by Irving. But if it's front page news, they print it in the bottom left where nobody really tends to look anyway..."

Michael: All their good stories are front page, like the Irving Whale; although it's been down there for 39 years, they're raising it today for environmental protection."

The local Irving example is a perfect manifestation of this concept (not to mention several others such as the construction of reality).

Perhaps students had already made the connection between the issues that were taught in class and themes such as this. Although there were questions that addressed this theme subtly, I failed to query students explicitly about it on the pre-assessment. On the post-assessment I asked if they could name any groups who were not represented fairly in advertising. The majority of students (65% of class) cited racial minorities, genders and the poor (This answer was not explicitly taught in class but could have been inferred). Thus, although the "concept" that "Media Contains the Ideological and Social Messages of the Dominant Culture" was addressed in the latter part of the course (and possibly prior to the Advertising unit), it was relatively absent during the unit under study.

Another "concept" that was overlooked was "Media Both Influences and is Influenced by the Social/Political Structure in Which it Operates." There was a total lack

of discussion about this concept in the "Advertising" unit, although one could argue that some "concepts" are better suited to other units or disciplines, such as this one to social studies.

"The Codes, Conventions and Characteristics of Media Influence the Content it Produces" was also neglected. Like some other key "concepts," it is embedded in any discussion of media, but was never explicitly mentioned. This McLuhanesque idea is applicable to the topic of advertising, and also to the topic of learning because it includes as integral parts of the media experience the channels through which messages travel. After reading a wealth of literature about the impact of mass media on learning, I had anticipated some discussions on this topic. Were students being taught to question their attention spans, or their ability to learn from human rather than electronic sources? In this unit, the answer was no; there were few references to "new" media, far less structured inquiry of them. However, one perceptive student offered this commentary during his individual interview with me.

> Your parents are with you less than the media is. The media is pretty much--and advertising is--with you constantly. It is replacing institutions like the nuclear family and the church, simply because they can't be in your face all the time...our attention span is so gone now from flash advertising, zippy television, that we're numb to things that take time (interview, May, 1999).

Before we rapidly succumb to the onslaught of digital media, these questions should be considered by all those involved in education. But if Media Education classes fail to provide this forum, who will?

Themes Not Addressed

In addition to the aforementioned concepts, several prominent themes were also overlooked. As a result of the deluge of media attention given to the theme of television violence especially in the early days of this unit, I expected it to be a central focus of this class. Television stations (CTV and CNN in particular) were using footage of the "event" in station-identification segments, a form of advertising that I hoped would be exposed in this class. Even in my early (and primitive) data analysis, I identified it as a major theme of this case, simply because it had substantial presence in my field notes. However, despite its resilience in conversations, it was never specifically discussed in relation to advertising, and never became a theme in this unit.

Another issue that did not gain much class time was social responsibility and consumerism. In the focus group and interview data, some of these students expressed a social conscience by refusing to purchase goods from corporations that do not follow principles of fair trade, such as Nike, or blatantly exploit consumer fears, such as Weight Watchers and Calvin Klein. Unfortunately, this concern was never discussed openly in class. But it could have provided a counterpoint to the often cynical discussions about the corporate world by empowering students to take action against these policies. On the post assessment I asked them, more out of curiosity than research, several affective questions. Slightly less than half the class (46% of those responding) claimed to feel differently about their roles as consumers after studying this unit, and fifty-eight per cent admitted that their perception of the advertising world had changed. However, less than half of those asked claimed to have altered their behaviour as a result of their learnings.

Ms. Jones had mentioned alternative media such as the Adbusters' website which debunks corporate agendas and promotes social action, but like many other topics in this unit, alternative media was not consistently emphasized. Thus, when I included one of Adbuster's spoof advertisements (a satirical look at the Calvin Klein Obsession ads) on the post-assessment, most students did not understand its significance.

Conclusion

As previously mentioned, many of the outcomes listed in the Atlantic Provinces Educational Foundation (1998) English Language Arts curriculum were so vague that they were difficult to use as standards. Fortunately, the large amounts of data collected over the course of this unit enabled me to present a chronological view of cognitive progression. These changes in students over the course of the advertising unit show evidence of progress towards a more critical view of media.

This intellectual criticism was not consistent. Despite what was supposed to be a relatively academically homogeneous group, there were differences in media literacy levels among students. There were also differences in their collective understanding of concepts, as most students' knowledge of advertising was restricted to certain areas, such as the ability to deconstruct texts and identify gender and sexual stereotyping. This is only fitting as more lessons were given on these topics than any other during this unit. Other key "concepts" in media education such as "The Codes Conventions and Characteristics of Media

Influences the Content it Produces," or in other words, "The Media is the Message," were not sufficiently explored, leaving the majority of students without any sophisticated understanding of these "concepts" and their relation to advertising. Thus, to say that this unit of Media Studies 120 succeeded in teaching students to think critically about media is perhaps ambitious. A more accurate conclusion is that this unit of the course succeeded--to an extent--in making them more media literate.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

Before embarking on graduate work, I had read myriad reports detailing how new technologies were facilitating peoples' lives. Ironically, these reports were matched by an equal number of complaints about the unforeseen stresses of these developments. My interest in Media Education evolved from one major concern. "What will be the impact of this information overload on children?" My impression then was that there seemed to be a lack of common sense surrounding this issue. As schools boasted about donations by Intel and Microsoft, and "mutually beneficial" arrangements with Industry Canada, the federal government was extolling the virtues of the V-Chip to censor children's television intake. Never a believer in censorship, but questioning the need for greater access to information and training curricula in schools, I sought alternative solutions.

Media Education was that alternative. After two years of research on the subject, my conviction of its importance remains constant. However, my general impression is that the subject, as it currently exists in New Brunswick, could be more effective in teaching students to think critically about media. Revisions are needed. What follows is a discussion of the significant issues raised in my study, the reasons for their significance, recommendations for improvement, and suggestions for future research.

Key Points of Study

As Chapter Four illustrates, Media Studies 120 is successful--to an extent-- in teaching students to think critically about media. However, laudable as these gains may

be, most students have yet to reach the level of what Eisner (1991) calls "connoisseurship," a state of expertise and appreciation. Perhaps that is too much to be asking here, but changes could improve students' level of understanding. In this particular unit, student learning seemed to be directly related to time spent on topic. In fact, student understanding of media seemed to be limited in breadth and depth to a handful of themes, key concepts and specific skills emphasized by Ms. Jones. The theme of gender construction, or the skill of deconstruction provide examples of where a chronological progression from naïve to more sophisticated understanding of a topic was evident in the class as a whole.

The "Advertising" unit revealed that only about half of the standards of best practice are being met (as documented in Chapter Four, this percentage appears higher during the remainder of the course). As educators, we are led to believe that best practice is a prerequisite to student learning. In this case however, the evidence on how best practice affects student learning was mixed. On the one hand, best practice does not support the use of direct teaching in media education, and yet, students' greatest cognitive gains were in the areas of skill deconstruction and conceptual knowledge--material conveyed by Ms. Jones through direct teaching techniques. Might they have learned more here? Perhaps some standards affect learning more than others. For example, I suspect that this one has more to do with media scholars' attempts to debunk traditional classroom power relations than empirical evidence on learning. On the other hand, standards that may directly affect course content, such as teacher background, should be weighted more heavily. Ms. Jones' lack of specific media knowledge and her failure to

include production opportunities in the "Advertising" unit limited student exposure to essential material.

The place of Media Studies 120 in the curriculum also affects best practice. While the APEF English Language Arts (1998) curriculum is sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes, the pedagogical freedom it provides to teachers can be both beneficial and detrimental to the study of media education. A certain degree of freedom is necessary in this subject, so that local issues, current events or student concerns can be accommodated. But students seem to be best served when this freedom is employed by an experienced, knowledgeable teacher, such as Mr. Smith. For a novice teacher, this freedom can be detrimental because it provides a valid excuse to bypass unfamiliar territory.

In Ms. Jones defense, she is qualified as an English teacher, and thus could not be expected to have expertise in media production While "Media education is committed to the principle of continuous change...[and] must develop in tandem with a continuously changing reality" (Masterman, 1995, www.media-awareness.ca/eng/med/class/support/mediacy/edu/masterm.htm), this is unlikely to happen so long as it is included in the English curriculum. If English teachers are considered those best fit to teach it, a probable result is that analysis will be emphasized and the production component will be limited. Consequently, the essence of the subject will be lost.

The conditions for best practice are not in place. A benevolent interpretation would conclude that only one of the five standards outlined here is currently being addressed in New Brunswick, and even this is not being done well. This factor is the most serious impairment to the legitimacy of media education in this province because it

affects so much: teacher training, professional development and morale. In addition to their regular teaching responsibilities, best practice tells media educators to keep pace with technology and current events and assemble their own resources. With the exception of the latter, the "Advertising" unit revealed this is not being done, and therefore, opportunities to make learning relevant and contextual are being missed.

Relation to Existing Knowledge

There is little research--advocacy or empirical-- about media education in New Brunswick In fact, before I entered the classroom, my only insight into this subject was through course curricula. But curricula tell us little about classroom realities. Aside from providing a national context for New Brunswick's media education initiatives, my work captures a living example of media education in action, showcasing the strengths and weaknesses of a particular class at a particular time. This case illustrates three points: that Media Studies 120 succeeds in teaching students to think critically about media, that the teaching of Media Studies 120 does not conform to all standards of best practice, and that the external conditions that facilitate best practice are virtually absent. These findings should be interpreted with caution, for they describe one specific unit of one specific class at an urban New Brunswick high school. And although they are not easily generalized, much can be learned from their example. To me, they beget more questions and suggest avenues for future research.

Recommendations for Further Research

As each technological advance brings us closer to McLuhan's vision of the mediated world, or in his words, the "Global Village," education offers us the opportunity to enter it with our eyes open. Presently, we have much to learn. There is a dearth of empirical evidence on media education in Canada, and this impairs our ability to say conclusively what practices are or are not effective. More research needs to be completed on the daily workings of these classes, as there is little evidence about what goes on in them. The following questions arise from the findings of my study.

On the subject of cognitive development and media education, here are some suggestions for future research. How does the success of Fredericton High School in teaching students about media compare with other Media Studies 120 classes in New Brunswick? Is there a provincial baseline? A complex case study of numerous classrooms could answer these questions and provide a better idea of media education practices in this province. Another potential research question raised by my findings is as follows: Is student transfer of knowledge between classroom study and real-life scenarios related to the type and number of concepts and themes covered in class? What is the relationship between media knowledge and social activism?

Which standards of best practice have the greatest affect on student learning? Perhaps they are all equally important. However, the question is worth investigating because its answer could affect teacher training, professional development and media education budgets. Additionally, I would like to investigate the possibility of fusing the existing Broad Based Technology program with Media Studies 120. Not only would this partnership give Media Studies much needed funding and publicity, but, according to

research, it could improve media awareness in students. As noted earlier, these studies are not Canadian, and do not necessarily reflect the New Brunswick example. A local context is needed.

Finally, there is a need to better understand the relationship between support systems, such as media education networks for teachers and parents, and teacher efficacy and morale. An experimental study could resolve the importance of this issue as one group is assigned to a control condition using a support network, while the other continues their daily routine. The issue here is more about teachers' perceptions of support and whether these systems make them feel less isolated, than about any actual skills or knowledge they may receive from like-minded individuals.

In the past two years, I have come to appreciate that there is much to be learned on the subject of media education, especially as it pertains to New Brunswick. Its potential is not being realized at this time. While my research is intended as a modest contribution to its advancement in this province, it is merely a preface to the larger tome still to be written. There are many more oceans of knowledge waiting to be discovered; I hope I have provided a springboard from which other researchers can leap.

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