

THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA LITERACY  
CURRICULUM ON BODY IMAGE OF  
POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS  
IN OKLAHOMA

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Defining Media and Media Literacy .....	5
Purpose/Significance of Study .....	7
A Mediated World .....	9
Theories of Media Literacy and Body Image .....	12
Media Literacy: Two Directions .....	17
Research Questions .....	19
Overview of Research Design .....	20
Data Collection .....	23
Curriculum Design .....	24
Body Image (SATAQ-3/M) .....	28
Focus Groups and Interviews .....	30
Triangulation .....	30
Study Limitations .....	31
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	33
Media Literacy .....	33
Media Literacy Education.....	36
The Media and Body Image.....	40
The Power of the Media .....	44
Media literacy Curriculum.....	50
Theories of Adult Learning.....	53
Adult Learners and Media literacy Curriculum.....	58
Conclusions.....	60
III. METHODOLOGY .....	62
Research Paradigm: Mixed Methods .....	62
Teacher Research .....	65
Participant Selection .....	68
Methods.....	70
The Curriculum .....	71
Data Collection .....	75
Quantitative Data .....	77
Qualitative Data .....	78

Analysis of Data.....	80
Quantitative Data .....	81
Qualitative Data .....	82
Summary/Conclusions .....	83
IV. FINDINGS.....	85
Sample and Data Collection.....	85
Curriculum Implementation.....	87
Focus Groups .....	92
Interviews.....	93
Data Analysis .....	95
Part A: SATAQ-3 .....	95
Part B: Focus Groups.....	99
Part C: Interviews .....	102
Triangulation and Member Checks.....	106
Quantitative Research .....	108
Qualitative Research .....	110
Thematic Analysis .....	111
Emergent Codes .....	112
Body Image of Self and/or Other.....	114
Media Definitions: Pros and Cons .....	121
Altered Perceptions .....	125
Ethical Consideration.....	128
Implications.....	131
V. CONCLUSION.....	134
Discussion and Implications .....	134
Curriculum Theory .....	134
The Biopsychosocial Approach .....	137
Discussion.....	139
Body Image of Self and/or other .....	140
Media Definitions: Pros and Cons .....	143
Altered Perceptions.....	144
Research Questions.....	146
Question 1 .....	146
Question 2 .....	148
Question 3 .....	149
Implications.....	151
Limitations .....	153
Recommendations.....	156
Future Research .....	160
REFERENCES .....	163
APPENDICES .....	175

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 4.1: Overall Main Effect of Sex.....	97
Table 4.2: Internalization Main Effect of Sex .....	97
Table 4.3: Pressures Main Effect of Sex .....	98
Table 4.4: Information Main Effect of Sex .....	98

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
Figure 3.1: Analyst Triangulation.....	76
Figure 3.2: Methods Triangulation .....	76
Figure 4.1: Analyst Triangulation.....	89
Figure 5.1: Biopsychosocial Model for Understanding Curriculum .....	138

## CHAPTER I

### **Introduction**

A student imagines walking up to a death scene in his sharp, clean uniform with that serious, but handsome look on his face. With tiny steel tweezers, he heroically picks up the little white maggot. He quickly places it in a perfectly concocted solution, on the scene no less, and turns to the police to let them know the body has only been there a few days. After graduating with a degree in forensic science, the dream ends abruptly. This same student is overwhelmed the first time he is allowed to accompany colleagues to a real crime scene. He is surprised that they have to cover their heroic uniforms with cheap, plastic suits. He is overwhelmed by the smell, and is confused why the CSI investigators never had to wear masks. When he is told it will take 2-3 weeks to analyze the soil sample to make an accurate data prediction, he begins to realize that the reality of this job that he had always known, the reality he had fallen in love with over the flat screen television in his bedroom, was not reality at all. “We live in a society that has become a cross-referential system of culturally constructed meanings, creating a funhouse of mirror-screens...” (Hobbs, 2007, p. 6). These screens influence the way that people perceive their worlds, the meanings they attach to specific symbols, and even their own identity, individuality, and body image as individuals living in a mediated world.



One of my first graduate courses in media literacy, where I wrote the short introduction above, changed my worldview dramatically. I began to realize that people were heavily influenced by today's mediated world, both positively and negatively. This heavy influence led me to the belief that media literacy curriculum was an important component of general education. However, with my background in curriculum studies, I recognized the incremental nature of the K-12 system, and began to focus my attention on what could be done at the post-secondary level to "awaken" students to this important phenomenon. After taking a job as a college professor of psychology and sociology, I began to realize that many students entered college with false perceptions of what it means to be a forensic scientist, a doctor, or even a student. With years of mediated constructions of what it would mean to be in college, and more specifically, what it would mean to be a college student, many of my students were in for a big surprise when the fun, never-ending party of beautiful people and perfect roommates posed to them from the television screen turned into a reality of "average" beauty, overnight studying, and exhausting work nights.

As I pondered this incredible notion, I began to evaluate the media I was exposed to very differently. Like a semi-truck barreling towards me, one theme bombarded my perceptions daily: beauty. Whether I was told to "make my skin less oily," or my hair more, or simply caught myself evaluating my own body against the billboard of the young, beautiful blonde posed in her perfect bikini with a flawless body, I realized I was constantly being exposed to images of a beauty that I could never attain. What it means to be beautiful in the United States is "created" in the media from the time society puts girls in pink and boys in blue, with slogans such as "Princess Alert," and "Heart Throb"

screen-printed across the front. A study by Engeln-Maddox (2006) found that women's ideas of beauty were "...consistent with a media-supported female beauty ideal" (p. 1). I began contemplating this issue, and pondering what the impact would be if people could be more informed about the influence of the media on their own identity, particularly in terms of beauty and/or body image.

An exhaustive search of the literature revealed that the majority of research on media literacy curriculum has been aimed at K-12 students. Study after study found that indeed, media literacy can influence students' perceptions, specifically their perceptions of body image (Levine & Murnen, 2009; Simon & Wade, 2009; Damico, Fuller, & Simile, 2007). And yet, even with a massive amount of research to support the influence of media literacy curriculum on positive body image outcomes, K-12 education systems still resist the implementation of another component to their already saturated system. The rules and regulations often forced on the school systems by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) leaves little room for material that will not be on the next standardized exam. Thus, while I completely understand and vehemently agree with the need to reach our children at a young age, the current system does not appear ready for another add-in curriculum, whether or not integrated into existing structures.

Although some K-12 schools do require a small component of media literacy, most focused on the most testable, observable, or measurable portion of media literacy: media production. For example, it is not uncommon for schools to offer courses in media production, and yet, analysis of the influence of media on self and society still remains uncovered. Knowing that very few students are receiving any type of media literacy education in the K-12 system I began to wonder whether postsecondary

education could offer an outlet for these students to participate in a media literacy curriculum. A pilot study I conducted with college students in 2008-2009 found that most students were unable to define media literacy (well over half left the question blank), but of the 300 + students surveyed, 78% suggested that the media played some role in the way they felt they should look. The exact question posed was: Does the media influence the way that you perceive yourself in terms of beauty? Why or why not? This led me to wonder whether college students' perceptions of self are heavily influenced by the media. Could a curriculum aimed at teaching the core components of media literacy influence these perceptions? All of these questions began to overwhelm me as I personally explored media literacy and body image through research, literature, and personal communications.

As I pondered these questions, I quickly realized that in order to begin this endeavor, I would have to create my own curriculum, as no curriculum has been widely created and/or accepted for a college level audience to date. As a professor of psychology and sociology, I also realized the potential to easily work major themes of media literacy into the existing curriculum structure with no significant changes to coursework, topics, or curriculum of the classes. Topics common in psychology and sociology courses such as eating disorders, biopsychosocial influences on identity development, and The Age of Technology, all appeared to offer a unique opportunity to introduce a media literacy curriculum, specifically one dealing with issues of body image or satisfaction. I did recognize that I was interested in the sociocultural dimensions of body image, and not body image as a whole. Although I use the term "body image" throughout this study, note that in particular I am referring to the social, cultural, and

biological dimensions of body image as it develops through media socialization. From this starting point, my research design evolved around the initial questions that had emerged from my first experience with media literacy.

### **Defining Media and Media Literacy**

According to the National Association of Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) media, literacy, and ultimately media literacy can have multiple, and broad meanings. They attempt to help readers and educators alike by broadly defining specific components of media, media education, and media literacy ([www.namle.net](http://www.namle.net)):

- Media refers to all electronic or digital means and print or artistic visuals used to transmit messages.
- Literacy is the ability to encode and decode symbols and to synthesize and analyze messages.
- Media literacy is the ability to encode and decode the symbols transmitted via media and the ability to synthesize, analyze and produce mediated messages.
- Media education is the study of media, including ‘hands on’ experiences and media production.
- Media literacy education is the educational field dedicated to teaching the skills associated with media literacy.

Going back over one hundred years in American history, media has always existed in a variety of forms. Historically, media may have included a few local newspapers, a wanted poster, and possibly a sign or two carefully placed outside of

storefronts to draw in customers. However, today's world has changed. For better or worse, technological advances have quickly created a world overwhelmingly dominated by media. According to Jolls and Thoman (2005), "... information about the world around us comes to us not only by words on a piece of paper but more and more through the powerful images and sounds of our multi-media culture" (p. 8). People today are exposed to media in a variety of forms on a daily basis, both intentionally and unintentionally. The amount of media consumed by individuals must be considered when determining what is important for students, particularly those approaching the workforce, to learn.

Rogow and Scheibe (2004) define media literacy as "...the ability to access, analyze, critically evaluate, and produce communication in a variety of forms" (p. 1). It is important to note that media literacy includes not only the ability to produce media, but the ability to evaluate, contemplate, and explore its potential influence on viewers; something often overlooked by individuals attempting to incorporate media literacy across the curriculum. According to Postman (1985), media literacy is an important part of the responsibility of schools. He suggests that media literacy helps students to accomplish the goal of "interpreting the symbols of their culture" (p. 163).

Knowing that we consume large amounts of media, whose responsibility is it to prepare citizens to be media literate? Should media literacy be incorporated into the classroom? According to Albers and Harste (2007), "educators must be prepared to work with how messages are sent, received, and interpreted, as well as how media and technology position us as viewers and users of multimedia texts in the world" (p. 6). However, it is not only educators, but also students who must be prepared to work within

a mediated society. Today's students are more technologically literate than ever before. Some students outperform their teachers at general technological knowledge. Between students' knowledge of technology and consumption of media, educators must recognize the importance of some type of media literacy education. According to Wan (2006), "if students are to use new media to their own greatest advantage, they too must learn to creatively and critically browse, research, organize, select, and produce communication forms that use the full spectrum of literacy tools available to them" (p. 174). In addition, students must be able to understand how media is "sent, received, and interpreted," all of which may play a significant role in students' lives from occupational choice to identity development (Rogow & Scheibe, 2004, p.1).

### **Purpose/Significance of Study**

According to Kornblum (2006) in *USA Today*, the U.S. Census Bureau predicts that Americans will spend more than half of the next year engaged with some type of media. A study conducted at Ball State University's Center for Media Design found that college age students (18 to 24) consumed and/or participated in large amounts of media. In general, the study found that people were "exposed to screens..." whether television, cell phones, global positioning devices, or other electronics "for about 8.5 hours on any given day" (Stelter, 2009, para 3). Overall, the objective evidence suggests that people spend a large portion of their day involved with and/or exposed to some type of media. However, little research has been done on the way people perceive the media's influence, on body image after direct instruction in media literacy. In addition, while research

suggests that people are being exposed to media in a variety of formats on a large scale, little research has focused on the overall role it plays for the individual in terms of perceptions of self, life, other or even body satisfaction.

As the world becomes more connected, and continues to expand on the various literacies that people use daily in their attempts to inform, persuade, and educate, it is imperative that people learn how to analyze the information that they are being surrounded with daily. Tessa Jolls and Elizabeth Thoman (2008), the founder and president (respectively) of The Center for Media Literacy, suggest we should be concerned about the “high rate of consumption and the saturation of society by media” (p. 12). From video games to social networking sites, we are bombarded with media from a variety of outlets daily. This suggests we must begin to evaluate “the media’s influence on shaping perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes” (Jolls & Thoman, 2008, p. 12). Only by knowing how the media helps us construct our views can we truly gain control over these constructions. These “constructions” begin the moment we are born and begin being exposed to a media saturated world.

As noted earlier, research suggests that media literacy curriculum can significantly influence the perceptions of K-12 students. For example, Tiggemann, Wade, and Wilksch (2006) found that media literacy offers a “promising” prevention for eating disorders in adolescents. Unfortunately, the current atmosphere of the K-12 education system is not congruent with introducing new curriculum. With all the regulations put on public schools by NCLB, few schools are willing to even look at adding new curriculum. While research suggest one can prepare students for the mediated world during their K-12 years, the current state of public education makes it

difficult, if not impossible, to incorporate media literacy across the curriculum. Though reaching students while they are young would be optimal, currently, other avenues must be explored. One potential source is postsecondary education.

### **A Mediated World**

In 1964, Marshall McLuhan made the timeless statement: “the medium is the message” (p. 8). When McLuhan wrote this, the media were relatively few and simple: print, audio, and visual. However, today’s technological world is extremely complex, offering a immense variety of mediums in which students’ are exposed to messages in ways that McLuhan may have never fathomed. For example, originally coined “Project Natal,” Microsoft has created software that allows users to interact with artificial intelligence on the television screen. Wrede (2009) describes this astounding new technology noting that “combined with voice and face recognition, this takes away the controller out of the control: your full persona is represented in the system – not just your fingertip” (para 3). The student literally becomes involved physically with the technology, while simultaneously being exposed to audio, visual, somatic, and textual stimuli. In addition, these programs and their advertisers have worked hard to create an emotional element to the experience. Although this idea was originally introduced years ago, it is only now becoming a crucial element in the video game industry. Technologies that engage the participant in emotional connections introduces a new complexity to the potential influence of media, and ultimately increases the need for media literacy education.



Loftus (2005) discusses the concept of emotioneering, defining it as a technique that implements the psychological influence of emotion in game play. Project Natal, now known as “Connect,” and other technologies have used emotioneering in their attempt to allure more users, and ultimately more investors willing to pay to have their product placed, reviewed, or shown in these virtually stimulating worlds. I will never forget the first time I turned on the Connect and entered my new “workout” game. It scanned my body, and then placed an image of my virtual self-next to the image of a small, skinny “goal-self” as they described it. The game proceeded to tell me where I was too fat, where I needed more muscle tone, and what products I could use to achieve these ends. I wonder, however, who decided what my “ideal” body shape and weight was? Knowing who is producing the message and why is an important element in understanding our interaction with media. Emotioneering will continue to influence technology, and lead to even more issues of body satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) in the future. With the combination of biological, social, and psychological elements, students’ are at a greater risk than ever in terms of exposure to elements of media they are simply not prepared for. While the intended functions of this new medium may be obvious to most, the unintended consequences continue to be overlooked, and are certainly not being adequately explored with the main consumer: young people.

In addition to the exposure to and interaction with the media itself, advertisers are paying good money for spots within these games that allow them to play on the emotional, physical, and psychological vulnerability of players to push their products. While students’ may be more than prepared to use the advanced technologies of today, are they literate enough to understand the implications of the message? The full

ramifications of this type of “whole body” interaction are yet to be known. However, with the intense emotional experience the player is engaged in, the likelihood that specific elements of the game, such as the reoccurring images of the “perfect” body style for men and women could have serious implications. These ideal body images are not only portrayed by the artificial intelligence in the games, but by the avatars created by the users themselves. Avatars are self-created virtual representations of “self,” and often mimic the ideal versions of self-portrayed in the games. Finally, the ideal body image in advertisements within the games may influence the players’ body image.

I am concerned that many students in the United States are simply not informed (and thus not prepared) for the various ways media influence their lives. The way in which we understand the world has changed, just as the way in which we understand the self has changed. Without a required media literacy curriculum in our students’ secondary schools, I think it is imperative that we, as college educators, attempt to address the issue across the curriculum in order to prepare our students for a future in a mediated world. I hope to provide pedagogy, a curriculum template, or simply a foundation for those college educators interested in incorporating media literacy across the curriculum. Ultimately, by informing one generation of the potential influences of media, both positive and negative, it may be possible for them to pass this knowledge down to the next generation, whether through the home, or pressure to change the way K-12 education is designed.

As noted earlier, most of the research on the influence of media and media literacy curriculum has focused on younger populations. Therefore, studying the influence of media literacy on the body image of postsecondary students could not only

help to fill in an existing gap in the research, but encourage others to evaluate the potential of postsecondary classrooms as an outlet for media literacy education. If successful, the curriculum could potentially catch the eye of K-12 educators and policy makers looking to help students become better prepared for the real world: *The Age of Technology*.

### **Theories of Media Literacy and Body Image**

Sociology has been at the forefront of studies on media and communication for many years. “European sociologists of knowledge and mass society such as Marx, Tonnies, Simmel, Mannheim, Tarde, and Le Bon all asserted that society cannot exist without communication and that communication cannot exist without society” (Mendelsohn, 1974, p. 2). At the same time, these early theorists recognized the potential for specific types of communication to manipulate the will of man. According to Mendelsohn (1974), American sociologists were much more concerned with the potential of reciprocity between those in power and the people, and focused more specifically on the functional aspects of media. According to functionalist theory, it is important to consider that not all parts are functional for every person within a society. For example, media can have both manifest and latent functions.

Robert Merton (1957), one of the founders of functionalist theory, defines manifest functions as “...conscious motivations ...” and latent functions as “... objective consequences...” (p. 60). Manifest functions include those functions of media that the producer intended and was prepared for. Latent functions are the unintended and often unforeseen consequences of some social behavior, such as media. For example, the

intended consequences of media, or manifest functions, may include attempting to sell a product, to make a profit, to display a product or service, or even to simply provide information. However, some media also have unintentional or latent functions. The materialism and consumerism often supported in media of capitalist societies can lead to dysfunctional views of one's body, anxiety over material goods or depression over lack of goods (Engeln-Maddox, 2006). Without media literacy it is doubtful that students will understand the complexities of media, particularly when it comes to the reason the message was originally created (manifest functions) and what, if anything, actually happened as result of the message that the creator did not specifically intend (latent functions).

Jolls and Thoman (2005) note that “all media messages are constructed” (p. 25). Regardless of the authors' intentions to present reality, they are, by choosing the what, when, where, and why, ultimately presenting their own version of reality embedded with particular beliefs, values, and assumptions. Even our views of self and other may be influenced by the media. For example, consider the typical actor who portrays the “average American woman.” Are they truly a good representation of the “average” woman? Likewise, how does one filter the good from the bad? When you are bombarded with a stereotyped image daily, at what point do you begin to internalize those expectations, and hold yourself up against them (a potential latent function)? These are important topics that media literacy curriculums can address.

One particularly potent latent function of media is the perception of beauty in the United States. For many, beauty has become associated with extreme thinness. Tiggemann, Wade, and Wilksch (2006) maintain that a variety of risk factors can

increase the likelihood that someone will suffer from an eating disorder. One of those factors is “media internalization” which “refers to the extent to which an individual invests in societal ideals of size and appearance (p. 385). The emergence of pro-anorexia or “pro-ana” websites supports the theory that thinness and beauty are being correlated in Americans’ construction of the concept. Pro-anorexia websites often use the symptoms of clinical eating disorders as a guidebook for life. They encourage women, and sometimes even men, to use the symptoms of disorders such as anorexia and bulimia, outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR), to live a good, “thin” life. Notice that the “good” life is being associated with body image. According to Ahlers-Schmidt, Harshbarger, Hawkins, and Mayans, (2009), “while the websites differ in philosophy (e.g., anorexia as a disease or lifestyle choice) and opinions on recovery, all provide a place for ‘anas’ to receive support, share experiences, and offer encouragement in their pursuit of thinness” (p. 1).

“The body is an important site for the management, negotiation and development of identity/ies in advanced industrial societies” (Gavin, Riley, & Rodham, 2009, p. 348). In addition, Gavin et al (2009) suggest that this relationship between body and identity is extremely relevant when considering the relationship between individual’s actual weight and perceived or actual body size. According to Alberts, Chesley, Klein, and Kreipe (2003), “pro-ana sites are part of a largely web-based movement that supports and advises those who wish to initiate or maintain anorexia” (as cited in Gavin et al, 2009, p. 349-350). These websites are frequented by a wide variety of ages, genders, ethnicities, and others; actively promoting an idea of beauty based on thinness. Pro-anorexia websites continue to serve as one of the many media through which people construct their

views of and beauty and develop an ideal body image. “Along with photos of extremely slim models, which serve as ‘thinspiration,’ tips and instructions are published that, among other things, help one to stick to and disguise extreme diets from friends and family” (Grunswald, Rall, & Wesemann 2008, p. 96).

The idea of ‘thinspiration,’ is littered throughout internet sites, particularly those aimed at young people in the United States. Borzekowski (2010) suggests sites that promote the idea of ‘thinspiration’ encourage users to remain at dangerously low weights and states that these “...sites present very dangerous ideas and disturbing material that serve to inform and motivate users to continue behaviors in line with disordered eating and exercise behaviors,” (as cited in Williams, 2010). A study by Harper, Perry, and Thompson (2008) found that “individuals who frequented pro-eating disorder sites had higher levels of body dissatisfaction and eating disturbance ...” (p. 1). Interestingly, there was little difference between the influence of the material on pro-ana sites versus professional sites providing information on eating disorders, suggesting that simply viewing media (without potentially vital tools for analysis) associated with a thin body image can, in fact, influence an individual’s satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their own body image.

The media presents an interpretation of reality in which the “producer” or creator of the media uses a variety of formats to paint a picture of reality based on what they see, believe, think, and/or feel. In terms of the media’s functions, it can be functional and/or dysfunctional, depending on the perspective. For example, the media provides important information about current events, products, politics, and much more (manifest functions). Through media, we are able to share our world globally. Recently, Egypt showed the

world the power of the media by staging a revolution via twitter, email, Facebook, and other media. At the same time, because most media are constructions of reality, consumers may be indoctrinated with certain views or values. As Harper et al (2008) found, even informational sites can negatively influence people's perspectives when the pictures, information, or products combine with their overall media experience to encourage them to "find" a beauty associated with thinness.

Functionalist theory suggests that the human condition must be considered when evaluating the influence of media on consumers. When discussing functionalist thought on media messages, Mendelsohn (1974) explains individual responses by suggesting that:

He [the consumer] avoids most of them [the messages], ignores many more of them, and transforms only minute numbers of them into stimuli in accordance with his own personal situation, background, experience, needs, wants, and expectations. In this process, the signs that first appear as overt content may or may not remain congruent with what was originally intended by the communicator or with what a third-party observer thinks he sees. (p. 7)

Mendelsohn is suggesting that through awareness one is able to "control" the message(s) consumed and/or ignored, thereby introducing the possibility that knowledge, such as the tools that could be obtained in a media literacy curriculum, may play a role in people's ability to filter the information they are receiving daily through a variety of media outlets.

In terms of understanding individual experiences with media, it is important to evaluate the potential biological, psychological, and even sociological influences. Simply generalizing a single response would not be sufficient to understand the complex reality of media influence. One must consider an in-depth exploration of the meanings

individuals derive from specific media experiences. A biopsychosocial understanding can be important, as the intricacies of media influence are great. Biologically, we may “feel” physically alienated by the images we are exposed to, or even seek biological changes through surgery, Botox, and other methods of body modification.

Psychologically, as mentioned, body image or a satisfaction or dissatisfaction with oneself can be influenced by the way one interprets media. Socially, we either accept or reject our society’s ideal image. In addition, society defines that ideal image through the type of media consumed, and ultimately by how much time and energy is spent on informing citizens about the manifest and latent functions of media.

### **Media Literacy: Two Directions**

Harmful latent functions, such as damaging views of self, must be recognized and considered when preparing a media literacy curriculum. However, as consumers and producers of media, it is important for students to consider the potential positive and negative functions of media in society. Understanding both the overt and covert functions of media can be essential when attempting to gain a deeper understanding of the way that people experience media in their own lives. However, a historical trend has been a dichotomous view of media in which one group attempts to “inoculate” members of society from media, while the other sides suggest that media offers, at least to some extent, positive implications that can be neither overturned nor ignored.

Some theorists today take an inoculation approach to media. That is, they suggest that the media is detrimental, and therefore, we must “inoculate” our youth in order to protect them. For example, a study of media literacy education in Asian countries by



Cheung (2009) suggests that “a negative impression of the media persists...” and people can “often be heard to asserting that the media represent one of the most disruptive and destructive forces in society” (p. 49). In addition, Cheung notes that most of the earliest Asian media literacy education programs revolve around this theme, that is, that the media is all bad and we must protect and/or inoculate our populace from it, and many still do. Introduced by McGuire in the 1960’s, inoculation theory suggests that people’s beliefs, values, and attitudes can be inoculated against communications directed at them by the media. According to Breen and Matusitz (2009), “As the theory developed, it became more elaborately defined as a method of fortifying existing attitudes to decline persuasive communications before those messages generated and presented themselves to the recipient(s)” (para 6).

This argument is certainly not new, and definitely not over. Kline, Murphy, and Stewart (2006) suggest that “pedagogy of resistance” to media began early in the history of media literacy. In fact, as early as 1933 “Leavis and Thomson proposed a prophylactic ... pedagogy that would teach the masses to better discriminate culture tastes and resist the commercial rhetoric of popular culture” (as cited in Kline, et al, 2006, p. 133). In the United States, “...American progressives rallied public support in the USA, helping to launch the Public Broadcast System as a counterweight to mass ignorance” (Kline, Murphy, & Stewart, p. 133). The inoculation approach would suggest a media literacy curriculum that helped the individual develop “immunity” towards all media, taking a cautious and somewhat negative view of all media forms.

Basically, media literacy is being pulled in two distinct directions. First, by those who support an inoculation theoretical view, and second, by those that focus on the more

positive aspects of media, such as cultural studies theorists. Cultural studies theorists, such as Buckingham (1991) and Masterman (1985) focus more on the positive potential of media. Buckingham discusses the notion of the “active participant,” claiming that we must recognize that children do not passively consume media, but are, in fact, active consumers. This “consumerism” must be considered when developing appropriate media literacy curriculum. Masterman (1995), as part of the Media Awareness Network, suggests that

The central unifying concept of media education is that of representation. The media mediate. They do not reflect reality but re-present it. The media are symbolic or sign systems. Without this principle, no media education is possible - everything else flows from it. (n.p)

Unlike inoculation approaches, neither Masterman nor Buckingham suggest we should inoculate ourselves from media, avoid it, nor see it as a fundamentally flawed or negative component of society. Instead, they suggest we recognize media’s important presence in our society, knowing that they are not presenting reality, but a version of reality that must be interpreted through our own awareness, experiences, and knowledge. Thus, media literacy education is meant to help individuals become more active in their interaction with media instead of more suspicious.

### **Research Questions**

As a college educator, I hope to improve the effectiveness of my long term impact on social science students by incorporating a media literacy program into the curriculum. I suggest that the social science curriculum is a natural setting for media literacy, as

topics ranging from eating disorders to terrorism are confronted on a daily basis.

However, no research has been conducted in this area. I conducted a study that attempts to answer the question: how can college students taking social science courses benefit from an integrated curriculum? In this case, by integrated curriculum, I mean a curriculum in which media literacy is incorporated into the coursework. However, for the purposes of my dissertation, this question had to be narrowed. Therefore, while sticking with my original intent to incorporate a media literacy curriculum into the social science classroom, I evaluated my own perspective on the media and media literacy, and decided to narrow that intent to a curriculum aimed at a specific portion of media influence: body image. With this more specific direction in mind, the questions that emerged include:

- 1. Are students' perceptions of body image influenced by the media, and are they aware of these influences?*
- 2. Can a media literacy curriculum, aimed at informing students about the major issues of media literacy, particularly issues concerning body image, influence students' overall perspectives on the media's influence on body image?*
- 3. What information, outside of issues specific to body image, will students retain about media literacy and the influence of media on their lives after being exposed to a unit of media literacy curriculum?*

### **Overview of Research Design**

The convergence of media and technology in a global culture is changing the way we learn about the world and challenging the very foundations of education. No

longer is it enough to be able to read the printed word: children, youth, and adults, too, need the ability to both critically interpret the powerful images of a multimedia culture and express themselves in multiple media forms. (Jolls & Thoman, 2008, p. 6)

This is the idea behind the curriculum I implemented. That is, I felt I needed to help students “critically interpret” the media they are exposed to daily. Like Masterman, I believe that media literacy is a critical component to successfully living in a mediated culture. We do not have to inoculate ourselves, cutting ourselves off from the media around us; however, it is imperative that we learn how to analyze it.

Using a mixed methods approach, this study offers a different take on the traditional teacher research. Mixed methods allowed for an accumulation of in-depth analysis of qualitative research and the statistical validity of quantitative studies. However, mixed methods are much more than simply combining the two approaches. Mixed methods offered a compelling research plan to study this topic, allowing for great depth and detail. I was able to gain a better idea of the influence of media literacy on body image using mixed methods than either method alone would have allowed. The sample for my study included college students from a four-year college in northeastern Oklahoma (University Blue) for whom I currently teach psychology and sociology courses. The sample included students taking social science courses in the Spring of 2011 who were willing to participate in the research.

This study is based on a basic interpretive research design. Merriam (2002) suggests “learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world, the meaning it has for them, is considered an *interpretive* ... approach” (p. 4). Because I am

interested in how students come to define their own body as satisfactory or dissatisfactory based on media, the interpretive approach is appropriate. Although researchers have for many years used triangulation of qualitative or quantitative methods in their research, the field becomes somewhat cloudy when one suggests using a mixed-methods design. Niglas (2004) suggests that mixed methods are “designs where elements of quantitative and qualitative approach are combined in various ways within different phases of the study” (p. 11). He goes on to suggest that “there is a lack of terminological and even conceptual clarity and coherence: we can find many different labels for the same ideas; at the same time, authors use the same terms in different meanings” (p.11).

I use a mixed methods approach in which qualitative methods, in addition to the quantitative data provided by the SATAQ-3, helped to provide a better picture of the overall influence of media literacy curriculum on the body image of students in the social science classroom. I agree with Niglas (2004) who states that “the practice of educational research benefits from both broad methodological approaches and can be enhanced if qualitative and quantitative methods will be taken as complementary ways of studying educational phenomena and not as mutually exclusive paradigms (p. 18). I believe that the mixed methods design of this study helped the research to gain an in-depth understanding of how media literacy can be effectively integrated into the curriculum, and how media literacy may influence the way students perceive media in their own lives. I believe it was through the interaction of individuals with the media curriculum that meaning was constructed, or more accurately, reconstructed. In addition, the statistical analysis of pre and posttest attitudes towards appearance was evaluated in light of the data obtained through interviews and focus groups. Therefore, a mixed

method approach offered the best way to attempt to understand what it means to integrate a media literacy curriculum within the social science framework of post-secondary education.

According to Merriam (2002), qualitative methods should be used when the “...researcher is interested in understanding the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved” (p. 37). As I interpreted the results of the information obtained, both qualitatively and quantitatively, pre and post media literacy curriculum, it was important to focus on understanding what meaning it had for the students in the social science classroom. As the participants interacted with the new curriculum, it is likely that they will have constructed new meanings as they attempted to make sense of their lives in accordance with the new information provided to them. Using interpretive qualitative research I will attempted to “...uncover and interpret those meanings” (Merriam, p. 39). However, I believe the use of the SATAQ-3, a Likert-scale that has been validated over many years, offered depth to this study, and ultimately enhanced my ability to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

### **Data Collection**

I, the researcher, will be the primary instrument of data collection. Using an interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and at times, observations, I collected the data needed to answer my research questions. I am a relatively young college professor, and must not only prove myself to my colleagues, but oftentimes to my students as well. I did not open my first email account until 2000. I was, at that point, barely technologically literate, and certainly not media literate. In fact, I was quickly pulled in

by credit card ads claiming “free money,” and further tempted by beauty supplies that required only a credit card! I signed up for every card they offered, and quickly became an 18 year old in debt. I have been blown away by the rate in which media has become a dominant part of our society. In fact, I am often amazed by my own students’ abilities to produce and work the technological aspects of various types of media when compared with my personal skills. However, too often, I see students and teachers alike equate technological savvy with being media literate. Being able to access the internet on an I-phone, or quickly navigate the latest video game, in no way prepares the student for the potential biopsychosocial ramifications of the 5’ 10” model that shows up on the screen to encourage him or her to buy the latest accessories. There is a real difference between being technologically literate (which most of today’s students are) and having the skills to navigate the various media/mediums students’ are exposed to daily.

### **Curriculum Design**

One of the major obstacles to this research was the lack of college-level media literacy curriculum. Jolls and Thoman (2008) suggest that media literacy is a necessity in today’s culture and that “...it paves the way to mastering the skills required for lifelong learning in a constantly changing world” (p. 6). This is a huge undertaking, with serious ramifications for the future of college students; students who were unlikely introduced to media literacy in any other format. In personal communications with Tessa Jolls, the President of the Center for Media Literacy, I obtained permission to use the Five Key Questions, Core Concepts, and K-12 curriculum to develop a curriculum aimed at college level students (Appendix G).

Although there is a variety of media literacy curriculums created and designed for K-12 students, I had a difficult time finding any media literacy curriculum aimed at adults and more specifically, focused on body image. Careful research of the literature found that a variety of significant studies on media literacy curriculum were using the curriculum created by and offered to educators and researchers by Jolls and Thoman from the CML. In addition, the National Association of Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) offered a plethora of information and guidelines to consider when creating media literacy curriculum. After reviewing the curriculum already available to me, I determined that I could use the “five key questions” and “five core concepts” of media literacy, as presented by the CML, to create a curriculum that could quickly introduce media literacy to the students, and still allow time for me to introduce issues of body image in relation to the media. I was pleasantly surprised with Tessa Jolls, President and CEO of the Center for Media Literacy, who immediately gave me permission to adapt the concepts, questions, and curriculum for postsecondary students, was also willing to correspond about the curriculum, and ultimately offered to review when completed.

In order to get to the core of my question, body image, I had to develop a curriculum that would not only represent the major components of a good media literacy curriculum, but one that tied in nicely with the curriculum already required in the social science curriculum. It is my belief that media literacy should be incorporated across the curriculum. At the heart of media literacy education is “...basic higher-order critical and creative thinking skills [such as] knowing how to identify key concepts, how to make connections between multiple ideas, how to ask pertinent questions, formulate a response, identify fallacies...” and ultimately become a more able and active citizen (Jolls &



Thoman, 2008, p. 8). Jolls and Thoman (2008) also point out that the education of the past focused on concept learning and/or simply memorizing key facts. Unfortunately, in today's world, where most "conceptual" information is available at the touch of a button, this type of learning is simply no longer relevant. Thus, as Paulo Freire (1970/2003) would call it, the "banking model" of education, in which teachers simply deposit information into student repositories, does not adequately compare to the potential educational models available today. Thus, any curriculum I developed could not simply involve having students memorize the key questions of media literacy, or it would be doomed to failure. Using the advice and curriculum of Thoman and Jolls, as well as the literature available on adult learning and body image studies, I attempted to create a curriculum that shaped the classroom into "...a gathering place for students ...[a place] to explore, to question, to experiment, to discover" (p. 9).

During two years of teaching social science courses, I conducted a pilot study of used an open and closed-ended questionnaire to obtain information about their views concerning media and media literacy. Over this two year period, I obtained 380 pre/posttests that were valuable for data analysis. The general demographics of the sample were representative of the school from which the sample was taken; a four year college in northeastern Oklahoma. Since the social science curriculum naturally covers major issues pertaining to media, without specifically acknowledging issues of media influence, I was interested in whether the students were impacted by these subtle lessons. In particular, the pilot study was conducted to determine at what level students are currently informed about media to help in the creation of media literacy curriculum that was pertinent and interesting. In addition, the survey assessed what methods of delivery

students preferred. In order to obtain more details, I expanded my pilot study to include several personal interviews and focus groups. These studies provided distinct insight into the questions and techniques I used in my research design, as well as methods used when creating the curriculum. By combining the results of this pilot study with the literature and advice of the CML, I was able to create a curriculum specifically designed to engage and actively invite students' to analyze their perceptions of the media, and in particular, the media's influence on body image (Appendices F1 – F17).

Using a variety of fun, interactive activities I created a media literacy curriculum aimed specifically at postsecondary students. First, using a colorful PowerPoint, a format indicated as preferred in the pilot study, I offer students the opportunity to participate in “fact” game related to their favorite products from “All” to “Zest.” Comparing their results of the “advertiser’s alphabet” to their knowledge of state politics, I introduced the terms media and media literacy, terms that I had discovered through preliminary research that many college students could not define. Next, I helped the students explore the core questions and concepts of media literacy in an attempt to help them solidify their understanding of the term. Finally, I spent the remaining time connecting the curriculum with their sociology and psychology courses, by evaluating the influence of media on body image. The curriculum consists of handouts, facilitator notes with corresponding PowerPoint’s, and vivid discussion sessions. Although the curriculum was only approximately one hour in length, the participants were given the opportunity to learn a lot about media literacy in a short period of time. In addition, they were able to take the handouts home, giving them an additional opportunity to explore the concepts presented. I waited around seven days before asking the students to complete the SATAQ-3/M after

the curriculum. I did this to give the students time to internalize the concepts, and hopefully run into situations in their own lives for which the concepts applied.

### **Body Image (SATAQ-3/M)**

The quantitative data involves the use of the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Scale-3 (SATAQ-3). This Likert-scale was given both before and after the introduction of the media literacy curriculum. The authors give users permission to use and publish the scale in non-profit research and work (Appendices D1/D2). Likert scales are based on a 1 through 5 response system as follows:

1= Definitely Disagree

2= Mostly Disagree

3= Neither Agree nor Disagree

4= Mostly Agree

5= Definitely Agree

The introduction of the curriculum involved students from a variety of social sciences courses on campus. Each group of participants received approximately one hour of direct instruction using the media literacy curriculum I designed. Each group was introduced to the curriculum as an integrated portion of a traditional lesson plan from either the psychology or sociology curriculum. The curriculum was designed to seamlessly correspond to the already required curriculum in social science courses at University Blue. The topic of social and psychological influences on identity development and self-esteem was the “corresponding” topic chosen for these sessions.

That SATAQ-3 is a revision of two former Likert scales created by Hinberg and Thompson (1995/1999). In addition to an overall view of the participant's attitude towards appearance, the questionnaire offers four subscales. Looking at the scale, it has four subscales that assess internalization (general, athlete), pressures, and information. The questionnaire has been used by numerous authors to study a variety of populations. Tiggemann, Wade, and Wilksch (2006) used the SATAQ-3 to measure the influence of a media literacy curriculum on young adolescents. Calogero, Davis and Thompson (2005) used the scale to measure the internalization of media pressures on those who suffer from eating disorders. Although the scale was originally designed for females only, a variety of authors, including Wilksch et al (2006) have used a simple revision of the scale that corresponds and can be measured directly with the original in male populations. The minor changes involve wording. For example, the word "pretty" was replaced with the word "handsome." I similarly used this version of the scale with male participants. This scale was denoted from the female questionnaire by the addition of an "M," (SATAQ-3M). Throughout this study, when referring to the scale as a whole, that is, as it was used for both male and female participants, I will use the acronym "SATAQ-3/M." In order to evaluate the potential influence of media literacy curriculum on postsecondary students, I administered the SATAQ-3/M (Appendices D1/D2) before the introduction of the curriculum, and then approximately seven days after the curriculum.

## **Focus Groups and Interviews**

In addition to obtaining data concerning students' attitudes towards appearance using the SATAQ-3, I conducted three focus groups designed to obtain more socially embedded information about students' perceptions of self, as influenced by the media. These focus groups consisted of 8, 9 and 5 students, and were designed to last approximately one-hour each. In order to gain a more individualized perspective, I interviewed three students. One was a young, black male who plays basketball for University Blue. The second interviewee was a 19-year old white female who has a four-year old child who she is supporting on her own. The third interviewee was in her 30's with a teenager daughter, and considered herself Native American.

### **Triangulation**

In order to increase the reliability and validity of my study, I used member checks and triangulation. Triangulation, as defined by Karner and Warren (2010), is "...the use of different kinds of data and methods to 'capture' the analysis" (p. 8). This was achieved by using questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews to collect data. I also used triangulated member checks, checking my analysis of the data with three different sources. First and foremost I listened to, read, and transcribed the data. After initial coding and thematic analysis, I sent the transcripts, my coding, and the thematic analysis to the participants of the focus groups and interviews, as well as an Associate Professor of Experimental Psychology. The participants were encouraged to read the transcripts, and then evaluate those transcripts in relation to my conceptual coding and related definitions, concepts, and correlations. Because these students were undergraduates, I provided them with a website that included a short, but detailed video on Bryman's four-

step process for coding qualitative research. The Associate Professor of Experimental Psychology was similarly asked to evaluate the transcripts and coding hierarchy. Upon receiving feedback, I was able to narrow and refine my codes, and consider new conceptual ideas. Before updating the data based on member checks, all of the members were invited to a final meeting in which the coding categories, themes, and concept correlations were discussed, evaluated, and ultimately finalized. At this meeting we discussed, in detail, any questions, comments or concerns pertaining to the data and its representation in my research. This meeting will be explored in greater detail under data analysis in Chapter III.

### **Study Limitations**

As I mentioned, this is a mixed methods research project, with a valuable twist; it is also teacher research. According to Parsons (2011) of San Jose State University, teacher research offers some unique limitations of its own. Parsons offers various examples and definitions of teacher research such as “educators who wish to undertake research in their classrooms or schools for the purpose of improving teaching, to test educational theory, or to evaluate and implement an educational plan” (n.p.). Ultimately, my intention is to research a specific curriculum in my field of study, within the department at the university for whom I work. This qualifies as teacher research, specifically because I hope to not only improve teaching, but to “evaluate and implement an educational plan” (n.p.). One of the major limitations, as outlined by Parsons, is that my role is to teach, and thus, I could not do anything that put teaching nor the teacher/student relationship in jeopardy. It certainly would have been easier to simply

access all of my own students, but I had to limit my population due to the potential of influence the student/teacher relationship. Therefore, it was not possible to obtain a random sample.

Parsons also mentions the need to offer research that is congruent with the majority of members in one's educational community. Unfortunately, qualitative research, particularly in the field of psychology, is not widely accepted. It was important that I provided ample evidence of the importance of my mixed methods design in order for the department at University Blue to accept the research as valid and worthwhile. In addition, because the participants are college students, it was hard to offer reciprocity as their time is often consumed by work, friends, and of course, school. Any type of incentive, such as bonus points or rewards, could have been interpreted as "favoritism." Therefore, it was important that I provided as much intrinsic motivation or internal incentives as possible to participate. It is much harder to convince a student that spending an hour discussing media literacy is intrinsically worthwhile than using an external reward, such as money, to encourage participation.

Although I use a quantitative method in my study, it was used as a part of a mixed methods design to allow for greater depth and understanding, not for statistical significance. Therefore, without random sampling, controlling for potential intervening variables, and a non-representative sample, I cannot generalize to the larger population. It is my hope that this study will serve as a template for larger studies in the future, allowing for more generalizability.

## CHAPTER II

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Chapter I briefly discussed media consumption in society, suggesting a continual increase in the amount of interaction with, and ultimately the influence of media in our lives. While most studies of media literacy curriculum have focused on K-12 students, little has been done in terms of implementing media literacy on a mass scale. Thus, without a nationwide media literacy curriculum in K-12 or postsecondary education, students are entering college, and ultimately the workforce, without the foundation in media literacy that may be necessary to become productive, intelligent, healthy, and active citizens in the American democracy (Jolls & Thoman, 2009). This chapter explores the foundations of media education as well as the power dynamics within the system and its potential implications. Next, this chapter provides a foundation for understanding media literacy curriculum and presents adult theory of significant learning as it applies to the development and understanding of media literacy curriculum.

#### **Media Literacy**

According to Wan (2006), "...media literacy refers to the understanding of media and the use of it as a source of information, entertainment, enrichment, growth, empowerment, and communication" (p. 179).



Media literacy has developed in response to an increasingly mediated world that is rapidly changing. As early as the 1970's, media literacy education programs were being developed in an attempt to help people begin to understand the ever-increasing mediated world (Hobbs, 1998). It is doubtful, at the time, they had any idea how quickly media would revolutionize the world. Jolls, Thoman & Share (2007) note:

With the growth of the internet and its web of interconnections with television, videos and DVDs, advertising, music, newspapers, magazines, books – and even personal communication through email, cell phones and instant messaging – knowledge and information has changed in major ways. (p. 4)

And yet, amongst the mounds of evidence, many people still fail to recognize these changes. In an enlightening statement, Lewis (2003) notes that “likened to the classic metaphor of fish being unaware that they are wet because they are surrounded by water, we are so immersed in a mediated culture that we fail to understand its effects” (p. 24).

This is a powerful and frighteningly true statement. The Center for Media Literacy notes that the United States still falls behind in understanding and implementing media literacy across the board. “Although media literacy education is only just now beginning to spread in the United States, it has been a required part of the school curriculum in Canada for some time now” (Expanding the Definition of Literacy, CML).

Although we have a great deal of literature on media literacy and its positive effects, we have few schools implementing any media literacy curricula, and no national mandates requiring comprehensive nor interdisciplinary media literacy training. In the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, words like “mandate” scare potential supporters of a media literacy curriculum, no matter how well researched, and sometimes

even creates negative feelings towards any “intruder.” However, as noted by Jolls, Thoman and Share (2007), “...the need of the educated citizen of tomorrow is not to acquire yet more content but to develop and internalize a coherent and consistent process for analyzing content and managing information” (p. 4). Unfortunately, this is not currently the focus of K-12 curriculum. According to the National Education Goals Panel, a government sanctioned group given the task of evaluating national education goals, we must focus on raising the achievement scores of students, particularly in math and science (NEGP). Much of NCLB also focuses on this imaginary “achievement” number tied to the outcomes of various standardized tests. This is a far cry from preparing a citizen for a world based in technology. Toffler states: “The illiterate of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn” (As cited in Jolls & Thoman, 2007, p. 7). The point is that the traditional ideas of learning have changed in The Age of Technology. It is much less important to memorize dates, times, and definitions, and much more pertinent to be able to quickly access those dates, times, and definitions on a variety of technological devices, and ultimately use that information critically and creatively.

Supporters of media literacy are attempting to convey the seriousness of teaching our future generations how to navigate the mediated world in which we live. Toffler’s statement is similar to the social constructionist notion that we must continuously evaluate and reevaluate our notions of truth in order to replace them with better definitions, with notions closer to the truth. The only way to do this is to have the skills to analyze and evaluate the knowledge (media) we are confronted with daily.

## **Media Literacy Education**

Literacy, to most, refers to reading or being literate. Therefore, when used with the term “media,” literacy assumes the meaning of being literate about media. From media production to media analysis, media literacy refers to the broad spectrum of literacies associated with the various media we are confronted with in our society. Recent research has found that an increasing number of children are spending more time involved with the media than in traditional classrooms. Kline, Murphy, and Stewart (2006) found that children spend as much time in front of the television as they do in their formal classrooms. There is little argument that people are consumed by media; however, it will require great debate and conclusive evidence to push the nation towards a curriculum centered on media literacy.

According to an article by Kornblum (2006) in *USA Today*, the U.S. Census Bureau predicts that Americans will spend more than half of the next year engaged in some type of media. In fact, “...by the time a student graduates from high school, they have spent considerably more time watching television than they spent in the classroom” (Arden, 2003, p. 32). Research shows that most Americans are consuming media in large quantities and on a daily basis. However, knowing that people are consuming media is not enough. Researchers are also interested in how media consumption influences these individuals. According to Wan (2006), “virtually all we know about the world beyond our immediate experience comes to us through mass media, TV, radio, internet, etc.” (p. 174). Wan goes on to note that this is not necessarily a bad thing. For example, we are now able to obtain more information and at a faster speed than ever before in history. However, we are receiving a version of reality presented by those in charge of the

medium. It becomes important, then, for us as a society to understand and recognize this presentation of reality. At the very least, this knowledge should help inform our own definitions.

Recognizing that most media is simply the creator's version of reality, it is pertinent then to consider the reason the media is being presented. For example, a newscast that is backed financially by a political activist for the oil industry may have a very different take on stories related to that industry than other mediums. The knowledge that individuals have in terms of how media is created, produced, implemented, or even how media consumption may affect them must be taken into consideration when one is researching the potential effects of media consumption.

Should classrooms include a critical examination of media? According to Albers and Harste (2007), "educators must be prepared to work with how messages are sent, received, and interpreted, as well as how media and technology position us as viewers and users of multimedia texts in the world" (p. 6). There is no question that today's generation is more technologically literate than ever before. Some students outperform their teachers at general technological knowledge. In addition, students are spending nearly "6.5 hours a day with media" (Wan, 2006, p. 174). Between students' knowledge of technology/media and consumption levels, educators and policy makers must recognize the importance of some type of media literacy education. According to Wan (2006), "if students are to use new media to their own greatest advantage, they too must learn to creatively and critically browse, research, organize, select, and produce communication forms that use the full spectrum of literacy tools available to them" (p. 174). Therefore, media production is an important component of a comprehensive media

literacy program. Unfortunately, if they are not also taught how to critically examine, analyze, and evaluate that media, students are still seriously lacking in the skills needed to live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Many of the individuals interested in media literacy today are taking part in a controversy over the approach educators should take to incorporate media literacy into the curriculum. According to Kline, Murphy, and Stewart (2006), "...media literacy prompts an increasingly divisive debate between educators who wish to protect children from the commercialization of global markets and those who challenge critical media studies as misguided, outdated, and ineffective" (p. 131). And yet, some propose that a middle ground can be established in which the positive and negative aspects of the media can be explored in a way that informs, intrigues, and entertains students.

There are still opponents of media literacy education. Some rely on the overloaded secondary curriculum to suggest that teachers simply do not have the time or the "place," to incorporate a media literacy curriculum. However, research on media literacy suggests that one does not have to necessarily formulate a new, and separate media literacy curriculum in order for it to be successful; but instead, media literacy can be incorporated throughout the curriculum during regular lessons. In addition, other educational formats, such as the college classroom, can be considered as effective formats for media literacy curriculum integration. According to Frost and Hobbs (2003), "...media literacy instruction improves students' ability to identify main ideas in written, audio, and visual media" (p. 331). Identifying main ideas in various formats is a skill that is valuable and can be incorporated across the curriculum. Whether students are in an English class or evaluating a historical document, the skills learned from media literacy

education can be valuable. In addition, these skills need not be limited to a media literacy classroom. Students can be taught media literacy while discussing a famous literary piece, or while evaluating the ethics of new scientific procedures.

Research on media literacy education to date suggests that it can be extremely successful in increasing the literacy of young children and adults. Frost and Hobbs (2003) had students participate in a yearlong study in which they incorporated critical media analysis of print, audio, and visual texts. They found that media literacy instruction improves students' abilities to identify main ideas in written, audio, and visual formats. Statistically significant differences were found for writing quantity, quality, and ability to identify the purpose, target audience, point of view, and identify omitted information from a variety of formats. Frost and Hobbs have conducted one of the only large-scale statistical studies on incorporating media literacy into the classroom. However, other researchers have found similar results using qualitative methods. According to Kline, Murphy, and Steward (2006), "...an encouraging body of evidence indicates that media literacy initiatives can help students make informed and responsible lifestyle choices about risky products such as cigarettes and alcohol are also highly effective" (p. 139). Although few studies exist on exclusively "adult" populations, the correlation between high school students and those students entering postsecondary education, in terms of media consumption, and the importance of media literacy is significant.

## **The Media and Body Image**

As a professor of social science, I have witnessed a common theme emerge across the curriculum: body image. Issues relating to body image, from eating disorders to social anxiety disorders are on the rise, and continue to be perpetuated by various media exposing generation after generation to an “ideal” body type that is, in many cases, unattainable. Tiggemann, Wade, and Wilksch (2006) found that “media internalization...has been shown to be a causal risk factor for body dissatisfaction, dieting, negative affect, binge eating, and increases in eating disorder symptoms” (. 385). Numerous studies have suggested that media now plays a major role in the socialization process, replacing many traditional socialization agents, thus leaving the individual to develop major psychological concepts, such as self-esteem and self-concept through the big screen (Anderson, 2001; Arden, 2003; Berry, 1998; Buckingham, 1993; Rasmussen, 1998; Stroman, 1991). Unfortunately, most media creators are invested in their business, not their societal implications, therefore, extremely thin women and tall, dark, and muscled men continue to grace the pages of our televisions, newspapers ads, and billboards. These images, as part of the socialization process, can lead to an unattainable ideal of beauty, and ultimately dissatisfactions of one’s own body. The idea that the most commonly displayed body type is just a myth may seem far-fetched, however, as Tavaris and Wade (2008) point out:

Evolution has designed women to store fat, which is necessary for healthy menstruation, healthy childbearing, nursing, and after menopause, the production and storage of estrogen. In cultures that think women should be very thin,

therefore, many women become obsessed with weight and are continually dieting, forever fighting their bodies' need for a little healthy roundness. (p. 446)

In addition to biological issues of fat storage and set point, most, if not all of the images seen on various media sites are doctored and/or altered with photo shop or another type of alteration program. Although hard to find, viewing the before and after pictures of your favorite celebrity can be quite revealing. Stars themselves have requested being photographed without such alterations. According to “W” magazine, Brad Pitt personally requested a photo shoot with absolutely no alternation, regarding the doctoring as dishonest ([www.wmagazine.com](http://www.wmagazine.com)). However, he is one of the brave, and few, willing to show their flaws. Some stars do not even recognize themselves, such as famous tennis player Andy Roddick. Roddick noted on his personal blog that he was surprised by the image of himself on the cover of “Men’s” magazine. Although in great shape, they increased his muscle mass, removed a birth mark, and gave him a tan (Sklar, 2007, np).

Type in “before and after Photoshop” into the [www.bing.com](http://www.bing.com) search engine, and you’ll be bombarded with images, both celebrity and not, showing the power of the “pen.” From breast enlargement, to waste restricting, photos can be manipulated in a variety of ways. Take the image below of a “common” American girl before and after Photoshop:





Although somewhat hard to see in this small, black/white copy, the original photo clearly shows facial features, skin tone, and even breast size being manipulated, in addition to the most obvious change; her waistline. In many of the before and after photos of older celebrities, you can see very “natural” (or at least biological) signs of aging; such as circles under the eyes, lines around the mouth and cheeks, and skin tone inconsistencies. And yet, they are all removed before the photo is sent to printing, giving the average consumer the perception that these very natural signs of aging either do not exist or can be eradicated. This false perception of perfection is something that should be addressed with students growing up in a mediated world. With the rise of anorexia and other eating disorders, not introducing media literacy may be more dangerous than we could have expected (Tiggemann, Wade, & Wilksch, 2006).

Some might ask, however, do these images really matter in terms of the way men and women process beauty, particularly their own self-image? Research suggests: absolutely! In a recent experimental study by Beckerley, Mahler, and Vogel (2010), the researchers attempted to discover whether media exposure to certain beauty regimens could actually increase risky behavior in participants. The researchers found that when viewers were exposed to models with tanned skin from a variety of fashion and beauty magazines, their attitudes towards tanning became significantly more positive, and they were ultimately more likely to want to have tanned skin. Regardless of research suggesting that both direct sun exposure and tanning beds can increase the risk of cancer, the ads persuaded the participants that tanning was a safe and viable option for “beauty.” Thus, when one considers the relativist belief that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder,”

it may be pertinent to note that the creation of beauty is often the byproduct of the latest product campaign!

Research has found significant relationships between media consumption and issues of body image in regards to both males and females (Shoger, 2008). Body image dissatisfaction (BID), a term commonly used in this area of research, is found to be directly correlated to women's level of consumption of media that covertly or overtly encourages thinness (Buunk, Dalley & Umit, 2009). In fact, a search of body image and media on any major journal site will provide hundreds of examples of studies examining the influence of media on body image. Although one will certainly find various mediating factors, from psychological health to age that may increase or decrease the influence of media on body image, one finding remains the same: men and women are influenced by the way the media portrays the "ideal" body image (Barlett, Saucier, & Vowells, 2008; Dittmar, 2009; Good & Roberts, 2010; Levin & Murnen, 2009; Shoger, 2010).

Knowing that we construct an ideal of beauty is only half the battle. If we help people understand how to analyze and critically evaluate media influences, particularly in terms of our perceptions of beauty, it may be possible to "inoculate" them from the potentially harmful influence of body image distortion. For example, it is likely that our perceptions of beauty are influenced by familiarity (Tavris & Wade, 2008). Tavris and Wade (2008) define the familiarity effect as "... the tendency to hold positive attitudes towards familiar people or things..." (p. 289). Thus, if the same tall, ultra slim woman and man with unrealistic abdominal muscles and skin tone are used constantly to sell products, entertain, and promote, it is likely that consumers will begin to familiarize

themselves with that body style as the traditional or most desirable. Thus, familiarity is part of the socialization process, and part of the way we construct our ideal of beauty. Another potential influence is the validity effect. The validity effect refers to “the tendency of people to believe that something is true simply because it has been repeated many times” (Tavris & Wade, p. 289). Both of these effects are very powerful at influencing our constructions or definitions related to beauty. For example, the familiarity effect is so powerful, that even exposing people to a nonsensical term, researchers were able to lead people towards acceptance and positive feelings associated with the term. A study by Zajonc (1968) found that repeated exposure to the nonsensical syllable “zug” ultimately led to a correlation between the term and positive feelings of participants (As cited in Tavris & Wade, 2008, p. 289). Likewise, the validity effect is so significant in the way we create definitions that Hitler’s right hand man, Joseph Goebbels, renamed the technique “The Big Lie.” Can you remember a time when you thought, “If I hear that commercial one more time....” and yet, you knew every word? Marketing experts use psychological techniques such as these in their campaigns to sell products. While their outward intentions or manifest functions, as Robert Merton would call them, may be just, and a key component to a free democracy, the unintended consequences or latent functions, such as encouraging an unattainable body image, are often overlooked.

### **The Power of the Media**

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1970/2007) describes a “banking model” of education in which educators make deposits of information that they have

determined as valuable, and expect collective absorption. According to Freire (1970/2007),

A pedagogy ... must be forged with, not for, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity. This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation. (p. 48)

Freire's revolutionary desire to include the oppressed in their struggles for liberation stands out when considering the United States does not have a nationwide, comprehensive nor mandatory media literacy curriculum. It is not our intent, in an attempt to provide a media literacy curriculum, to force another "truth" on the consumer, but instead, help the consumer (the potentially oppressed) reflect upon the influence of media in their lives. Freire suggests that only through "reflection by the oppressed" will these individuals be able to truly obtain liberation.

Freire's theory is exceptionally relevant to today's technologically advanced environment. The media continue to hold the power as they manipulate the way that we, the consumers, construct meaning. Without any type of education to teach the consumer how to evaluate what they are being exposed to, the media continue to control our constructions of reality in a variety of areas, including body image. Of course, business owners and investors are unlikely to support change, as our current construction of "beauty" leads us to spend billions each year on beauty products, breast implants, liposuction, shavers, creams, Botox, and much more.

Foucault (1979) describes a system of power and punishment in society as a binary system in which individuals are segregated, the powerful from the powerless. Whether one is separating the normal from the abnormal, the teacher from the student, the “pretty” from the “ugly,” or the creator from the consumer, the binary separation based on power is still present in these dichotomies. When describing the term *panopticon*, Foucault discusses a situation wherein those in charge are placed in location to the powerless in a way that allows better control through optimal visual frames. Just as he describes the situation in which the man in the tower is able to look down upon those in the cells, one can imagine the media conglomerates on a tower of information, consumer demographics, surveys, and interviews, controlling the output of this information based on those with the power to purchase the “truth” to fit the needs of their product.

The ultimate outcome of the panoptic situation within media consumption is a security of power by the powerful. The power is harnessed and regulated through the media and their presentation of truth. If a new product is created that bleaches the skin instead of tans it, and it has powerful creators and enough support, then magazines, television programs, and others may actually change the characters from dark skin to light, regardless of whether they actually used the product or not. For example, have you ever noticed the disclaimer at the bottom of a commercial that stated something like “this is a paid actor.” According to Arden (2003), this is not even kept a secret anymore:

According to a poll conducted by researchers at Marquette University, 93 percent of newspaper editors reported that advertisers tried to influence what was

published as news. A majority reported that the management of the paper is receptive to the pressure, and 37 percent admitted they had given in. (p. 50)

For example, a beauty company may encourage newspapers to run stories on the great benefits of Botox, or tanning beds. This claim suggests that the media can actually control the definition of beauty in culture. However, whether this is their intention, that is, part of the manifest function, or simply a by-product or latent function of capitalism, is up for argument. Regardless of the intent, it is important to provide citizens with the tools to make their own decisions regarding these “truths.”

According to Freire (1970/2003), the “oppressed” can only become liberated through knowledge and ultimately reflection of their situation through that knowledge. Freire notes that “world and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction” (p. 50). He believes that in order to emerge from oppression, one must “acquire a critical consciousness” and ultimately this “can be done only by means of praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 51). Thus, as mentioned earlier, people must have the knowledge and awareness (or consciousness) to reflect upon their situation, and then the desire to transform it. Research can play a powerful role in encouraging or discouraging praxis. I would suggest this study is no different, as I would ultimately be encouraging participants to become more aware of the interaction between their perceptions of self and the way some media sources play a role in the way they construct their perceptions of self and beauty.

Knowledge can be powerful, but how is knowledge directly related to power? According to Kogan (2005), “...power affects the identification, use and transmission of knowledge” (p. 9). I believe there is a reciprocal relationship between knowledge and

power in which knowledge can provide power, or power can be the product of knowledge. For many, knowledge is power, and yet, knowledge, or lack thereof can also decrease power. Kogan suggests that “knowledge is an exercise of power, which could be exemplified by the power of academic disciplines” (p. 12). That is, certain groups or specialists have access to knowledge (and thus power) that others do not. “Those within the peer group gain power and authority by their participation in the knowledge. In that sense, power is both a meaning shared within the group and an exclusive and esoteric meaning as far as those outside the group are concerned” (Kogan, p. 9). Bourdieu (1975) makes similar claims, discussing the distribution of power within various fields. Basically, as academics, we have the tools and positions that allow us to research particular information within our specialized areas. Just as the creators of media have the power to influence the way people construct their views of beauty, we have the power to educate them about this potential influence. This makes educators not only valuable, but oftentimes connected to societal institutions, specifically government.

As noted in Chapter I, I feel an obligation as an educator to pass on the knowledge that I have had the privilege of obtaining. Because the knowledge is not easily implemented in elementary and secondary schools, it is the responsibility of those with the power to implement this information to do so. If I can show that incorporating media literacy into the curriculum can be an easy and worthwhile process, then it should be more readily accepted by professors across the United States. In addition, this will hopefully lead policymakers to recognize the need for media literacy education, and incorporate a more inclusive program that starts in elementary school.

Many policies are directly connected to the research of professionals in academia, and thus, we must be held accountable to our practices. “On the objectives-setting dimension, research sponsored by government or industry is almost always governed by the objectives of those commissioning it, although they may be negotiated with the researchers...” (Kogan, 2005, p. 17). Thus, as researchers we must be careful to consider the power implications of knowledge. Ultimately, we can become oppressors through research if we do not recognize the relationship. A good example of the power of knowledge is the process of policy-creation. When new policies are written, they are often lengthy, and laden with legal and/or political jargon. For example, H.R. 3962, the healthcare bill introduced by President Obama in 2010 is 1,990 pages. This is not uncommon. Because of the language and length of the bill, it is unlikely that the average American citizen will ever read the bill. This ultimately influences their ability to make informed decisions concerning participation, voting, or even to obtain benefits that might directly apply to them.

At the same time, for policy initiators withholding knowledge can be powerful, and can ultimately influence whether or not a bill is enacted and/or widely accepted. In some cases, withholding only specific portions of information is a powerful play by politicians. That is, because most citizens will not read the lengthy policy, they will rely on summaries presented by various stakeholders through a variety of media outlets. These politicians then hold the power to present and/or withhold information specific to the policy. Ultimately, the process of informing the masses of new policy shows how knowledge can be a tool in the process of providing or inhibiting power. I would suggest that many creators of media feel the same way. If, for example, everyone knew that



Photoshop is the regular staple of the video and magazine industry, and was given full access to the before and after photos of all participants, viewers may change their perceptions of beauty. Changes in these perceptions could lead to less beauty products purchased, which would ultimately mean less advertising space filled. Although I do not believe most media moguls are sitting around attempting to determine how to deceive the public, they are latently doing so in their attempt to earn money.

### **Media Literacy Curriculum**

As mentioned earlier, a thorough search of the literature reveals little research on media literacy curriculum in the post-secondary classroom, and no examples of curriculum designed specifically for the purposes of educating the post-secondary masses in media literacy and body image were found. In an attempt to create a functional, pertinent post-secondary curriculum, I contacted an organization dedicated to the implementation of media literacy across the curriculum: The Center for Media Literacy (CML). With the support of numerous national foundations, organizations, and prominent individuals, from Normal Felton to the Carnegie Corporation, CML has been a staple in the media literacy industry for many years. I was given permission to evaluate the curriculum designed for K-12 students, and use the key components created by the center to help me better understand the process of media literacy curriculum creation (APPENDIX H). On the CML website, Thoman and Jolls present what they call the “Five Core Concepts” of media literacy. These concepts can be used as a guide for educators hoping to incorporate a more balanced approach to media literacy in their

classrooms. These concepts are at the heart of the curriculum I designed for this study.

According to Jolls and Thoman (2008), the core concepts include:

1. All media messages are constructed.
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same media message differently.
4. Media have embedded values and points of view.
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power. (p. 23)

The core concepts presented by CML do not focus solely on the idea that the media is a disease that must be eradicated, but more realistically, the concepts focus on key facts gathered through comprehensive research and numerous practical applications.

Another important document during curriculum development was The Core Principles of Media Literacy Education (2010) by Bergsma, Considine, Culver, Hobbs, Jensen, Rogow, Rosen, Scheibe, Sellers-Clark, and Thoman, in association with the National Association of Media Literacy Education (NAMLE). The core principles played a role in developing a curriculum that was both accurate and educational. According to Bergsma et al, the following principles are essential to understanding media literacy education:

1. Media Literacy Education requires active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create.
2. Media Literacy Education expands the concept of literacy (i.e., reading and writing) to include all forms of media.
3. Media Literacy Education builds and reinforces skills for learners of all ages. Like print literacy, those skills necessitate integrated, interactive, and repeated practice.

4. Media Literacy Education develops informed, reflective and engaged participants essential for a democratic society.
5. Media Literacy Education recognizes that media are a part of culture and function as agents of socialization.
6. Media Literacy Education affirms that people use their individual skills, beliefs and experiences to construct their own meanings from media messages.

NAMLE provided the broader concepts that should be considered when developing curriculum for media literacy education. NAMLE discusses media literacy education, in particular, what that education should recognize and/or do for the individual receiving it. The Center for Media Literacy provided a foundation for the type of information that should be included in a rounded media literacy curriculum. CML's Five Key Questions provided specifics on how to analyze specific media. In addition, both sites provided foundational information on educating people in media literacy, from the types of questions to ask, to the types of activities to use. Without such strong national programs, I would not have been as prepared to develop a curriculum that was functional, educational, and relevant.

In addition to evaluating the curriculum and knowledge already available on teaching media literacy, I had to consider my audience: adults. Unlike the curriculum available, I needed to create a curriculum for very specific population. First, I recognized that technology has changed our world. For better or worse, we will continue to move forward in The Age of Technology, not back. In addition, media literacy includes the production and use of media, as well as the ability to evaluate and analyze. Thus, as educators, it is extremely important that we recognize the changes in significant learning.

In the article, “What is Significant Learning?” Fink (2003) suggests significant learning refers to the fact that “good teachers want their students to learn something important or significant...” (p. 1). Unfortunately, significance may change over time, during a course, or even for an individual. Therefore, attempting to define and understand a significant learning experience, particularly in today’s mediated world, is important for the future of education.

### **Theories of Adult Learning: The “Significant” Learning Curriculum**

Fink (2003) introduces a taxonomy of learning that focuses on: “learning how to learn, leadership and interpersonal skills, ethics, communications skills, character, tolerance, the ability to adapt to change...” and other factors that he suggests have emerged at the forefront of important significant learning concepts for students growing and learning during The Age of Technology (p. 2). Ultimately, Fink suggests it is no longer possible to prepare students for the real world by simply having them memorize key terms, dates, and formulas.

Kraebber supports Fink’s notion of the changing role of education. He suggests that we have seen the end of our need to encourage memorization, as we now live in a world in which technology allows us to access information at the touch of a button. “They [students] need to be able to use current technology and be prepared to learn and use the technology of the future, and more. Students need to be able to think!” (Kraebber, 1999, n.p.). Thus, the ability to navigate the increasingly complex world of online data has become an important component of media literacy education. Students need the knowledge to work with others to obtain key information, the ability to use and

constantly update skills pertaining to various technologies, the ability to integrate technology, knowledge, learning, and much more. These skills have emerged quickly, and for the most part, without educational efforts to help students keep up.

The Taxonomy of Significant Learning, introduced by Fink (2003) appears to be much better oriented to today's rapidly changing, technologically advanced world. He based his taxonomy on the definition of learning that suggests "significant learning requires that there be some kind of *lasting* change that is *important* in terms of the learner's life" (p. 3). Fink's taxonomy is designed around six key components of significant learning: foundational knowledge, application, integration, human dimensions, caring, and learning how to learn.

Foundational knowledge has been at the core of curriculum and assessment for decades, and remains important in Fink's taxonomy. Although a quick search on "google.com," can provide most traditional, foundational knowledge, it still plays an important role in significant learning. It is not easy to move up conceptually in the classroom if students do not have a basic foundation in the concepts of the topic. This is true for media literacy as well. For example, if students do not understand the term "ownership," then discussing its implications for body image will not likely result in significant learning.

Application is becoming more and more important in today's mediated world, and plays a special role in media literacy. As noted by Fink (2003), "application learning allows other kinds of learning to become useful" (p. 4). That is, it is important that students, particularly adult learners, are able to take the information they learn and apply it to real world situations. This ultimately is a great measure of whether or not the

learning experience has been significant. Therefore, the media literacy curriculum had to include applicable lessons and/or discussions so that students could actively apply what they were learning to the real world.

The ability of the student to identify the influence of media on their lives, particularly in terms of body image, is a significant portion of the study. Integration is also an important component of Fink's Taxonomy, and connects easily to media literacy education. Fink (2003) notes, "When students are able to see and understand the connections between different things, an important kind of learning has occurred. The act of making new connections gives learners a new form of power..." (p. 4-5). This is a revolutionary connection: learning = power. In media literacy education, understanding the integrated aspects of self, life, media, and outcomes is extremely important.

Understanding the media's influence on body image does little good if the student cannot make connections between his or her own self-image and the media. This connection, when made, gives the student power. They now have the power of knowledge, thus lessening the potential negative implications of future media exposure. With the media steadily increasing in our lives, it is important that our interactions with it are positive, and that we are given the tools (power) to make them so. Ultimately, we are becoming conscious, and moving out of the "oppressed" category through learning.

Obviously, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills remain a vital part of human life. Fink suggests that the human dimension of his taxonomy "informs students about the human significance of what they are learning" (p. 5). Without this type of learning, critical research could not exist. Freire (1970/1993) discussed this very issue when describing the narrative character of education. He suggests that the teachers' task is "to

‘fill’ the students with the contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance” (p. 71). Thus, disconnecting information from meaningfulness, from humanity, detaches knowledge from meaning or significance for the learner. With adult learners specifically it is important to connect information to the human experience, particularly their own lived experience. Without this connection, the students may not be invested in the learning.

Lieb (1991) points out the foundational work of Malcom Knowles, who suggested that educators must recognize the accumulation of knowledge and experience that adult learners often bring to the table. Thus, when developing curriculum, educators “need to connect learning to this knowledge/experience base” (Lieb, 1991, para 3). Ultimately, the most significant learning will occur if the new information is connected to previous knowledge and/or experience in a way that helps the learner recognize the significance of this information to his or her current or future lifeworld. This reflects Fink’s notion of caring. That is, learning experiences are often related directly to how much the student cares. Caring will obviously increase if the student recognizes a connection between the learning and him or herself. Fink reveals that “without energy for learning, nothing significant happens” (p. 5). Therefore, considering how to encourage the students to care about media literacy education was very important in the development of the media literacy curriculum for this study.

An often overlooked aspect of Fink’s model is learning how to learn. Especially when considering adult learners, one must determine what foundational learning they bring with them. In general, adult learners are usually referred to as more autonomous

than younger students (Lieb, 1991); however, this cannot be assumed for all adults. Lieb (1991) suggests that an important part of working with adult learners is recognizing individual differences. Evaluating what the students already know can be helpful in determining what aspects of learning they are still lacking, or more than likely, just need assistance in refining.

In 2008-2009, I conducted a pilot study on college students' perceptions of media. In order to gain a deeper understanding of students' perceptions of the influence of media in their lives, I conducted surveys, two in-depth interviews, as well as a focus group study using college students from a four-year university in northeastern Oklahoma. As mentioned earlier, I was able to use this information to determine what it was that the students already understood about media and media literacy, thereby avoiding covering concepts they already understood, and/or starting with information that they needed foundational knowledge to understand.

Unlike other models, Fink's taxonomy is meant to be interactive. That is, each of the major categories of significant learning proposed by Fink can be understood in a dynamic relationship with each other. In addition, Fink (2003) suggests that "achieving any one kind of learning simultaneously enhances the possibility of the other kinds of learning being achieved" (p. 6). That is, learning within this model is synergistic, and must be understood this way when educators are attempting to implement into the classroom. Using this model to implement and evaluate media literacy in the college classroom offered a great opportunity to evaluate the synergistic nature of Fink's taxonomy.



## **Adult Learners and the Media Literacy Curriculum**

This study required a new curriculum for media literacy. The curriculum widely available today is created and implemented for elementary and secondary students. It was not enough to simply streamline the same curriculum, as adult learners require substantially different considerations, particularly for course design/development. Thus, it was necessary to consider theories of adult learning. In addition to creating a “significant learning process,” I also agree with Fink’s suggestion that we move to active learning environments that engage the students. Lieb (1991) outlined the work of Knowles, suggesting that adult learners are: autonomous, self-directed, have accumulated a foundation of life experiences, are goal-directed, relevancy-oriented, practical, and need to be shown respect. His outline of the adult learner is similar to those proposed by others, and was used as a foundation for the media literacy curriculum (Appendix G).

In order to create an active learning environment, as outlined by Fink, one must also consider the characteristics of the adult learner. Fink (2003) suggests that “all learning activities involve some kind of experience or some kind of dialogue” (n.p.). Experiences can be had through either observing or doing, while dialogue will be either with self or other. Dialogue with self involves reflective thinking. That is, the individual learner begins to question what he or she thinks, feels, knows, or has experienced about the topic. Dialogue with others can occur in a variety of formats from reading a textbook to listening to a podcast. However, Fink (2003) suggests that the most successful type of dialogue is dynamic, and occurs in situations where exchanges can be made between speakers.

Experiences are a huge part of what makes adult learners unique. That is, they have had multiple experiences inside and outside the classroom that influence their knowledge, perceptions, and even learning. Fink (2003) outlined two specific types of experience: observing and doing. Whenever a learner is watching a speaker, reading a book or article, or simply listening to a conversation, he or she is observing. Observation can occur casually and/or intentionally. In addition, it can be “live,” as in watching the instructor in class, or vicarious, such as watching a simulation of the content to be learned. Doing refers to any type of learning activity that requires the person to take direct action in the experience. Like observation, doing can be both direct and vicarious. For example, role-playing may offer a vicarious way for a student to participate in the actual learning process.

In order to implement the model of active learning into the classroom, Fink (1999) offers three major suggestions: “expand the kinds of learning experience you create, take advantage of the power of interaction, and create a dialectic experience and dialogue” (Active Learning, n.p.). I attempted to use these guidelines when creating and integrating the media literacy curriculum into the SBS classroom. As adult learners, my students bring individual experiences and backgrounds with them into the classroom. I attempted to use these to my advantage by creating dynamic dialogue with others. For example, I asked the students to prepare a reflection (dialogue with self) about the influence of media on their image of self. Then, in small groups, I asked the students to share their experiences, and address some of the similarities and differences in individual experiences (dialogue with others). This activity actually takes advantage of interaction. The power of interaction refers to connecting learning activities together. According to

Fink (1999), "...when properly connected, the various learning activities can have an impact that is more additive or cumulative; they can be interactive and thereby multiply the educational impact" (n.p.). Thus, by having the students dialogue with self (reflection) first, and then meet in small groups (dialogue with others); I am connecting their learning experiences. In addition, this activity required students to reflect on their own knowledge and experience. For adult learners, realizing what the students bring to the table is a key component of being a good adult educator.

Fink's theories concerning significant learning experiences and active learning environments, as well as Fink and Knowles' work on adult learners was used comprehensively to develop a media literacy curriculum to implement during the course of this study. In addition, the core concepts outlined by The Center for Media Literacy, and their current K-12 curriculum were carefully considered and implemented throughout the development process. I believe it was very important to consider theories on adult learning and significant learning experiences, as I attempted to implement a media literacy curriculum that complemented the intentions of my study, and offered students a valuable learning experience.

## **Conclusions**

In this chapter I attempted to provide the reader with a foundation of the key components, concepts, and literature related to this study. First, defining media literacy and media literacy education was important to understanding the underlying research in this study. In particular, the current research on the relationship between media literacy and body image not only provides a foundation for my research questions, but a rationale

for implementing media literacy curriculum into the college classroom. The power of the media, particularly in terms of its ability to influence consumers, is important when considering the potential long-term significance of media literacy curriculum. In a current K-12 educational system that has only incrementally allows new curriculum to enter, at best, it is important to address the real implications of a system in which the power of the media goes unchecked, as well as justify the use of postsecondary students as participants in this research. Finally, as I personally developed the curriculum, I outlined for the reader the theories of adult learning and other important concepts I considered when creating that curriculum.

## CHAPTER III

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study will attempt to incorporate a newly designed media literacy curriculum into postsecondary social science classrooms in an attempt to better understand the influence of media literacy curriculum on students' perceptions of self, in particular, issues of body satisfaction or body image. The following chapter will outline the theoretical foundations of a mixed methods study grounded in teacher research. Next, I will outline the participant selection process, and then describe the methods used for data collection. Then I will explore the techniques I used to analyze the collected data, and end by outlining the ethical considerations that played a role in the development of my overall research plan.

#### **Research Paradigm: Mixed Methods**

It is important for researchers to explore their personal thoughts on reality, truth, knowledge formation, and even what constitutes research, in order to be effective researchers in their field. The way a person views the world, including his/her views on the nature of reality and knowledge, will influence their approach to research design, data collection, and even data interpretation. Therefore, it is critical to have a solid understanding of these concepts before starting the process of research. My own philosophy for research has merged and reemerged over many years.

As noted earlier, my theoretical framework is interpretivist. I will now use Howe's term, and refer to it as mixed-methods interpretivism in which I am using quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate causation (intentional and/or natural). In order to understand the mixed methods approach, it is important to address the definition and concepts related to the researcher's worldview or paradigm. Paradigms can be defined in multiple ways, but a solid definition provided by Creswell in 1998 suggests a paradigm is a "basic set of beliefs or assumptions" (p. 74). These beliefs often guide the researchers design and ultimately their choice of methodology and methods.

Positivists believe that knowledge can only be based on the observable or experienced, and thus their studies often result in quantitative data. Interpretivist philosophies have a much broader view, as they are more often concerned with the "meanings and experiences of human beings" (Williamson, 2006, p. 84). Interpretivists often turn to inquiries that result in qualitative data. According to Gorard and Symonds (2010) "the classification by many scholars of numerical research processes as quantitative and other research techniques as qualitative has prompted the construction of a third category, that of 'mixed methods', to describe studies that use elements from both processes" (p. 121). This study will incorporate the mixed methods classification, merging qualitative and quantitative data and perspectives in hopes of providing a more in-depth analysis of the research questions.

Having a worldview of both research and epistemology that fits into a mixed methods design is important for creating a study that is both valid and coherent. First, one must explore the foundations of mixed methods approaches, as many people question how two methods with two very different ontological bases can be rectified into a

coherent study. Thus, it is imperative that the researcher has a solid grasp of their methodological and theoretical foundations. Mixed methods research is a design that allows the researcher the best of both worlds. It is more than simply doing a qualitative and a quantitative study about the same topic. Instead, it is a technique in which the researcher attempts to synthesize the two designs in a way that creates a better, more coherent whole than either method could have offered alone. Rather than simply providing qualitative and quantitative results, the researcher takes what he or she learns from both methods and creates a new unified whole based on the results as a syndication, not a simple comparison of the two separate forms of research. Creswell & Clark (2006) suggest:

Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone. (p. 5)

For much of their existence, qualitative and quantitative methods have been associated specifically with constructionist and objectivist epistemologies (in that order). Thus, suggesting a study in which both approaches are used would seem ludicrous, as the logic leading up to these epistemologies, at first glance, appears to be incongruent. However,

in the 1950's, researchers Campbell and Fiske proposed the use of both methods, suggesting the combination would lead to a better understanding of specific traits.

Ontology, or the study of being, is related to one's beliefs concerning reality. What is real? This question frames the basis for ontological beliefs. In terms of the relationship between one's ontological perspectives and research, it is important to consider how an individual evaluates the outcome of science or research. That is, does the researcher believe that science can "express the world as it really is," or is the outcome a "social construct" that reflects the "objective structures and typical beliefs of a particular social universe" (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 4). As noted in Chapter II, I tend to follow an interpretivist perspective in which I believe that multiple realities exist, and that often those realities are formed and reformed as new information becomes available. Thus, like objectivists, I do believe reality exists; however, I do not believe there is a single reality that can be objectively defined. I believe that mixed-methods interpretivism, introduced by Howe (2011), offers the best possible explanation of my theoretical perspective. Howe (2011) clarifies the mixed methods approach when he suggests that "the relationship is crisscrossing—quantitative methods can be used to investigate intentional causation and qualitative methods can be used to investigate natural causation—within an overarching framework of mixed-methods interpretivism" (p. 1).

### **Teacher Research**

Regardless of my theoretical frame, my dissertation fits the description of a teacher research project. As a college professor of social science interested in the



influence of media literacy curriculum on issues of body image in postsecondary social science students, I am conducting teacher research. According to Brown (2010), the teacher researcher is one "...who engage[s] in research in their own teaching settings...." (p. 276). Teacher research is defined as "the systematic, intentional data collection and analysis to gain understanding of their own research questions..." (Brown, 2010, p. 277). Unfortunately, as Brown suggests, teacher research is often seen as a sort of presumptuous act on the part of the teacher. That is, how dare a teacher conduct research his or her own students? And yet, one has to consider whether good teaching inherently includes research. For example, if a teacher employs a curriculum that is an utter failure, that is, the students do not respond to or learn from, and thus decides to pull that portion of the curriculum the next time he or she teaches, is the teacher not practicing research? If he or she does not pull the curriculum, is that better?

I would suggest teacher research is a necessary part of being an effective teacher. However, once that teacher decides to share his or her findings in the form of a "formal" research study, the air of acceptance becomes cloudy as Institutional Review Boards (IRB's) are known to inadvertently deny teacher research over other forms. In a dramatic, but eerily accurate comparison, Brown suggests that "it is easier for a researcher to gain permission to draw blood from a kindergartener than it is to ask her about her favorite book" (p. 276). One of the major concerns of IRB's about teacher research is the claim that it is impossible for a teacher to conduct research on his or her students without coercion. I would counter this vehemently, suggesting that most teacher research is conducted with the best interest of the students in mind. For example, in my study, students all participated in a curriculum that focused on the potential positive and

negative influences of media on identity development and body satisfaction. This study offered two very important advantages. First, the students were being introduced to expansions of topics they were already covering in their social science courses. Second, there were given tools to ultimately be better consumers of media (if they so choose). Regardless of whether or not students decided to allow me to use their surveys as part of my research, or participate in focus groups or interviews, I am confident that the curriculum was an important part of the coursework, and would have been included regardless of whether or not I was given permission to conduct this study. As far as coercion is concerned, making it clear to participants verbally and through the detailed description in Informed Consent documents, I believe students can realize that their participation is ultimately a choice with no repercussions inside or outside of the classroom.

In order to ensure I, as a teacher researcher, and more importantly, a teacher and mentor to over 200 students, was doing everything possible to ensure the safety, security, and confidentiality of my participants, I used the “questions to include in self-preparation for teacher researcher...” outlined by Brown (2010) in her study “Teacher Research and University Institutional review Boards.” One of Brown’s suggestions included using a layered consent/assent form. I decided that this was relevant for my study, as I proposed multiple levels of participation. By providing a layered consent, students could determine whether they wanted to participate in some, all, or none of the research being conducted. I created a three part form in which the students could choose to (or not to) participate in the focus group, the interview, or by allowing me to use the results of their pre and posttest questionnaires (Appendix C).

My study, and ultimately layered consent form, contains three specific areas, all of which were considered separately when attempting to ensure that they met and exceeded the standards required by research ethics and more specifically, the Institutional Review Board. I believe that being cognizant of the possible complications of teacher research was important when attempting to provide much needed research in a manner that was both ethical and responsible. I feel that by using Brown's recommendations, as well considering other key points concerning teacher research, I made an active effort to protect the student participants, as well as the student/teacher relationship. In addition to carefully considering incentives, and creating a layered consent that allowed students to participate in one, two, three, or none of the studies, I created a teacher research project that protected participants from any adverse feelings of potential consequences for participation or non-participation. The following sections will outline these procedures in more detail.

### **Participant Selection**

According to Arden (2003), "a study performed by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that the average American child spends about 40 hours per week consuming electronic media..." (p. 32). Thus, upon entering college, it is likely that most students have been subjected to a variety of media, in large quantities, for most of their lives. Television continues to be the most used media source. "The social modeling provided by television has served to promote an unreasonable image of what people ought to look like...the more television watched, the more intense their compulsion to be thin" (Arden, 2003, p. 34). Due to the large amount of media consumed over the lifespan and research

suggesting its influence on body image, college students were certainly a relevant, if not timely sample. In addition, because the majority of media literacy curriculum has been designed for K-12 students, it was both important and relevant to make them the subject of my research design. In particular, college students were selected because there is currently no required media literacy course in American curriculum. Although No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has haphazardly placed a few bylines about media literacy education into their massive literature, there is currently no full scale media literacy education in K-12 schools, even though some states have added minimal requirements into their policies. Thus, by the time students reach college, the influence of media, both positive and negative, continues to be unsupported by a personal education about the matter, perhaps leading to results such as those dismal summaries of television viewing time reported by the Kaiser Foundation.

In addition to selecting college students for this study, I chose to study social science students in particular. First, I am a professor of social science at a four-year university in Oklahoma, thus making the sample convenient. However, in addition to being a sample of convenience, I have realized over several years of teaching social science, that many units; from eating disorders to identity formation, could easily integrate a media literacy component. If the study demonstrates a better understanding of body image based on a media literacy curriculum component, other subject areas could implement similar components, integrating media literacy in units that would naturally help students form an even deeper connection between their virtual and real worlds. Finally, I chose college students because getting things accomplished, especially in terms of curriculum changes, in the K-12 school system in the United States is incremental at

best. With the thousands of rules and regulations related to NCLB, and other policies, teachers are hard pressed to add new material, let alone attempt to integrate what they would consider a new “topic” into the classroom. Although I ultimately believe that media literacy should be a continuation throughout our citizen’s education, everything has to start somewhere.

### **Methods**

The first portion of the study (Part A) includes a Likert scale questionnaire that students were given the questionnaire before and after the introduction of the media literacy curriculum that I designed specifically to be integrated into their existing coursework. For example, I introduced the media literacy curriculum, which focused heavily on media literacy and body image, during the chapter on motivation in the Psychology courses, which focused specifically on concepts such as identity formation, motivations to eat, and eating disorders. Likewise, in the sociology courses, I introduced the curriculum during chapters pertaining to identity formation within society and/or the sociological origins of beauty. Before curriculum implementation, I administered the questionnaire, known as the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire-3 (SATAQ-3). The SATAQ-3 “is a revision of our first two scales” (Heinberg & Thompson, 1995; Thompson et al., 1999). Students in a variety of social science courses were given the pre-test prior to the introduction of the media literacy curriculum (Appendix G). In addition, all students were given the post-test within one week of participating in the curriculum. However, only those students who signed and returned the informed consent (Appendix C) were included in the research findings.

Next, I conducted focus groups, and several in-depth interviews. All students were given equal opportunity to participate in the focus group. That is, I assigned each participant who had agreed to participate and gave them several options in terms of a time and date to participate. Finally, the interviews were conducted in my office on the third floor of one of the main campus buildings. The students were notified that the interviews would take approximately one hour. I placed the informed consent forms of all students that had agreed to participate in the interview in a folder, and randomly selected five. Of those, four stated they were able to participate. Both the focus groups and the interviews occurred after the students had already participated in the one hour media literacy curriculum.

### **The Curriculum**

As noted, media literacy curriculum available on a wide scale is aimed at elementary and secondary students. Therefore, part of the challenge before the SATAQ-3 could be used was to develop a curriculum I felt comfortable sharing with college age students. I began by researching media literacy curriculum through the Center for Media Literacy (CML) as well as the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE). Both organizations provided a plethora of information pertaining to informing others about media, and both sites had specific curriculum for introducing media literacy to young populations. Due to time restraints and availability, I was able to get permission from the President of the Center for Media Literacy to adapt their curriculum for the purposes of working with adult populations. Thus, CML became the most prominent source for preparing the curriculum for social science students.

However, in addition to using the Five Key Concepts of media literacy prepared by the CML, I also evaluated various curriculums in use by secondary educators, scoured the literature on adult learning, and read the information available by NAMLE and others (as described in Chapter II).

Heidi Cody, a teacher and advocate of media literacy, has developed what she calls the “Media Literacy Alphabet.” This fantastic piece of curriculum includes the entire alphabet, made up of various advertisers from “Bubblicious” to “Zest.” Knowing that significant learning, according to Fink, should be based on what the learners already know, and ultimately provide them with information that is applicable to their real lives. I found this alphabet intriguing, and something that I knew could immediately draw the student’s attention, and would begin the curriculum in a familiar area of media (advertising). Therefore, I contacted Ms. Cody, who quickly gave me permission to use the curriculum as part of my study (Appendix I). In addition, by asking the students to identify their state representatives and senators, in addition to naming the “alphabet” advertisers, I was able to initiate an interactive, dynamic conversation about how we have arrived at a time in our nation’s history where advertisers are more prominent and known than those that represent us in a representative government.

Fink, Knowles, and others have all suggested that learning will only be significant if it is related to the participant, that is, applicable or meaningful in some way. Therefore, the first lesson is aimed at getting their attention and letting the students know that this topic is applicable to their own world (The Alphabet). I asked the students to prepare a reflection (dialogue with self) about the influence they believe media has on their image of self and/or others. Then, in small groups, I asked the students to share

their experiences, and address some of the similarities and differences in individual experiences (dialogue with others). After doing so, I ask the students to define media literacy, inviting open dialogue, a key component in significant learning in adults, according to Fink. Next, using a PowerPoint for the students, and a facilitator's guide for myself, I introduce the Five Key Questions of Media literacy (CML):

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message?
4. How might different people understand this message differently?
5. Why is the message being sent?

Carefully using active dialogue and examples (following a PowerPoint) to keep the students actively attentive, we go through the five key questions, and then attempt to evaluate a media messages based on our new foundational questions. Finally, I have the students read line by line a powerful document written by Lofshult (2006) of The New York Times, which includes the following statistics:

19% = the number of overweight people who would risk death to be thin.

33% = the number of obese people who would risk their life to lose 10 pounds.

4% = the number of normal-weight people who would take that risk to shed 10 pounds.

31% = the number of obese people who would trade up to 5% of their remaining years to be 10% thinner. (n.p.)



After going through our Five Key Questions pertaining to this article, I then open the discussion of the media's influence on body image. As the discussions began, I pull up my body image PowerPoint entitled "The Real Star," which includes several before and after images of both "average citizens" and well-known celebrities. I point out significant changes, and ask the students to pick out changes they see as well. From breast size to the number of abs, the pre and post Photoshop images are shocking.

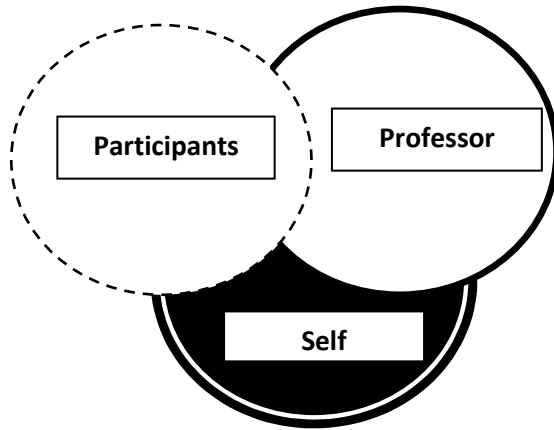
As the students analyze the pictures, and discuss their influence, I bring up the story of supermodel Ana Reston, only 22 years old, who died on stage at a show from anorexia. She had a heart attack at 22. Using this as an eerie reminder of the potential negative consequences of media outcomes, we go back to our key questions, and explore what the objective of changing specific aspects of men and women before they are shown on TV, magazines, on billboards, or in shopping mall windows. Using a facilitator's guide, I help the students explore their own perspectives concerning body image and the media.

Finally, in hopes of creating a fair depiction of the media, I begin to discuss the statistics on obesity in the United States. Listed as one of the top ten leading causes of death, obesity is a huge problem in the US (Feist & Rosenberg, 2010). Using a variety of positive ad campaigns, including those from Michelle Obama's "Move" campaign, we address the potentially positive influence of media on children and adults. For example, Ms. Obama has done several commercials aimed at young children and adolescents, encouraging them to "move" more. Finally, I end the curriculum asking the participants' to really consider whether or not they are influenced by the media, positively or

negatively. If so, what are the implications of that influence? What can the Five Key Questions, or more generally, media literacy education, do for our future?

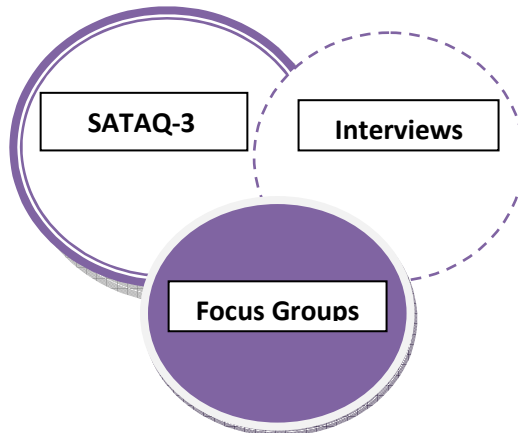
### **Data Collection**

The mixed methods research design was selected purposely in order to provide a more thorough understanding of the topic. Mixed methods studies are becoming more popular, and slowly beginning to develop a series of “standards” related to practice. One of the standards is triangulation. “The process of triangulation is used as an enhancement to current research methodology to increase reliability, credibility, and validity” (Swenson, 2008, n.p.). Patton (2002) discusses the process of triangulation, suggesting that it can help reduce bias in studies, and ultimately increase the quality of one’s work. In addition to triangulating methods, I chose to use analyst triangulation (Figure 4.1) by analyzing all of the data using three separate evaluators. First, I evaluated the data using my own research skills and knowledge. Next, I took my transcriptions, statistical analysis, and overall evaluation back to the participant, and asked them to read and analyze my interpretations, ensuring I had accurately portrayed their words, and was correctly analyzing their statements. Finally, I asked a colleague, a specialist in experimental psychology, but a social scientist nonetheless, to evaluate my interpretations for accuracy. By using two different forms of triangulation, I believe I am increasing the ability of this study to have a significant impact on the field of media literacy and curriculum.



**Figure 3.1: Analysts Triangulation**

This study also uses “methods triangulation” in an attempt to decrease potential bias and improve the overall credibility of the study (Figure 4.2). “By obtaining relevant information from a number of perspectives validity is increased...” (Swenson, 2008, para 7). I incorporated methods triangulation by using pre/posttests, focus groups, and interviews.



**Figure 3.2: Methods Triangulation**

The members of the analyst triangulation team were given copies of the interview and focus group transcripts, quantitative data results, coding process, and thematic analysis.

## **Quantitative Data**

“The Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire-3 (SATAQ-3) was developed to assess women’s recognition and acceptance of societally sanctioned standards of appearance” (Heinberg, Stormer, & Thompson, 1995). Since this time, the questionnaire has undergone numerous investigations and updates, which have continually confirmed and ultimately improved the validity and reliability of the SATAQ, now is its third edition. In addition to being tested with a variety of American populations. A study using the SATAQ-3 on Jordanian women found that “The results suggest that the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire-3 is a valid and reliable instrument...” for culturally diverse populations (Brown, Hawks, & Madanat, 2006, p. 421).

Research on body image has been predominately focused on females (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997). In fact, as with many questionnaires developed for studies related to body image, the SATAQ-3 was specifically designed for females. However, there are a variety of measures aimed at evaluating body image in males including: Body Dissatisfaction Sub-Scale of the Eating Disorder Inventory-2, Muscle Appearance Satisfaction Scale (MASS), Drive for Muscularity Scale (DMS), and the Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS). Research on all of these inventories, including a thorough evaluation of the literature surrounding the study of males and body image, revealed an adaptation of the SATAQ-3 for the male population created by Cass, Cone, and Ford in 2007. From this point on, I will use the “SATAQ-3” to refer to the questionnaire given to women, and the acronym “SATAQ-3M” to refer to the questionnaire given to me. In addition, I will use the acronym “SATAQ-3/M” to refer to the questionnaire as a whole.

“The SATAQ-3/M has been used to assess facets of media influence ...” (Guarda, Heinberg, Roehrig, Thompson, vanden Berg, 2004) The SATAQ-3 was slightly modified in two ways for use with the male population. First, “male models” were specified where original items referred to “models” (e.g., “I would like my body to look like the [male] models who appear in magazines”). Second, references to looking “pretty” were changed to looking “attractive.” The SATAQ-3 has evidence for adequate reliability and construct validity in female samples ( $\alpha > .88$ ; Thompson et al., 2004) and an earlier version of the SATAQ-3 has evidence for adequate reliability (.87) for internalization in college men (Tylka, Bergeron, & Schwartz, 2005). For this study, the SATAQ-3, as revised by Cass, Cone and Ford (2007) was used with male participants.

### **Qualitative Data**

Focus groups took place in a home-like conference room, complete with couches and lamps, that is often used as a classroom at the four-year university at which the participants attend. The students were seated in a circle, using a variety of couches and chairs, with the facilitator, myself, also seated in the circle. The recorder was placed in the center of the circle in hopes of providing the best recording. The focus groups were conducted before interviews in order to allow the researcher to evaluate the interview guide questions in light of any new information obtained during the curriculum study and/or focus group sessions. Although a structured questionnaire was created for the focus group (Appendix E), many of the conversations began to develop naturally, and eventually the questions were more of a by-product of conversations already in development.

As the interviewer and leader of the focus groups, I myself was the instrument of data collection during the focus groups, and therefore I had to be constantly alert, adaptable, and cognizant of my surroundings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Eisner, 1991; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990 ). When attempting to develop a good interview guide, I kept in mind Lincoln and Guba (1985) who noted, “If you want people to understand better than they otherwise might, provide them information in the form in which they usually experience it" (p. 120). That is, I could not approach the interviews with media literacy concepts or research terminology expecting the students to have background knowledge of information and issues that I myself learned through many years of education and research. Therefore, I created an interview protocol (Appendix F), designed to encourage the participants to actively participate in the telling of their stories. The interview guide, also sometimes called interview schedule, is a set of questions, topics, or areas of interest that the researcher wants to explore during the interaction with the interview participant (Hoepfl, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). “Qualitative research has an emergent (as opposed to predetermined) design, and researchers focus on this emerging process as well as the outcomes or product of the research” (Hoepfl, 1997, n.p.). Thus, I developed my interview schedule in a way that was meant to encourage an emergent environment in which the participants would become engaged in the process, and begin to forget the interview, and ultimately become involved in the storytelling process. I feel I adequately accomplished this goal after completing my interviews.

## **Analysis of Data**

Interpretivist research is an attempt to find the better or more authentic answers to the question. However, different theoretical perspectives offer meaningful insights on many aspects of data collection and interpretation. As stated by Crotty (1998), “different ways of viewing the world shape different ways of researching the world” (p. 66). For example, a positivist approach, based on an objectivist epistemology, would call for a scientific analysis in which a value-free researcher would attempt to offer controllable and predictable analysis. This is the perspective I was originally drawn to, as my undergraduate field, psychology, impressed upon me the need for this control and predictability. I believe the history of this desire in psychology has more to do with legitimizing the field than with their actual beliefs regarding truth and knowledge. For example, most psychologists I know agree that human behavior is extremely complex, and at most, only somewhat predictable. However, due to the unfortunate belief that qualitative research is somehow less valuable, they continue to pursue quantitative methods. This is not the case for interpretivist approaches.

Interpretivism does not promote the researcher to be a value-free observer. Instead, it implores researchers to be “passionate participants” in the research, embedding themselves into the population at hand in order to gain a better understanding of the cultural and historical implications. Therefore, I took this challenge, to be a passionate participant, and attempted to incorporate it throughout my research design, including during analysis. As mentioned earlier, I will more specifically be considering myself a mixed-methods interpretivist, analyzing the data singularly, but looking for codes and themes as a by-product of the whole study.

## **Quantitative Data**

Microsoft Excel was used to enter all of the pretest and posttest data from the SATAQ-3 and the SATAQ-3M. Steps were taken so that all information that was actively used by the interviewer and/or any research assistants did not contain participant names or identifying information. During the pre/posttest design, students were asked to put the last four digits of their SSS on the BACK of the form. Similarly, when they completed the posttest, they were asked to do the same thing. Once both forms had been collected, only I, the researcher/professor used the data to match consent forms. Once I completed this process, and had matched up any students that also participated in focus groups and/or interviews, I used a permanent marker to mark out the four digits to avoid any future association of the data with the individual by myself or others. While information was being held, it was kept in my locked office, inside of a locked file cabinet for which only I have the key. Once that data had been entered into the statistical analysis software, and the data analysis had been completed, the forms were shredded.

The SATAQ-3/M is a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. The questionnaire was evaluated using basic descriptive statistics and a 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA. I chose not to use t-tests, as I would have quickly increased the chance of Type 1 errors by attempting to run multiple t-tests on the data. Factorial ANOVA's involve more than one independent variable. In this case, I was interested in both the influence of the scores (time) and the gender (sex) of the participants. After the data had been entered into the Excel document, SPSS 17.0 was used to transfer the data into its statistical software system. Using SPSS, I ran a 2 x 2 factorial ANOVA, allowing the time and sex to be



evaluated in terms of their influence on the dependent variable, the participants' SATAQ-3/M scores.

Ultimately, I was able to look for main effects, in which “one variable has a significant effect on the dependent variable regardless of the treatment level or condition of the other independent variable” and for interaction effects in which “one independent variable has a significant effect on the dependent variable, but only under certain levels or conditions of the other independent variable” (Steinberg, 2008, p. 313-15). Ultimately, the choice to use a Factorial ANOVA over independent t-tests is related to reducing the possibility of error, and increasing the ability of the researching to understand the independent variables and their levels.

### **Qualitative Data**

The qualitative research collected was initially evaluated separately. The focus groups and interviews were transcribed in order to provide clean, accessible data. Next, each data set was individually evaluated using thematic analysis as outlined by Patton (2002). Baker (1999) sums up the purpose of my research poetically when she states “...its aim is to capture a holistic sense of the environment being studied. Thus, it does not aim towards precise details or quantitative accuracy but towards representing a whole social space” (p. 335). Thus, the goal is to obtain an overall picture of the influence of media on students' perceptions of body image, and ultimately the way those perceptions are influenced by a media literacy curriculum integrated into the social science classroom.

After getting my qualitative notes organized and transcribed, my next step was open coding. The first step in open coding was to carefully re-read all of my notes, evaluating what was written. The open coding process is important as it helped me “to identify, and formulate, any and all ideas, themes, or issues they [the research] suggest” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 105). After coding, I began my thematic analysis, identifying major themes and key issues relevant to my research questions. I then evaluated what I learned from the qualitative data and the quantitative data as a synchronized whole. Evaluating the data as a single unit allowed for even more clarification, and provided insight into particular themes that had been originally overlooked or under evaluated. I was able to clarify gender differences that were at first unclear, and gain a much better understanding of the way that the curriculum influenced the individuals perceptions of self and other. Finally, I began to triangulate my thematic analysis by contacting both participants and a professional in the field of social science to review my transcriptions, and ultimately evaluate my thematic analysis and final conclusions concerning the data. In combination with my own analysis, triangulation ensured I did not misrepresent any of the participants, and that my analysis of the data made sense to another professional in the field.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The major goal of this study is to examine a gap in the research. Today’s research on media is extensive. Thousands of studies show that our citizens are consumed by media, and are heavily influenced by it. In fact, John Arden (2003) suggests that the oversaturation of our society has lead to LCD, or “The lowest-common-denominator

society” in which everything from education to socialization can be tied back to the influence of media. In the face of so much research, we still lack a nationally sanctioned and/or required media literacy curriculum in our K-12 schools, even though much of the existing research on the influence of media has focused on children. However, with the incremental nature of the U.S. school system, and powerful purse of those lobbying for NCLB, the likelihood of a mandatory media literacy curriculum being implemented anytime soon is not likely. Therefore, I proposed we look at a group of people that may be the ones influencing the government in the near future: college students. Little research (if any) has focused on the influence of media literacy on college students. We have plenty of research to suggest that adults, including college students are being influenced by media (Arden, 2003; Schlosser, 2002; Mestrovic, 1997; Ritzer, 2005), but little research on what to do about it. Of all the potential influences of media, its influence on body image has been studied extensively, suggesting a powerful, negative effect on society (Arden, 2003; Media Awareness Network, 2010; Center for Media Literacy, 2010). And yet, little to no research can be found on how to reduce the effects of media saturation on body image. Therefore, using body image as the basis for the curriculum design felt not only relevant but emergent! If media literacy curriculum can be integrated smoothly into the social science curriculum, and influence students’ perceptions of self, there are endless possibilities for incorporating this method across the curriculum, both in college and ultimately in K-12 education systems!

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

To date, little research has been conducted on the influence of media literacy at the college level. With the incremental nature of the public school systems, the college level is the most likely and viable location for a media literacy curriculum to be successfully implemented, and hopefully proven valuable enough to be considered by secondary institutions. However, there must be solid evidence to support the implementation of media literacy units across the curriculum. This study provides an introduction to the possibility of successfully implementing a media literacy curriculum, and a foundation for future research. In particular, this chapter provides the results of implementing a media literacy curriculum designed to potentially influence body image or satisfaction of postsecondary students.

#### **Sampling and data collection**

College students from University Blue that were participating in any psychology, sociology, or other social and/or behavioral science courses during the spring of 2010, were invited to participate in this study. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at

University Blue read and approved a description of the study, suggesting that their only requirement was IRB approval from Oklahoma State University (OSU). The IRB at OSU desired the approval of University Blue before approving the application for research. the head of University Blue's IRB was given a description of the study, and provided the necessary documentation for the research to begin (Appendix A). I was able to obtain IRB approval (Appendix J), and establish a positive repertoire with the IRB at my data collection site. This also allowed me to ensure that I was not, as a professor researching at my own institution, putting my students or my job at risk in any way.

This study was designed and conducted in three parts, for later analysis as a single unit. Part A of the study was designed to quantitatively measure whether students body image was influenced by a media literacy curriculum using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire, the SATAQ-3/M. Part B of the study included focus groups made up of students that had participated in Part A, regardless of whether they allowed me to use their questionnaires to obtain data. Participation in the curriculum was imperative for focus group members, as they could be expected to be more informed about media and its implications in terms of body image than students who had not participated in the curriculum. Finally, Part C invited individuals who had participated in the original curriculum implementation to sit down with me, the curriculum presenter, for a one-on-one interview. Participants in Part C were selected only if they had given me permission to use their questionnaire as part of the study, thereby allowing me to use their results in our discussions.

## **Curriculum / Curriculum Implementation**

Upon entering the classroom for curriculum implementation, I immediately asked the students to complete the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Scale (SATAQ-3). SATAQ-3/M is in this study to refer to the two the questionnaire given to males and females as a single unit. After I had collected the student's pretests, I proceeded to facilitate a one hour curriculum (Appendix G) on media literacy and body image. I introduced this curriculum in 5 social science classrooms. The classrooms had 24, 26, 20, 24, and 23 students respectively on the day I presented the informed consent and discussed the study. After discussing with colleagues, it was decided that students that were absent on the day of the informed consent presentation would not be given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire; however, they were allowed to sit in on the curriculum if they were present when I returned for the curriculum presentation.

As noted in Chapter III, the curriculum that I created was based on in-depth research concerning media literacy across the nation, as well as theories of adult learning. The Center for Media Literacy offered "Five Core Concepts" and "Five Key Questions" as a foundation on which the rest of the data was built. The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions introduced by Jolls, Share, Thoman (2005) of the Center for Media Literacy, include:

### Five Core Concepts

1. All media are constructed
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules

3. Different people express the same media image differently
4. Media have embedded values and points of view
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power (pg. 7).

#### Five Key Questions

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message?
4. How might different people understand this message differently?
5. Why is the message being sent? (pg. 7).

I began the curriculum with an activity that is not only fun, but shows compelling evidence that the media play a significant role in what we recognize as important. The students were asked to jot down on a piece of paper the answers to the following questions in one minute or less:

- a. How many US senators represent Oklahoma?
- b. How many Oklahomans represent us in the House of Representatives?
- c. What determines the number of representatives a state has?
- d. Name as many Oklahoma Senators as you can?

Asking the students not to put their name on the paper, I quickly handed off the responses to the faculty who were instructed to quickly check the responses. While he/she

performed this task, I asked the students if these were important questions, and if so why? While discussing their responses, the faculty member wrote on the board the % of correct and incorrect responses to each question. Next, I asked the students to get ready to “play the alphabet game.” With a few laughs, I told the students that I was going to present them with the alphabet based on common products from soaps to candy, and I needed them to write out the name of each. I gave an example that was not on the task. My example was: If I showed you a picture of an “S” with white and red around the edges, you might recognize it as the advertising symbol for snickers. The students were then given one minute to complete the task. The following is a replica of what the students saw up on the “big screen” via PowerPoint display:



**Figure 3.1: The Media Alphabet**

After the students had finished, we went through each letter out loud together, asking student to honestly mark the any they did not get. We quickly did a course tally of how many were missed (no one missed more than four in any of the five classes) and



compared our percentages with those of our government questions. The students were often shocked by the results, appearing to be somewhat unsettled by the influence of media campaigns on their memory.

Using the curriculum I designed, I then told the students that depending on whom you asked; somewhere between 5 and 10 companies own 99% of all the media we consume in the US, from television to billboards. Freepress.net suggests the big six own the majority of the US market and include: Disney, Newscorp, GE, Timewarner, Viacom, and CBS.

Fink, Knowles, and others have all suggested that learning will only be significant if it is related to the participant, that is, applicable or meaningful in some way. Therefore, the first lesson was aimed at getting the participants attention and letting the students know that this topic is applicable to their own world (The Alphabet). I then asked the students to prepare a reflection about the influence they believe media has on their image of self and/or others. This, according to Fink (2003), is “dialogue with self” and is a key component of successful adult learning. It gives adult learners the ability and time to reflect on what they have learned and process it through their own knowledge and experience. Next, in small groups, I asked the students to share their experiences, and address some of the similarities and differences in individual experiences. Fink (2003) suggests that this “dialogue with others” is important for validating adult learners thinking and helping them reflect on a wider scale. Finally, I asked the students to consider their own writing, as well as their group discussions, to attempt to come to a consensus on a definition for media literacy. This “open discussion,” as Fink would call

it, allowed the students to verbally process the information they had been confronted with.

Next, I attempted to address two of the main components of Finks (2003) taxonomy of significant learning: caring and the human dimension. In order to involve the student emotionally, I pulled on PowerPoint a powerful article written by Joel Arak (2005) which discusses the implications of body image satisfaction on suicide. In order to encourage active participation, I invite students to read out loud one line at a time. Some of the startling revelations bring tears to the eyes of participants. It was important for the students to understand the seriousness of the issue without a lot of time. Immediately after this article, I pull up the Center for Media Literacy's Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions (and pass out a hardcopy for each of the students). I then asked the students to reflect on these concepts, particularly in light of the article (our first analysis using the key concepts/questions).

After introducing what Fink would call the "foundational skills," I ask the students to further apply those skills by evaluating the before and after "photoshop" images of various individuals, from superstars to everyday people. They were displayed onto the big screen; however, I also provided all of the PowerPoint images to the students as a hardcopy to ensure they were able to see some of the smaller details or image changes. Looking at each image, we used our new foundational skills (key concepts / core questions) to evaluate the pictures. After discussing this particular media, we completed a similar analysis on a Calvin Klein add that is actively being shown on the internet, and in some countries on television. It quickly became clear that the students had picked up on the foundational knowledge, as they began to ask questions from the key

questions and core concepts such as: “why was this message created,” “how might young people interpret this message differently than older students,” and “what values are embedded in the message?”

In all five classes it was apparent, based on personal and faculty observations, and later interviews and focus groups, that the “structure” of the curriculum, based on Finks (2003) taxonomy of adult learning was significant. Fink suggests one consider foundational knowledge, application, caring, the human dimension, integration, and learning how to learn. In a short, one-hour curriculum, I believe I was able to reach all of these dimensions to some degree.

In order to allow students some time to process the new information, I waited seven days before asking students to complete the posttest exam. Of the 117 students who completed the SATAQ-3 pretest and participated in the original curriculum, 111 (95%) returned the posttest. Of the 111 that returned their pre and posttests, 97 (87%) participants agreed to have their pre and posttest questionnaires incorporated into the study per their consent forms. Of the students that returned the posttests, and agreed to participate in the study, 73 (75%) were female, and 24 (25%) were male.

### **Focus Groups**

For Part B, the focus group, I used pseudonyms based on gender descriptions in my transcription. For example, Focus Group 1, Female 1 or Focus Group 3, Male 3. For member checks, in case I had a specific question or needed clarification, I kept a single, printed copy of the real name of each student and their pseudonym in a locked cabinet in my office. Of the 97 students that agreed to participate in the study in some form, 28

(29%) agreed to participate in focus groups. I managed to set up three focus groups, using the student's schedules to best choose a time and location on campus that was convenient. The first focus group consisted of eight students. The second focus group had nine, and the third focus group had five. Therefore, of the 28 that originally agreed to participate, 22 (79%) were able to attend one of the three sessions. Appendix E is a copy of the focus group questions that were used to guide the discussion over approximately a one hour time period. These questions were used sparingly in order to invite the emergence of more natural conversations. After the focus groups, I transcribed the data as accurately as possible. I conducted member checks by emailing the original transcript to the participants, along with my interpretation of the conversation, giving them the opportunity to evaluate the interpretation, or delete anything they do not want included. Although some students added to their thoughts, no student requested that I remove or not include their thoughts in the study.

## **Interviews**

For Part C, the interviews, participants were scheduled individual meeting times. Participants met in my office which offered a comfortable, quiet meeting space. The participants sat across a small table from me, with the recorder in the middle of the table, but pressed against the wall in an attempt to make it less "visible" to the interviewee. 18 (19%) of the 97 participants were willing to partake in a one-on-one interview. In order to select participants, I first removed any students that had agreed to participate in the interview, but had not agreed to have their questionnaire data analyzed or included in the study (which would be critical for the interview). This reduced the number to 11. I

placed the informed consents in a folder, and randomly chose five of the 11 that had agreed to participate. I sent emails to the participants that were not selected, thanking them for their time and willingness to participate, and informed them of the possibility of doing an interview in the future.

Within two weeks of the initial curriculum presentation, and collection of posttest data, each of the five interviews was scheduled. However, only three of the participants were able to attend. Fortunately, the three interviews provided more than enough information, and almost five hours of transcription total. Although I could have attempted to arrange additional interviews, after transcribing the interviews and focus groups, the SATAQ-3/M and completing my thematic analysis, I felt confident that I had obtained enough information to saturate each of the themes that emerged from the coded transcriptions.

Appendix F is a copy of the interview protocol. The interviews were taped using a digital, audio tape recorder. Once the data had been transcribed, it was stored on a flash drive and locked in a file cabinet, inside of my locked office. Once the transcriptions were finished, and the flash drive secure, the audio recording was deleted to ensure the security of the participants shared experiences. For the interviews, I also use pseudonyms in my transcription and kept a single, printed copy of the real name of each student and their pseudonym in a locked cabinet in my office. I was careful to ensure I did not add identifying characteristics in the actual research, decreasing the likelihood that the students would/could be identified by description only. After the interviews I conducted member checks by emailing the transcript to the participants, along with my

interpretation of the conversation, giving them the opportunity to evaluate the interpretation and/or delete anything they do not want included.

### **Data Analysis**

The following section outlines the plan for data analysis of the SATAQ-3/M, before and after the implementation of the media literacy curriculum (detailed in Chapter III). Next, it details the retrieval and analysis of the three one-on-one interviews following curriculum implementation. Then, I explore the data analysis of the three focus groups, individually, and as a whole. Finally, I will discuss the synthesizing of the data into a mixed method interpretive study by describing the triangulation and members checks process.

#### **Part A: SATAQ-3/M**

For the quantitative portion of my research I used the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire 3 (SATAQ-3/M), a five-point Likert scale that has been validated and replicated in research numerous times (Heinberg & Thompson, 1995; Thompson et al., 1999). Students in a variety of social science courses were given the pre-test prior to the introduction of the media literacy curriculum. In addition, all students were given the post-test after one week of participating in the curriculum. However, only those students who signed and returned the informed consent (Appendix C) were included in the research findings.

As noted earlier, research on body image has been predominately focused on females (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997). In fact, the SATAQ-3 was specifically

designed for females. However, an adaptation of the SATAQ-3 for the male population was created by Cass, Cone, and Ford in 2007. Therefore, the SATAQ-3 was given to females, while the SATAQ-3M was given to male students. Because the changes between the scales are only minor, such as changing the word “pretty” to “handsome,” Cone, Cass, and Ford suggest the two can be given and measured simultaneously. As noted, I use the initials “SATAQ-3/M” to refer to both the male and female scales.

Once the pretests and posttests scores had been collected, I used a 2 x 2 Mixed Model Factorial ANOVA with the time as the repeated factor to analyze the data. The SATAQ-3/M has four subscales. Thus, the data includes analysis of the overall effect, as well as the effect of three of the four individual subscales: internalization general, internalization pressures, and information. I decided that the internalization athlete subscale was not relevant to this study, and was therefore not included in the analysis other than as a part of the overall analysis of the complete scale.

In the overall analysis, a significant main effect of time was found with post-test scores significantly higher than pretest ( $F(1, 95) = 11.743, p < .05$ ). The pretest mean = 85.28, posttest mean = 91.51. There was also a significant main effect of sex, with women ( $W = 93.89$ ) scoring significantly higher than men ( $M = 82.90; F(1, 95) = 5.615, p < .05$ ). However, the sex \* time interaction was not significant. Overall, both males and females scored higher after curriculum implementation than before. This suggests that both men and women were influenced by sociocultural attitudes towards appearance at a higher level after curriculum implementation than before. In addition, women scored significantly higher than men, suggesting women, overall, were more heavily influenced by sociocultural attitudes after the curriculum than males.

#### Overall Main Effect of Sex Table 4.1

	Male	Female
Pretest M	79.29	91.26
Posttest M	85.27	93.89

On the internalization general subscale, a significant main effect of time was found with post-test scores significantly higher than pretest ( $F(1, 95) = 11.743, p < .05$ ). The pretest mean = 85.28, while posttest mean = 91.51. There was also a main effect of sex, with women ( $M = 93.890$ ) scoring significantly higher than men ( $M = 82.896, F(1, 95) = 5.615, p < .05$ ). However, the sex \* time interaction was not significant. Therefore, the research found that media internalization increased after the implementation of the curriculum in both males and females. In addition, women scored significantly higher on the posttest than males, suggesting much higher levels of media internalization after the curriculum was introduced.

#### Internalization Main Effect of Sex Table 4.2

	Male	Female
Pretest M	79.29	91.26
Posttest M	85.27	93.89

On the pressures subscale there was no effect of time, but a main effect of sex, with men ( $M = 22.73$ ) scoring higher than women ( $M = 16.63, F(1, 95) = 14.354$ ). However,



the sex \* time interaction was not significant. Therefore, in terms of pressures from the media to maintain a certain level of appearance, men scored significantly higher than women after the curriculum. Women showed a marginally significant decrease in scores, however, the decrease was not dependent on the curriculum.

**Pressures Main Effect of Sex Table 4.3**

	Male	Female
Pretest M	16.67	22.25
Posttest M	22.73	16.63

On the information subscale there was a significant effect of time ( $F(1, 95) = 26.87, p < .001$ ). There was a marginally significant effect of sex, with women ( $W = 31.03$ ) scoring higher than men ( $M = 28.96; F(1, 95) = 2.972, p = .088$ ). The sex \* time interaction was not significant. Thus, the influence of information provided by society and culture on the way participants judged themselves was significantly influenced by the curriculum. Women were somewhat more affected than men.

**Information Main Effect of Sex Table 4.4**

	Male	Female
Pretest M	24.083	26.493
Posttest M	28.958	31.027

## **Part B: Focus Groups**

Each of the three focus groups was conducted in late afternoon, in a comfortable conference room in the newly renovated student center at University Blue. The conference room is inviting with chairs, tables, and couches all arranged like an upscale sitting room. The walls are scattered with beautiful art, the most alluring of which shows a young couple on a sunny day in a warm embrace. For the first focus group, the room was a comfortable temperature, and I quickly arranged the couches so that the students could sit in a circle-like formation. The first focus group consisted of 8 students, all of which arrived within approximately five minutes of each other. As they entered the room, I made sure to ask whether they knew the other students, making introductions when necessary. During each focus group, I made it a priority to spend the first five to ten minutes in casual conversation, getting to know the students, and allowing them time to get to know each other. I believe this worked in my advantage in all cases, as the students immediately appeared more comfortable with each other as I began guiding the focus group to the topic at hand: media literacy and body image. Overall, I had ten (45%) male participants and twelve (55%) female. Interesting, according to University Blue's website, this is the exact male to female gender ratio at the University.

When I entered each of the rooms to conduct the focus groups, I had just finished teaching a class, so I was still dressed in my traditional, professional clothing. However, I do not think I was over-dressed, simply because the students most often see professors, particularly me, dressed this way, and thus it would have probably been more unusual if I had dressed casually. The students themselves were dressed pretty casually. In the first focus group, which consisted of eight students, three (38%) were male and five (62%)

were female. One student was dressed rather eccentrically with purple and black leggings, lots of black and silver jewelry, and a type of collar around her neck. However, the other students did not appear uncomfortable.

Because I was attempting to use the digital recorder, I wanted to ensure that it was in a location that would clearly pick up all of the participants voices. However, it did not have a straight edge and therefore it would not sit on its side with the microphone pointing towards us. The first group of participants actually helped me decide where the best location was: in the middle of the circle, propped up on a book. As noted, I had formed a circle with the couches, and ultimately decided to place the recorder in the middle. I actually think that by involving the participants in determining the location of the recorder, they become more comfortable with it, as well as with each other. Because of this realization, I allowed each of the three groups to determine the location of the recorder. General psychology suggests that the best way to build group relationships is to have the group solve a problem together; maybe this was an example of that (Feist & Rosenberg, 2010).

In the first group, it was quickly apparent that three of the boys were roommates, but the girls were unfamiliar with each other and the males. Even though they did not participate in causal conversation without prompting, the females did all manage to sit together on one side of the room. The males, appearing much more comfortable with each other, and the environment, sat closely together on a single couch, laughing and joking before the focus group began. The girl that appeared to be the youngest, and dressed eccentrically, was also the most outgoing of the females (Focus Group 1, Female 1). She tended to lead the conversations, and oftentimes spoke over the others in an

attempt to get her voice heard. Although not intentionally so, she often broke in on the other females who would speak less often, discouraging them to speak up in the future. I attempted to bypass this problem by making note to go back to the female after Female 1 was done speaking.

Overall, the first group focused on media literacy and/or body image for approximately 45 minutes. The conversation was dominated by the three males and the Female 1. However, there were several small, but significant statements made by Females 2 and 3. By the end of the discussion, it was apparent that the students were much more comfortable with each other, and myself, engaging in casual conversation before leaving the room.

The second group consisted of nine students, four (44%) of which were male, and five (66%) female. Unlike the first group, the males and females in this group were much more “integrated” in the space. Female 1 and Male 1 were married, and stayed close to each other, somewhat isolated from the rest of the group. However, the rest of the group intermingled, speaking openly and candidly before the session ever began. With a close to even male/female ratio, it was interesting to note that the females dominated the conversation. In the one hour and 19 minutes recorded, females spoke approximately 57 minutes of the entire time. This is 72% of the time! Female 1 was the least communicative; however, she did tend to speak up when her husband, Male 1 did. Females 2, 3, 4, and 5 held very similar beliefs about looks, beauty, and the media’s influence on our perceptions of self. All four of the females were admittedly “overweight” and felt “undervalued” by the media portrayal of women in general.

The final focus group only consisted of five students, three (60%) males and two (40%) females. Like the first group, the conversation revolved around the males, and the most outspoken of the group. Male 1 and 2 in Focus Group 3 dominated the conversation. In 64 minutes of recorded tape, the males accounted for well over 68% of the conversation. In the beginning, the females sat across the room from the males, maintained close proximity to each other, and appeared somewhat timid about the issues. Although they did not say this, it was apparent from body language, such as blushing, that the females were somewhat embarrassed to talk about issues of body image. I would assume this is related to the male participants not only outnumbering them, and being outgoing, but being close in age (possible dates). I found out later that all of the students in this particular group lived on campus in the dorms, possibly increasing the chance that the students felt that their confidentiality would be breached, or that they would somehow have to “face” the other group members in the near future.

### **Part C: Interviews**

I scheduled five interviews, and managed to obtain close to five hours of conversation, only meeting with three of original five participants. The first participant was a black male in his mid-20's who played Basketball for University Blue. The second interviewee was a 19 year-old female who had become pregnant at the age of 15. She was currently supporting a four year old on her own, and attempting to increase her chances of success by earning a college degree. The final interviewee was a 35 year old, non-traditional female student, who identified herself as Native American. She also had a teenage daughter that had suffered from anorexia nervosa.

My first interview was scheduled with a black, male college student at 3:00 PM in my office at University Blue. The interviewee promptly arrived at 3:00, knocking quietly on my door. I opened the door, giving him a big smile and welcome, and he appeared to instantly relax. The interviewee was wearing a t-shirt and crisp, clean dark blue jeans. His shoes were immaculately white, and appeared to have never been worn before. I could faintly smell his cologne, or possibly aftershave. My office is a small, cozy space, although to some it may be considered chaotic. For example, my square office has bookshelves on three of the four walls, each of which are filled with a variety of colorful, and yet, randomly sized books. My computer desk is packed with a variety of electronics from my phone to my printer; in addition to my snacks, drinks, and anything else needed for comfort during the day. My back wall is home to a massive black filing cabinet topped with numerous pictures of my beautiful baby girl. On the only wall not covered with bookshelves, I proudly display my college degrees, certifications, and various awards. As the interviewee walked in, I offered him a chair. The somewhat comfortable chair is maroon, and cushioned well, however, it somehow did not quite look right with his 6' 5" basketball frame. He had to lay farther back in the chair than what seemed comfortable in order to have back support. However, as he became more comfortable in our discussion, he also appeared to become more comfortable in the undersized chair.

He was pleasant, and appeared to be in a good mood. However, my own mood was somewhat lacking, and I found myself performing, or doing what psychologists call emotion work. Emotion work simply involves changing one's cognitive, verbal, and emotional state to suit the situation, rather than allow one's "real" emotional state to come through (Feist & Rosenberg, 2010). I was feeling overwhelmed, teaching five

separate classes, an intersession course, and attempting to finish my dissertation.

Therefore, this interview was not only hectic, but emotionally painful. Thus, for the first time in my academic career, I had to make myself ready and appear to be fully engaged. Not wanting the participant to detect any instability or apprehension on my part, I maintained a smile and friendly composure (emotion work). I began by engaging him in conversation about basketball, something he had immediately suggested he loved (the reason he came to this school). I also asked him about his career choice, and allowed him to explore his occupational desires. After about 15 minutes of friendly conversation, I began to explain to him what I was doing, why I had asked him to take part in this interview, and read over the informed consent with him one more time. After he had verbally agreed to continue, and I was sure he was comfortable and ready, we began the interview.

Unfortunately, during the interview, the room became increasingly cold, and at one point, I noticed we were both rubbing our arms in an attempt to keep warm! Otherwise, the atmosphere was pleasant, and our interview was great. We met from 3:00 – 4:30 PM. The digital recorder was purposely veiled beside a stack of books on the center of the table, a location I had tested earlier for recording accuracy. The location appeared to work, as I never noticed the interviewee looking at the recorder.

A few days later, a young, white female entered my office to offer her time for my second interview. Unlike the earlier interview, I felt somewhat less disoriented, and in a much better mood. I felt delighted to be starting the second interview, and it was apparent that my good mood influenced the young female as we began discussing media and body image. Considering the western definition of beauty, this 19-year-old female

met the standards. She was tall, thin, and had blonde hair and blue eyes. Her trendy clothes appeared clean and new, and her five or so inch heels made her tower above me as she entered the room. Upon sitting down, she appeared to shell up, quietly looking around at items in my office. She immediately tunneled in on the pictures of my young child. Come to find out, she is also a mother of a four year old, having had the child when she was just 15 years old. This discussion quickly leads us into societal expectations of women and beauty, and therefore I quietly pushed play on the recorder and kept the conversation going. Before we knew it, almost 2 hours had gone by. I thanked her sincerely for her time, and openness. In addition, because we had discussed some issues that had prompted tears and anxiety, I recommended she visit with the school counselor. I explained the process, and told her a little about the counselor, and she appeared relieved and excited to have a free counseling service on campus. The interview ended on a positive note.

On a cold, cloudy day with snow storms looming, a white female 35 years of age, entered my office to complete the final interview. Although the weather was dreary, a tingle of excitement filled the air with buzzing of “blizzard” and “school closings.” The interviewee appeared somewhat anxious, entering the room cautiously, unsure whether she was in the right place. I immediately began to invite her in, offering her the comfortable chair sitting across from me. Using the weather as an ice breaker, we spent the first ten minutes or so getting to know one another better, and making the participant more comfortable with the entire process. She quickly let down her guard, and was very open and honest about her views concerning the media, and in particular its role in the process of influencing body satisfaction, or as she claimed, dissatisfaction. Her opinion



of the media must be evaluated through the traumatic time period in which she watched her 11-year-old daughter suffer from severe anorexia for more than 3 years. It was what she defined as “that damn internet” that introduced her daughter to the lifestyle.

Although somewhat negatively skewed due to life circumstances, she was surprising willing to consider and discuss the positive aspects of media as well, and we had a fruitful and enjoyable discussion. At the end of the interview she thanked me for offering a curriculum in media. She stated, “People don’t realize the potential...the potential dangers, like anorexia, that are accessible more now than ever before. But we don’t like to talk about it. So thank you for talking about it.”

### **Triangulation and Member Checks**

On a nice, calm Friday afternoon I invited all “analysts,” that is, focus group members, interviewees, and the Associate Professor of Experimental Psychology to join me for a brief discussion concerning the transcription and interpretation of the data. I was pleasantly surprised that I had four focus group members and one interviewee show up, in addition to the Associate Professor. As noted earlier, I did not provide these students incentives to participate, and therefore with their busy schedules it was somewhat unlikely that I would have a large turnout. In order to promote a calming, and open atmosphere, I had opened the windows in the white-walled classroom, and brought in drinks and snacks for the various members of the analysis triangulation team.

The atmosphere of this meeting was light and cheerful. Several of the students asked about my anticipated graduation, and whether they should attend graduate school or not. I allowed the personal conversation to flow for several minutes before redirecting

the group to focus on the task at hand. First, I asked if there was any specific subtractions or “misunderstood” analysis within the transcriptions of the conversations (the members had been given their own “number” when they recieved the transcriptions). None of the particpants felt that they were misrepresented, nor wanted any information removed from the study. When I moved on to the coding process, the students appeared facinated. Many had only heard of quantitative methods, and were very interested in the information I had sent them on qualitative analysis and more specifically mixed methods reserach. I answered several questions pertaining to the “new” method for the students before asking them to consider the coding process. They spent approxiamtely 10 minutes reading over, and discussing amongst themselves the coding process (referring back to the link I had sent them on qualitative coding adn thematic conceptualization). I spent the time discussing the relationship between the quantitative and qualitative data with the professor of experimental psychology, and answering questiosn when needed.

Although the members had originally sent back little information in terms of subtractions from my analysis, when I opened up the discussion about coding and thematic analysis, they did add a rich detail to the data that I had not foreseen. For example, when reading over my codes, and my wrieten formulation for the various themes, one of the students (Focus Group 2, Female 5), noticed that I was replicating information between two categories consistently (media definitions). She pointed out the amount of information backing up each of my other themese, and suggested combining the “pros” and “cons” of media into a single thematic category. I agreed with her description, and was able to combine the two themes into a single code. In addition, another student pointed out from the transcription I had sent (and he had printed and

brought with him) a very poignant pieces of evidence that supported my “altered perceptions” theme (Focus Group 3, Male 3).

Overall, I was pleasantly surprised by the outcome of this meeting. In addition to providing some very important, albeit minor changes to my themes, I felt as if the students benefited immensely from the meeting. In terms of teacher research, it is nice to be able to provide intrinsic value that could not be “promised” to the students beforehand. I felt that all of the students, as well as the professor, left feeling confident that they had learned something new that day, as did I.

### **Quantitative Research**

The decision to use the SATAQ-3/M scale was based on its reliability and validity scores, as well as the authors’ general permission for this scale to be used in research that is non-profit. In order to evaluate the data that I collected from the pre and posttest SATAQ-3/M scales, I consulted with a local statistician, informing him of my desire to not only evaluate the overall changes, if any, in their scores, but to assess three of the four subscales, with biological sex and time (the curriculum) as a factor. He immediately recommended a Mixed Model ANOVA with time as the repeated factor, given that I had required a one week “internalization” period before collecting the post-tests. The first step in the analysis process was to match up the pre and posttests. I did so by stapling the pretest to the posttest. Next, as I had promised, I used a black permanent marker to erase the student’s identifiers from the backs of the forms (only denoting in code those that would be interviewed). The SATAQ-3/M is itemized into four subscales, with reversed key items in all of the scales (see below):

- Internalization-General: Items: 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16, 27
- Internalization-Athlete: Items: 19, 20, 23, 24, 30
- Pressures: Items: 2, 6, 10, 14, 18, 22, 26
- Information: Items: 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 28, 29
- Reverse-keyed items: 3, 6, 9, 12, 13, 19, 27, 28

Therefore, while entering the data into an excel sheet, I had to ensure that I used the reverse keyed items when needed. An intern at University Blue checked the data for inaccuracies only after I had removed any identifying measures from the questionnaires. Once the data had been entered into excel, I was able to export the data into SPSS 17.0. SPSS is a statistical analysis software program often used in social science research. I was able to quickly analyze the data using a 2 x 2 Mixed Model ANOVA with time as the repeated factor.

Overall, the SATAQ-3/M measures participant's sociocultural attitudes towards appearance. That is, how much of what they consider "normal" appearance is socially or culturally instilled, particularly through media sources. The questionnaire is set up as a Likert scale (1-5) in which a "1" means that you "definitely disagree" while a "5" means you "definitely agree." Internalization in the general subscale refers to whether the individual has internalized "media ideals" (Tiggemann, Wade, Wilksch, 2006). For example, question 7 asks whether "I would like my body to look like the models that appear in magazines." Answering "I definitely agree" would suggest a high level of internalization.

The "pressures" subscale measures the extent to which the individual feels pressure to meet the social and/or cultural ideals of body image they are exposed to. For

example, question two asks participants to rate whether they have “felt pressure from TV or magazines to lose weight.” If a participant answers “definitely disagree” this would suggest that they feel little to no pressure from TV/magazines to lose weight.

The “information” subscale focuses on where the individuals get their information from. For example, question one asks participants to rate their belief about whether “TV commercials are an important source of information about fashion and being attractive.” If a student answers that “they agree” this would suggest that this student’s ideal of attractiveness or body image is being informed by the media.

### **Qualitative Research**

According to Sharon Merriam (2002), “the key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. The world, or reality, is not fixed, single, agreed upon, or measurable phenomenon” (p. 3). I used qualitative methods for this portion of the study in an attempt to gain a better understanding of media literacy in the social science classroom. I hoped, in the end, I could synthesize the quantitative and qualitative data to gain an understanding about how media literacy can be integrated into the curriculum, and how that integration influences the way students understand media, and in particular, its influence on body image. It is through the interaction of individuals with the media literacy curriculum that meaning is constructed; therefore, qualitative methods offer a good approach to understanding what it means to integrate a media literacy curriculum within the social science framework of post-secondary education.

I used a basic interpretive qualitative perspective in an attempt to analyze the findings from my focus groups and interviews. According to Merriam (2002), this method should be used when the “researcher is interested in understanding the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved” (p. 37). As the participants interacted with the new curriculum, they likely constructed new meanings as they attempted to make sense of their lives. Using interpretivism I attempted to “uncover and interpret those meanings,” with the hope of synthesizing the results with the quantitative data analysis to develop a deeper understanding of the influence of media literacy curriculum on body image (Merriam, p. 39).

### **Thematic Analysis**

Numerous researchers provide detailed directions for dealing with, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data. Bryman (2001) presents a four stage theory of qualitative analysis that offers a step by step approach to coding qualitative data. This study used methods triangulation, in which three different data collection methods were used. Two of the three methods (focus groups and interviews) were qualitative in nature, and needed a theoretically sound and reliable technique for analysis. First, Bryman suggests you read the research as a whole, looking for themes and categories connected to the research question. Therefore, I carefully read the focus group and interview transcripts, noting significant themes and/or categories. Next, Bryman suggests you read all of the research again, this time attempting to create labels for the codes, and highlighting any significant portion of the data in which the research question(s) is/are addressed (open coding). I thoroughly read through the transcripts again, attempting to assign labels to the categories

I saw emerging. After labels had been assigned, Bryman suggests moving on to the systematic coding of the data. Since I had already created labels for many of my codes, I began to “pull out” terms, phrases, and portions of my transcripts that fit into specific codes. Referred to by Bryman and others (such as Corbin and Strauss) as chunking, I attempted to discover what specific “chunks” of data were about, eliminate repetition within the codes, and systematically form an organized view of the data. Finally, in Stage 4, Bryman suggests you evaluate the codes or chunks of data in light of theoretical ideas, outside literature, and your research question. Coding is only the first part of a long research process in which the researcher must add his or her own interpretation to the relationship of the codes in light of related literature and the research questions originally posed.

During open coding, I attempted to “saturate” each code by reading and re-reading the data until I felt that the code was complete, or included everything related within the research data. Strauss and Corbin (2005) and Bryman (2001) suggest that emerging themes be organized into some type of conceptual ordering. Bryman suggests using code lists, or lists of codes, including definitions that are organized in an ordered, and/or hierarchical form that can be shared with others (member checks). According to Bryman, this organized version of your codes should also include your thoughts, ideas, connections, or any correlations made. Providing these can help ensure that your team members, when applicable, are able to quickly and easily interpret your codes and determine whether, when reviewing with the original data, they are confident about your codes. I used this process, providing my group members a hierarchical, conceptual

ordering of the codes, with applicable thoughts, correlations, and relationships I saw within or among the data.

### **Emergent Themes**

In Chapter IV I will detail the emergent themes in relation to the research questions, theory, related literature, and using mixed methods interpretivism. However, it may be helpful to review how the codes emerged from various themes through the open coding and member check process. First, let me outline the final themes and briefly define them. Next, I will delve into the coding processes that lead to the emergence of the following themes:

1. *Body image: Males perceptions of self and/or other* – this category includes the male participants expectations of body image for self and/or other. Particularly relevant are the terms “beauty,” “masculine,” and “good looking,” as they relate to body image.
2. *Body image: Females perceptions of self and/or other* - this category includes the female participants expectations of body image for self and/or other. Particularly relevant are the terms “beauty,” “sexy,” “skinny,” and “hot,” as they relate to body image.
3. *Media definitions (pro)* - this category includes participants’ definitions of media that portray the media as “needed,” “valuable,” and/or “necessary.”
4. *Media definitions (anti)* – this category includes participants’ definitions of media that portray the media as “obscene, violent, or vulgar” and oftentimes as



“dangerous” particularly in terms of its influence on our perceptions of body image.

5. *Altered Perceptions* – this category includes statements pertaining to the way people “used to” see themselves or others, as well as participants discussing changes (both inwardly and outwardly) they have made to themselves based on media presentations or suggestions.

Throughout the description of how I merged and re-emerged various codes into the five relevant themes, I will attempt to provide direct examples from the research to back up my thinking processes. I will use parentheses to denote a speaker, followed by their method of participation (interview/focus group/curriculum study) and gender. My own speech and/or observations is denoted by brackets.

### ***Body Image of self and/or other***

During the focus groups and interviews, much of the discussions were “free” associations. That is, I initially asked questions and obtained responses without interfering or reminding the participants of the topics explored in the curriculum in any way. However, it was after being asked about the manifest and latent functions of media that most of the participants began to speak freely about their views pertaining to the way the media influenced them. For example, several of the females began to take back their original depictions of men as “normal” or less sexualized than females in the media, and discussed the potentially harmful influence of men being shown as: “couch potatoes,” “bad fathers,” “drinkers,” “ripped,” “tall, dark and handsome,” “only black or white,”

“divorced,” “abusers,” and/or “losers.” These codes emerged throughout the data. These are just a few of the terms that the females used to discuss some of the more latent functions of the representation of the male figure in the media. In the following conversation, interviewee 2, the 19 year old female who had a daughter at the age of 15, makes a profound statement related to the potential consequences of latent functions on body image satisfaction and self-esteem.

*I was really surprised when I began, began to think about the ways in which guys, you know men are portrayed. I think about all the sitcoms, and they are usually cheating or beating on their wives, or heavy drinkers or something. No one says that all men are like that or anything, but when you see something like that over and over, I would think it has to be, to be, [internalized?], yes, internalized in some way. It has to influence the way the way they judge themselves you know? [What about body satisfaction in particular?]. Well, even though, like I said, they are sometimes just average with these beautiful women, that's not always the case. I think about that popular commercial with the black guy that keeps being shown without his shirt. He has an eight pack, is that even possible? I think that now more than ever we are stereotyping men to be tall, dark and handsome. They have to not only be good looking, but have money, a good job, and understand women. That's a lot to live up to. I knew wrestlers in high school that would throw up or not eat for days because that's the way wrestlers should look or should weigh. It's, well, it's kinda like that you know? Men have to live up to these standards whether they realize it or not.. and, oh yeah, and women expect it*

*because we see it in the media and think it must be real. I know women that have left their husbands simply because they thought they could do better, and I know where well I think where they get this idea is from TV and stuff..*

Overall, both males and females scored higher on the SATAQ-3/M after the implementation of the curriculum. For example, Interviewee 1, Male 1 scored a 72 on his pretest and a 91 on his posttest. At first glance, this would suggest that his sociocultural attitudes towards appearance had become more ingrained after the curriculum. However, if one looks more closely at the questions, particularly one's he changed from "definitely disagree" worth 1 point to "definitely agree" worth 5, you may notice a very different pattern. For example, he originally suggested that he did NOT (1) agree that "TV programs are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." However, after the curriculum, he answered definitely agree (5). When asked during his interview, why he changed his mind, he stated:

- "It didn't ask if I think they are important, but just whether they are, like in society I guessed, and I definitely agree after talking about it in class and stuff."

Thus, his response supports the idea that the media play a role in our development of self-image. When asked about his answer concerning the question from the SATAQ-3/M that stated: "I would like my body to look like the people who are in movies," Interviewee 1, Male 1 responded:

- “Really, I just didn’t admit it until now. Of course I do, and girls do too [do what?] Well, umm, they you know, compare you to others, plain and simple.”

Over and over I heard participants, both male and female, discuss the way they “evaluated” themselves and other based on the way similar individuals were portrayed in the media. During the first focus group, a heated debate raged over who was more affected by the media: men or women.

- “Women are shown in these skimpy little outfits all the time” (Female 2, Focus Group 1).
- “That’s not true, they usually have some guy gawking over them, but men do that regardless of what the women are wearing” (Male 1, Focus Group 1).
- “So, you actually think, you think that men are as sexualized as women?” (Female 3, Focus Group 1).
- “Well I, I mean...” (Male 1, Focus Group 1). (Conversation interrupted abruptly by another male student that appeared to be “protecting” his comrade as he puffed out his chest, moved to the edge of his seat, and used a somewhat defensive tone).
- “What he is saying is that we is just as bad as you. I mean, they show men in boxer shorts, with abs that are unreal you know. Yeah, they do show women in bikini’s and stuff, but it’s pretty much the same. Livin’ up to something we can’t” (Male 2, Focus Group 1).

The women tended to have very high expectations for men (as the men did for themselves), even acknowledging that many of those expectations came from various media forms. At the same time, they themselves stated that they felt “cheated” and “less desirable” because of the way they were portrayed in the media.

Many participants, both in the interviews and focus groups, talked about how the media portrayed males and females, and whether those portrayals were realistic. Ultimately, every group appeared to agree that both men and women were presented in a somewhat unrealistic way. However, males were the only ones who ever suggested they had some sort of obligation to live up to these standards. Whereas women referred to female standards as “unfair” “unrealistic” and “not real,” various males suggested a “picture” of themselves as they would like to be.

- “I think it’s good they show me those ripped guys, because it makes me work harder to keep in shape” (Interview 1, Male 1).
- “I know I am sexy if women stare at me like they do those men on TV. Maybe they use that computer stuff on girls, but I think more of the guys are real” (Focus Group 2, Male 3).
- “I know I evaluate myself against the men I see on TV. They are my competition. I don’t see that many men outside of the TV or X-box, so they are sorta my template, ya know?” (Focus Group 3, Male 1).

At the same time, while women felt compelled, as mentioned earlier, to rail on the media for its portrayal of women, they ultimately, but albeit subtly admitted that much of their

self-image is based upon the media representations. However, unlike the males, who appeared to embrace this portrayal, the females felt “overwhelmed” “ugly” “unappreciated” and oftentimes, as mentioned by four different females across various methods, “unwanted.”

- “You know men are judging us based on what they see on TV. That’s the only reason I try so hard to look like those girls. Guys don’t want you unless you look good. (Female 4, Focus Group 1).
- “I don’t like it, but I have to face it; men want girls that look like supermodels” (Female 1, Interview 2). [How did you come to that conclusion?].
- “I just looked around, you know. Everywhere, the signs, the TV, the stupid bus stop has beautiful women. Flawless. So when some product claims to make me so too, I usually jumped on it, trying to stay ahead of the game. Really, to get the best guy, you know, one that can care for me, and is good looking too.” (Female 1, Interview 2).

As I moved through the data, I began to see that the way the individual (as a male or female) was portrayed in the media played a role in the way the participants saw themselves. At times, a very specific theme emerged suggesting that the participants depended on the media to “inform” them what beautiful was. Likewise, the way the male and female participant’s evaluated each other appeared to be highly correlated with the media’s representation. Although they both claimed that the other, to some extent was definitely being “sexualized” and/or depicted “unfairly,” many of the participants’ also

freely admitted that the media had influenced their own expectations of the opposite sex. The following examples show both the “unfair” depictions of other, as well as times where it was obvious that their expectations of “other” were based on media ideals:

- “Although no one really talks about it men get it to, like you know told how to look and be. I think that it used to be different, muscles meant working and bigger meant rich, but now you not only have to be perfectly fit, but rich too. (Female 2, Focus Group 1).
- “The guy that got me pregnant was a real idiot. He was lazy and just sat around all the time. I see guys on TV that can be good-looking, rich, and be good dads. That’s what I want, umm, I want a guy like that you know?” (Female 1, Interview 1).
- “I feel really bad for my wife. I mean, come on, they try to sell her wrinkle crème and she’s only in her 20’s. The whole thing is a scam to make money, but women have been doing it for generations. It always amazed me that my mom would be late or not go rather than leave the house without make-up, now I know why. They are literally taught to be that way that is so sad.” (Male 1, Focus Group 1).
- Let’s be honest, we all want the, what did you call it? The ideal, the girl that winks at you from the TV. Even if we have a girl, we want that supermodel. That’s just biology. I think women have to use all those products and stuff to keep up, and I like that. I like a girl that takes her time to look good, I won’t lie. I have no, I mean there is no way I will date a girl that doesn’t look good [what do you

mean by “look good?”]. Well, not I guess, like the girls on TV (Male 2, Focus Group 2).

The SATAQ-3/M found that before the curriculum, women felt more pressure by the media, but less after the curriculum. However, for men, it was the opposite. They actually scored higher on the pressures scale after curriculum implementation. Somewhere, I had to include this idea of the male self as “required” by some biological or illogical force to be fit (Darwin maybe?). I would suggest it was these ideals or “pressures” that men felt they should live up to these standards that lead them to feel pressure to maintain a certain appearance, as presented by society via media. Thus, while men became more aware of their own pressures related to media after being exposed to the curriculum, women became had a small, marginally significant shift in their perceived pressures. In both males and females, it was apparent that they had deep rooted images of self and other that had been defined and refined within the Age of Technology. As I moved through the data I had numerous depictions or codes that dealt specifically with an ideal body image of men by men, women by women, men by women and women by men. These codes helped it became clear that the body image of self and other was clearly represented in my data.

### ***Media Definitions: Pros and Cons***

As I constantly moved through the data, I began to find that the way media was defined by the participants was somewhat variable. However, over and over again I



transcribed the word “they” assuming that the media is a giant conglomerate of people, objects, and/or things. When this informal “they” was used, a consistent pattern of criticism typically followed. The impersonal term appeared to allow for more damning statements about the media and its relationship to self-image. For example:

- “They just want us to buy more stuff, ya know” (Focus Group 3, Male 3).
- “Yeah, they are always showing how to make yourself better, like skinner or prettier or taller [*the other students laugh abruptly*]. But, you know what I mean, they want us to buy stuff, that’s how it works, why we can watch our favorite shows, because they are paid for with commercials” (Focus Group 3, Male 2).
- “I think it’s really all about money, but it works. They tell us how to be beautiful and we eat it up, we buy all the crèmes and makeups and stuff hoping to be more beautiful to get someone better, maybe even to be better” (Interview 3, Female).
- “They always are going to do that. You know, that, ummm...sell us stuff. They make people look perfect so that you have something to look forward to. If they just looked normal, then no one would buy all the stuff to look better” (Interview 1, Female).
- “It’s really like infomercials, ya know. Ahmm...they well...they can do anything in 60 seconds [*the other students laugh, and concur*]. I mean, a lot of times it’s not even real or just unhealthy, like the one that has you just drink some liquid that smells bad for 24 hours so you poop a lot and lose weight [*again, the other students laugh, one female turns red, looking down at the ground, appearing somewhat uncomfortable by the comment*]. (Focus Group 2, Male 1).

- “I wrote down those questions [the five key questions?] Ya, those, and starting to think about them, and it really made me angry too, like she said. I mean, there is a lot of mockery and fooling people going on in the media. I know you said that a lot of times their intentions are good, even though they lead to some bad things, but I think since we know that, they should recognize it and step up. (Focus Group 3, Male 1).
- “I have been an advocate against media for a long time. I have a child, and I always thought about the violence and cussing and stuff that goes on in TV, movies, videogames, and stuff like that, but I never thought about why, and really what the true outcomes could be. I don’t let my daughter watch much TV because of violence, but I would have never thought about its influence on her body image if I hadn’t done that course, that’s why I came for this group. I want to know how to intervene I guess, you know, make sure she has a healthier body image than I do. I have been wearing make-up since I was a teen, but why? Because some talking head told me so, that’s why. I wouldn’t go out of the house without it, but maybe I can change the way my daughter feels” (Interviewee 2, female).

Although the definitions above clearly show some cynicism in the way the students view media, they also showed profound moments of clarity in terms of the positive role the media can play in one’s life. These definitions tended to be much more personalized to that is, specific to “the media” or a specific type of media, like the internet or commercials.

- “I had, well, I guess no one had ever mentioned or made me ask why the media existed. I found that really neat, you know, getting to talk about those five things, steps [*key questions?*]. Yeah, key questions. I used to think of the word media to mean TV mainly I guess, but it’s much bigger than that. Newspapers, magazines, you even said billboards and t-shirts. Really anything that is trying to relay information for a purpose could be considered media. Like my video games, ummm...they have advertising in them. And now, the PlayStation move, and Wii and stuff are all aiming at improving the image of video games, making them more healthy and good for families, you know, and that’s good (Focus group 1, Male 2).
- “Think about it, you know, we would be riding ponies around without the media. We need the internet, and television, and stuff to be able to communicate, or even have this meeting, you know? It’s important. I think when people know what to look for, the media is really the best possible thing” (Focus Group 2, Female 3).
- “I think we can’t go back, so we have to go forward and make sure the TV is accountable for what they show. Since we know these things now, we can make the media better. Some of it is already great, like 918 Moms, I love that website, it’s awesome and gives so much positives information. But there are also sites, like porn sites and things that can be negative, so it’s really a balance” (Interviewee, Female 2).

Sometimes, as you may note, the same participant that criticized “them” had something positive to say about video games, television, or the media. This is critical, as it suggests that the students are not locking themselves into some singular category in which the media is either all “good” or all “bad,” which is by far the case. Instead, they are critically examining which parts, in their life, serve a positive role, and which serve a negative role. In the beginning, I had coded the two as separate themes, however, during triangulation meetings, a participant pointed out that they were really the same thing, the persons definition of media. That is, that many people have definitions that are both good and bad. I gained some clarity from the students thinking, determining there is somewhat of a dichotomous nature to the way we define media. That is why I chose not to separate the two, but to merge the categories into one theme.

On the information subscale of the SATAQ-3/M both men and women showed a significant increase in the amount of information they perceived to be related to their body image. Again, I have to suggest awareness is what led to this increase, and it is very possible that in the future, this awareness will result in less pressure. The media is neither all good nor all bad to any of us (so say the functionalist). The ability to analyze whether its implications are positive or negative, that is at the heart of media literacy, and being able to “define” media as it influences your life, not as a single entity with one definition, meaning, or effect.

### ***Altered Perceptions***

During the coding process, I realized a type of “transformative” speaking in which the participants referred to “pre” and “post” curriculum thinking. It was if there was a type

of epiphany or altered perception in their cognition, and it came out in the focus groups and interviews. As the SATAQ-3/M suggests, both male and female participants had a significant overall change in their perception of body image. Terms I initially coded included statements such as “now that I know,” “I used to think,” “before I knew,” and “after the experiment.” Similarities began to emerge, suggesting that these categories included statements pertaining to the way people “used to” see themselves or others, particularly in terms of body image. In addition, participants also discussed changes (both inwardly and outwardly) they have made to themselves based on media presentations or suggestions.

- “This is embarrassing (go ahead, this is a confidential space). Well, well I’ve been getting these treatments, they cost a lot, I mean a lot, and they are supposed to, well you know, supposed to remove belly fat. I think they keep telling me what a difference, and it’s enough, but you know I don’t really see it. But it all came down to the tv, movies, magazines, all these beautiful women everywhere, how can I compete [female became teary eyed, and took in a deep breath. Female participant sitting next to her patting her on the back, and she slowly began speaking again. The silence in between was somewhat piercing, as the participants, particularly the males, did not appear comfortable as if they did not know what they were supposed to do. Finally, her silence was broke]. And then, and then you showed us those pictures. Those pictures of the stars before and after. Even Brad Pitt, the magazine you know, where he didn’t let them use Photoshop. They were just normal. Why was I so stupid? I never thought to sit

back and think, you know, I've never actually met anyone as flawless, where do they come from, outer space? [Her laughter finally broke the tension, as others laughed with her, and began responding with their own insights] (Focus group 1, female 3).

- "I always thought men had to be tough, masculine you know? I have seen all the TV shows of men; you see them as the firefighters, police officers, jailers, and such and such. Well, I wanted to be a nurse, and I, well; I enrolled in the criminal justice program here because of my own belief that it would be manly. I guess, you know, I am dissatisfied with the way I look, and even afraid to be different in my job than those men on TV. It's really sad, but I am glad I was forced to talk about it. Maybe now, I will change majors [classmates began to encourage him, suggesting he should do it, and even giving him the name of the advisor over the program]. (Focus Group 1, Male 4).
- "I knew it, I knew it the minute you showed those before and after pictures. I thought screw this, I am not spending my time and money on all those products that are probably fakes anyway. I mean, it's not like you said, they make them look this way through beauty creams and make up, it's a damn computer. I simply will not be a product of this anymore. I was angry, really angry about it. I felt like I had been lied too [three other females quickly agree]. (Focus Group 3, Female 1).

It is obvious, from the statements above and the ANOVA data, that overall both males and females made significant changes in the way they viewed themselves,

particularly their satisfaction with their own body or image. In addition, they also showed significant increases in the way that they felt the media informed their decisions.

However, their discussions offer an even deeper view of just how much the media has influenced their images of self and/or other, and the role that a one-hour media literacy curriculum played in encouraging them to think differently about these issues.

### **Ethical considerations**

Various considerations must be made when attempting to conduct any type of research. However, I believe that working with students as “subjects” of research presents a distinct situation that had to be carefully considered. One way I hoped to reduce potential harm was to use the traditional ethical research guidelines outlined in the 1978 “Belmont Report” of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, all of which can be followed by both quantitative and qualitative researchers. Respect for persons is directly related to autonomy. An individual’s autonomy is an important consideration when evaluating research participants. Particular groups are less autonomous, and certain care must be taken to ensure the ethical treatment of these groups. Therefore, certain ethical considerations come into play that would not with an autonomous population. Prisoners who are being offered some outside commodity not easily obtained on the “inside” may decide to participate due to access to the commodity, regardless of possible risk to self. Ultimately, this makes most inducements effectively coercive. In general, as a researcher and a professor, students may also feel less autonomous, possibly feeling a sense of responsibility to participate, or even worry that their grade or evaluation will be affected. Therefore, when creating my consent form, which was addressed verbally in addition to

providing in hardcopy form, I worked hard to ensure that students' participation in my research in no way influenced the student/professor relationship. This was accomplished by ensuring all students that their participation in the actual study conducted in the classroom was voluntary. That is, they would not be penalized (nor rewarded) for agreeing to participate in any portion of the research. In addition, professors would not have access to consent forms to determine who did or did not agree to participate.

The second principle, beneficence, has been defined as “doing good” (Tisdale, 2004, p. 21). It refers to the researcher's obligation to “do no harm” and “maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harms” (p. 19). Tisdale brings up an interesting argument in terms of the issue of “doing good.” She notes that this concept may be defined differently depending on your own philosophical stance concerning morality and ethics. For example, the critical perspective suggests that we should protect vulnerable groups, particularly groups that have been oppressed. However, teleological ethics takes a very objectivist stance in which one analyzes the potential benefits in light of the possible risks. In this case, some suggest that harming a single person in order to help thousands is worth the risk. Thus, beneficence is really based on individual theories of what is right, good, and just. I personally believe in the evaluation of individual circumstances, and would be most likely to evaluate what “doing good” means on a case by case basis. In this study, my hope was to provide a solid foundation for future college educators to implement media literacy into their classrooms. Ultimately, this goal would be beneficial to the participants (the students) as they may begin to see media literacy more often incorporated into the classroom. In addition, the larger goal of showing the



potential benefits of media literacy curriculum in education, thus gaining the attention of K-12 policy initiators, is another important consideration.

The last principle outline in the Belmont Report is justice. Justice, as outlined by Tisdale (2004), dictates that "...researchers should not burden an already burdened group of people in society" (p. 20). Certain groups, such as ethnic minorities, tend to be targeted for research. The concept of justice suggests these groups should not be targeted unjustly, particularly since other variables, such as availability, already make them more likely to be considered as potential participants. A quick search of any journal will find that college professors are often at the heart of research literature. Thus, college students are often at the core of their research. Why? Convenience. Thus, I would suggest that college students are in fact targeted for research more often than other groups. However, I would also suggest that the most important part of this goes back to the principle of respect for persons. If a researcher respects people, in general, than individuals would not be targeted intentionally without positive motives, or at minimum, careful consideration of potential harm. In terms of critical philosophies, researchers may actually intend on helping oppressed populations break free of oppression. However, this is a good time to point out that not all populations defined as "oppressed" by the dominant culture actually feel or define themselves as oppressed. Part of the justice perspective should include ensuring a common understanding between researcher and participant. I truly believe that the media, in general, is an oppressive force WHEN citizens are not fairly given access to the information pertaining to accessing, analyzing, and evaluating media (i.e.; media literacy). Therefore, I feel I provided these students with a positive skill that may benefit them for life.

“Critical philosophy focuses ethics on special obligations to oppressed populations; actions of advocacy are considered right actions” (Tisdale, p. 17). This ethical orientation fits nicely with my views on knowledge and power, and my suggestion that we have an ethical obligation to evaluate this relationship. For example, in research, the participants or populations under study must be evaluated in terms of their access to knowledge, and ultimately power. Tisdale notes, “...they have the right to the social power that comes from knowledge” (p. 17). This supports my assumption that individual power is related to knowledge (access or lack thereof). So, who are “they?” That is, how do we decide who has the right to the power that comes from knowledge. I believe it goes back to my assertion that as educators, we have a responsibility to disseminate information, particularly when it could have a major impact on the lives of our students. In this case, teaching students to be media literate, to evaluate, analyze, and even create media in a variety of contexts offers a unique and useful tool that may help them to be successful in a mediated world. Therefore, if they are not being offered these skills beforehand, is it not our responsibility to at least evaluate whether we could adequately provide a media literacy curriculum within the post-secondary classroom?

### **Implications**

First and foremost, the design of a media literacy curriculum (Appendix G) for an adult audience was a key component of the research. Using the information and curriculum designs put forth by the Center for Media Literacy, and evaluating adult learning theory of significant learning put forth by Dee Fink in 2003, I was able to create a fast paced, curriculum component that offered foundational elements, as well as a

specific concept: in this case, body image satisfaction. The core goal of introducing the students to the main components of media; that is, preparing them for discussions relevant to media by offering them a foundation came from the Five Key Questions posed by Jolls, Share Thoman (2007). This foundation was necessary to be able to introduce any type of relevant media literacy curriculum. The Key Questions were easily presented and discussed, allowing me to quickly move forward into the curriculum most relevant to body image.

This study revealed the possibility of using a single class period to significantly influence students' perceptions of both the media, and a specific component of media (body image). In terms of the media literacy curriculum, I believe that, as suggested by Pinar, we can create interdisciplinary units of media literacy curriculum relevant to students' lives: biologically, socially, and psychologically. Using a Biopsychosocial model, I considered the key components of media and body image in relation to their potential biological, psychological, and social influences. Pinar discusses the lived experience of the individual as a placement in time, place, and history, all written autobiographically. Considering this perspective, it was extremely important to offer a curriculum that spanned the past, present, and future of all students. This also meant entering the classroom knowing that each person will have interpreted the media differently based on past experiences, will respond to the media literacy component differently based on past experiences and present states, and will hopefully (if encouraged) evaluate the future self through all of these, including the information on media and media literacy presented in the curriculum. Pinar refers to the "biographic situation" in which the student experiences "...a structure of lived meaning that follows

from past situations, but which contains, perhaps, unarticulated, contradictions of past and present as well as anticipation of possible futures” (p. 36). It is, I suggest, this biographic situation that should be considered, and hopefully pushed towards articulation in any curriculum, including media literacy.

## CHAPTER V

### **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a media literacy curriculum created for and implemented into a postsecondary social science classroom could influence students' perceptions of body image. In addition, this study was designed to recognize whether or not media literacy curriculum in postsecondary social science classrooms was a successful medium to introduce the core concepts of media literacy, in addition to body image issues. In this chapter, in an attempt to evaluate the results of this study, various theories will be applied to the data obtained during this research. In addition, this chapter will attempt to explore the study's influence on existing theories, and more specifically on the field of media literacy and curriculums theory. Finally, I will evaluate the overall effectiveness of this research and discuss possible future research.

#### **Curriculum Theory**

*“As we enter the new century, society's agreement on what defines an educated person, what constitutes essential knowledge and common discourse, has essentially collapsed”*

-Frank H.T. Rhodes (2001, B7).

The quote above is provided at the very beginning of William Pinar's (2004) book “What is Curriculum Theory?” Pinar goes on to describe curriculum theory using a quote by John Dewey (1916) as a progressive field that suggests we not only provide education

for society but for the "...self, and that its end is not only itself, but, rather, that it must engage and extend the interests - intellectual, psychological, social - of students" (p. 16). And, in a timely and meaningful moment, Pinar suggests that education must go beyond the school, and ultimately consider the wider implications for and on society as a whole. According to Pinar, curriculum theorists believe that the curriculum of any classroom and any subject extends well beyond the "ivory-towered" version of facts and standardized tests often portrayed as the key to university and secondary curriculum today. Instead, it is the combination of the technological, the psychological, the social, and the person that will ultimately interact (or not) with the subject to make it meaningful within the wider culture. One of the main themes in curriculum theory is to step outside of singular concepts and focus on the interdisciplinary possibilities that exist across the disciplines. Pinar writes that "to educate the public suggests that we teach popular culture as well, not only as a pedagogical lure to engage students' interests, but, through the curriculum, to enable students to connect their lived experience with academic knowledge, to foster students' intellectual development, and students' capacities for critical thinking" (p. 21). As media is often at the heart of popular culture, from our favorite blogs to our newest "tweets," I would suggest that teaching popular culture, as Pinar suggests, involves teaching our students about media and media literacy. Pinar discusses in detail both the potentially positive and potentially dangerous aspects of "cyberspace," suggesting that regardless of which direction we chose, surely it must be better than relying standardized test scores to determine the success or failure of our teachers and students.

This study was specific to postsecondary social science classrooms; however, its applicability to other areas is unexpected, at the very least. For example, many students

that fill the college classrooms have just left high school, and therefore could be, especially for first-semester freshmen, still classified as high-school students in terms of mentality and educational attainment. In addition, the curriculum that was adapted mainly from the core concepts of the Center for Media Literacy, and its media literacy curriculum for secondary schools, could easily be adapted into and across multiple disciplines. Finally, if a single, one-hour presentation of media literacy can influence the way that students perceive the media and its influence on body image, then there is certainly room to infer that it is a valuable tool to discuss in a variety of capacities from the role the media played in WWII (history courses) to the influence of technology on subjects like math and science.

Obviously, in a short, topic specific curriculum I was unable to reach the rich contextual qualities in all areas that Pinar would probably find most appropriate. However, the media literacy curriculum I developed for this study did follow many of Pinar's suggestions. For example, I attempted to develop curriculum that was not only interdisciplinary, but that introduced pop culture, as well as the way the subject (media literacy) influenced the students' lives socially, culturally, politically, and even psychologically. Although the curriculum was unable to provide all of these things to all students, they were, through the adapted version of the media literacy curriculum, given the tools necessary to delve into the role media played within specific spheres of their lives. Pinar's suggestion that a combination of psychological and sociocultural factors must be considered when developing curriculum influenced the way that I ultimately decided to evaluate the data that I collected. Being from a psychological background, I was drawn towards a Biopsychosocial model.

## **Biopsychosocial Approach**

The Biopsychosocial theoretical model, typically found in medical books, suggests that biological, psychological, and social factors all play a significant role in the way that humans function, particularly when attempting to understand illness or disease. In the medical world, the term “relationship centered care” has begun to replace the Biopsychosocial model to specify the model when applied to medicine, illness, or patient care (Suchman, 2003). This change in name has occurred mainly because of the overuse of the term by other disciplines. Although the model was introduced as, and often still used as a medical model, researchers have stepped outside of the boundaries and applied this model to a wider spectrum of topics and curriculum; from sexuality to program development and much more (Cortez, J., 1973; Downey, Furman, Jackson, & Seize (2004); Feist & Rosenberg, 2010; Luckhurst, Hatfield, & Rapson, 2010). Thus, this theory can easily be molded to understand the influence of media on students’ perceptions of body image. The model below shows the interactions between the three significant portions of the model. Note that the overlapping of the circles suggests that at times, biological, psychological, and social factors all play a role in one’s understanding of self and/or other. It is relevant to note the questionnaire I used in this study was based on sociocultural attitudes, which assumes a role of both society and culture in the way we shape our attitudes about body image. It is a natural extension to consider biological and psychological issues as extensions of or complements to sociocultural issues.



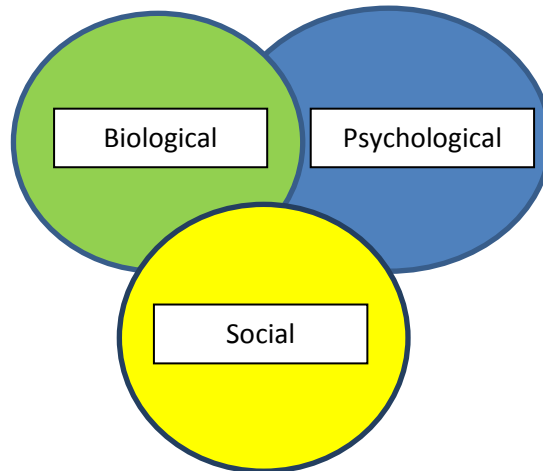


Figure 5-1: Biopsychosocial Model for understanding Media Literacy Curriculum

When attempting to evaluate the role the media plays in our understanding of body image, we must consider first and foremost that there are biological limitations for each. For example, Michael Lowe (1987) outlines set point theory which suggests each person has a biological homeostatic weight for which their bodies attempt to maintain based on height, bone density, and body shape. In particular, females are subject to higher set points as they are biologically designed for pregnancy, a condition that requires them to be able to store fat, endure gestation, and ultimately give birth. During the course of the research, one of the focus groups discussed this topic in detail, even pinpointed the term “set point,” as relevant to understanding reality versus “virtual reality,” as one male student put it (focus group 3, male 1).

Psychological factors of the Biopsychosocial model can include our mental, emotional, behavioral, and even cognition or thinking. Therefore, when attempting to

understand the influence media has on body image, evaluating the way the media influences these states can be critical to understanding the “whole” picture, and ultimately offering a curriculum that is best designed, as Pinar would suggest, to offer the individual an educational program aimed at helping them become more centered within themselves and society.

Finally, the social factors of media and their influences are probably the most obvious or latent. First and foremost, media is created, formatted, and shown in the social or public sphere. In addition, evaluating the influence the media has on the way the individual places themselves within society could be crucial to understanding the true influence of media on body image, and ultimately the best way to design a curriculum aimed at informing these individuals.

### **Discussion**

In this discussion, I will be applying the theoretical ideas of social, educational and curriculum theorists and the biopsychosocial model to the data. This discussion will evaluate the specific categories developed during coding, and ultimately apply them back to the research questions. First, I will evaluate the body image of self and/or other in males and females. Next, I will explore the nature of the media definitions presented by participants, both supportive and critical. Finally, I will discuss the ways in which participants felt that they and/or others should have or have changed based on media representations of body image.

### **Body Image of self and/or other**

As discussed in Chapter II, Robert Merton's sociological theory of manifest and latent functions can be relevant to understanding the influence of media on students' perceptions of self and other. In all discussions (focus groups and interviews), students were able to quickly think of and discuss the manifest functions of media in US society. For example, students pointed out that the media was used to "provide important information," "educate," and "raise money for disasters." All of these are open or overt examples of media presence in the students' lives. However, when the discussions turned to the specific issue of body image, the students became more reluctant, and had a much harder time discussing the latent functions of media in terms of its influence on body image.

In an attempt to understand the development of body image, participants were asked to consider where they obtained their information about how they should look. Immediately, participants began to squirm and appear uncomfortable, both in the focus groups and the interviews. Females tended, however, to speak up first, and have the strongest opinions opposing the media's representation of females (it appeared initially). According to the SATAQ-3/M, both males and females got more of their information about "how" they should look (body satisfaction) from the media after the curriculum than before. And yet, reading their responses, it appears that they were simply more mindful of the position the media played in the development of body image:

- “I really never thought about it until you asked us, and I was like damn, I do it all the time, I look at celebrities and want to be and look like them”  
(Focus group 2, female 2)
- “I can never live up to the standards, I don’t feel I can, the standards put on me by TV and media and stuff, and sometimes I get really depressed and then do stuff like overeat which makes me more unattractive”  
(Interview 2)
- “I don’t think I’ll ever be the ideal, but now I know no one really can. But, we would be lying if we said we didn’t look or try” (Focus Group 3, female 2).

Interestingly, as mentioned in Chapter IV, males appeared to be more accepting of what they thought of as the way the media portray them, offering cognitive and even biological reasons why they should be similar to the men portrayed in the media. The following are excerpts from the various perspectives:

- “I think it’s or the media tell us exactly how to be. Tall or short fat or skinny happy or sad, whatever they want that week, whatever will sell. And we buy into it, even I do. (Focus Group 3, Female 4).
- “I never really thought about it before, how even my “heroes” were being commercialized to sell me products or more realistically a product of how to look and dress and stuff (Interview 1, Male).

- “I think women mainly get the brunt of it, you know, that is they can’t live up to what the media suggests, but men can, I mean easier at least” (Focus group 1, female 2).
- “I think men are biologically supposed to be healthy, to be good dads and stuff you know. Women have to have bodies that can carry babies, but need strong sperm (several students laughed, while others shifted in their seats). I am serious. This is evolution or something” (Focus group 2, Male 2).

The students were able to openly discuss the way the media intentionally attempted to sell them products, and even sell them body images, but had a harder time discussing the latent functions of media. For example, the young female above admittedly “overeats” based on “depressive symptoms” caused by not being able to fit into a body image that the media has created. This is a scary and potentially deadly latent function of media’s influence on body image. Thus, while they were able to discuss separately the issues of manifest and latent functions, they had a much harder time connecting the two.

The women did not recognize the “societally unattractive” stereotypes as stereotypes. It appears as though the women failed to recognize their own tendency to stereotype, as their comments suggest they would like men to have a more specific body image, but as shown earlier, they themselves do not like being boxed into a particular body type or style. Body image can include a number of issues, from the color of ones hair to the size of ones hips. This is also seen in the results of the SATAQ-3/M, as both

males and females body satisfaction decreased after learning more about the way the media can “falsify” the way that individuals look in order to sell a product, or an image.

### **Media Definitions: Pros and Cons**

The way media was defined by the participants was somewhat variable. As mentioned, over and over again I transcribed the word “they” assuming that the media is a giant conglomerate of people, objects, and things. However, it was clear that the participants’ definitions and understanding of media, in general, had improved.

The curriculum focused first and foremost on developing an understanding of the Five Key Questions and Core Concepts outlined by the Center for Media Literacy. Using specific data, first, we discussed the importance of who created the message. Next, what techniques the “creators” of media use to attract and maintain viewers/readers attention, and how different people may understand, interpret, or value the message differently, depending on a variety of factors from self-esteem to knowledge of media. Then we discussed the reason the message was created, and the factors that could/would influence the message including the values, lifestyles, and points of view of the creator that are represented in (or omitted from) the message. We then discussed why media is created? That is, what was the actual manifest function of the message: to sale, to inform, to persuade? Finally, we discussed the potential latent factions of those messages. For example, the way that a commercial designed by Victoria Secret to allure and entice women to buy their products, may, at the same time be inadvertently influencing women’s perceptions of self and/or other, as well as men’s perceptions of women. I would suggest that this includes not only their own, but their expectations for others as

well. This appeared multiple times in discussions by men after prompting the students to think back to the Five Key Questions and the media literacy curriculum. The following examples attest to the significant changes in understanding and defining media in general:

- I always just thought of TV really. That's it. But, you know its kind-of everything, like video games, or even the signs outside the doors at my work. That's really all media you know? I guess I really do see those women and start to look for that, you know?" (Focus group 1, male 3).
- I not beautiful according to America. If you put me against a sign or a magazine cover, I don't even compare. But, I have this wonderful, beautiful husband, how did that happen if it's all about looks? Then, I have a three year old that asks, mom, when will my boobs get bigger like Hannah Montana's.....that let's me know for sure the media is influencing her body image, and I'd never even thought about it (Focus Group 3, Female 1).
- "I hold myself up to a very high standard. I think it comes from my heros, they are all sports stars. I say their girlfriends, usually models, but usually on TV or in magazines and stuff, so I thought, that's what I need too. I probably missed out of some great girls (Interviewee 1, Male).

### **Altered Perceptions**

This thematic category includes statements pertaining to the way people "used to" see themselves or others, particularly in term of body image, as well as participants discussing changes (both inwardly and outwardly) they have made to themselves based

on media presentations or suggestions. Overall, the internalization subscale suggests that both men and women internalized the media stereotypes more after the curriculum than before. However, as I have repeated, evaluating the questions on the scale suggests to me that any person who is better informed about the media's influence, and in particular, how it works (just as the key questions to ask), would score higher on internalization. However, in the long run I truly believe that this "internalization" will lead to "realization" and ultimately less influence.

- I always thought I changed my hair, my makeup, even the "liposuction..." It was just the needle kind; I thought I did all that for me. But really, I was doing that for everyone else because I thought that's what everyone else wanted and everyone else looked like (Focus Group 2, Female 1).
- I had several friends in high school who had their breasts enlarged when they were only like 16. I don't even think they could have known how large their breasts would be by then, but that was just my school, perfect or nothing. Funny, I never really thought about my high school that way, but it was, a bunch of people trying to look like TV stars or something.
- In college I met this super cool girl, we hung out, and had lots of fun. She was super smart and pretty, she'd help me with my work and girl troubles and stuff. One day she said, did you know we went to high school together? I was like, no way. She said, you would have never talked to me. Looking back that hurts. It was because of this ideal of what popular people look like and I was one of



“them” so I couldn’t be friends with “her.” That is too sad, she is one of my good friends now (Focus Group 3, Male 2).

Even though the ANOVA suggests internalization increased, discussions offer an even deeper view of just how much the media has influenced their images of self and/or other, and the role that a short, one-hour media literacy curriculum played in encouraging them to think differently about these issues.

### **Research Questions**

I began this study with three specific research questions that I hoped to address. The following sections will address each of the three research questions in terms of the data obtained during the course of this study:

#### **Question 1**

*Are students’ perceptions of body image influenced by the media, and are they aware of these influences?*

An evaluation of the totality of data I reviewed suggests that student’s perceptions of body image are indeed influenced by the media. In addition to their own body images, their expectations for others, both of the same gender and the opposite gender appear to be strongly tied to expectations set forth in the media. The males and females vividly described the female expectation of the “perfect body,” or the “perfect woman” using various adjectives including:

- Thin
- Skinny
- Small
- Flawless
- No wrinkles
- Tall
- Blonde
- Tan
- Pretty hair
- Clean
- Smell good
- No blemishes

There are just a few of the words/terms used by participants to describe the way that women should look. Unfortunately, even when the students appeared cognitively or psychologically aware of the media's influence on these expectations, men and women alike appeared to have already internalized them. For example, women gave numerous examples of beauty products, regimens, alterations, and other changes they attempted to make in order to fit into this "body ideal." Their overall body satisfaction appeared to actually decrease after the curriculum, and yet, I would highly suggest, as noted before, that this was the result of information simply making them more aware of the influence of media on their own body image. For example, when asked the second time whether the television played a role in the way they dressed, they were much more likely to have been sensitized to this particular mechanism of media persuasion through the curriculum than before. However, I do not believe it changed their overall body satisfaction. That is, most of the females had a strong grounding in the cultural ideals of what beauty was (is).

Likewise, males also appear to be highly influenced by the media ideals placed in front of them. Unlike females, however, they appeared less "bitter" and more likely to accept both the expectations set forth by society and their own body image, regardless of whether it fit that image. For example, several males that admittedly were outside of the media "ideal" stated matter-of-factly that they knew they were, and they would eventually get back "in shape." Females, however, were much more sensitive to the issues, blaming or pointing fingers at the media, but desperately trying to keep up regardless of the potential dangers (Botox) or pitfalls (nutritional imbalances from dieting).

## Question 2

*Can a media literacy curriculum, aimed at informing students about the major issues of media literacy, particularly issues concerning body image, influence students' overall perspectives on the media's influence on body image?*

I would suggest that this curriculum absolutely influenced students overall perspectives of the media's influence on body image. As mentioned earlier, it appeared that overall body image satisfaction had decreased after the curriculum, however, consider the following questions from the SATAQ-3/M:

1. Movies are an important source of information "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_
2. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to change my appearance. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I do not try to look like the people on TV. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Movie stars are not an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_

Before the curriculum, the students likely answered these questions honestly, but that honesty was coming from a deeply internalized societally embedded view of body image that they had never confronted before. Therefore, after the curriculum, the students were much more aware of the major issues concerning media literacy, particularly those concerning body image. They also learned about deconstruction, and the sometimes latent functions of media. Therefore, I am not surprised that their overall "body dissatisfactions" scores increased. However, I believe it is less a reflection of a change in body satisfaction, and more a change in their overall awareness of the true influence

the media has on them in terms of their overall satisfaction with self, and other for that matter.

### **Question 3**

*What information, outside of issues specific to body image, will students retain about media literacy and the influence of media on their lives after being exposed to a unit of media literacy curriculum?*

Unfortunately, of all the questions, this is the one that I have the least amount of information on. Because the conversations in the focus groups and interviews were so impassioned in terms of the media's influence on body image, little time was spent on whether or not the students remembered the "key concepts" of media literacy or how to deconstruct a message. That being said, there were certainly times in every focus group and interview that a participant referred to a concept, term, or idea that was specific to the curriculum. For example, several of the students mentioned manifest and latent functions (if not by name). That is, they were able to talk about the intended consequences of media versus the unintended consequences. The term "constructed" also appeared consistently throughout the focus groups and interviews. Of the five core concepts introduced, two used the term "constructed:"

- All media messages are constructed
- Media messages are constructed using a language with its own rules

Oftentimes, the participants would refer to the “creator” or “constructedness” of a message. For example, the male interviewee noted that he had never stopped to consider who “created” the message and why.

“This really had a big effect on me. I mean, what is the point, that’s the point right? Are they telling me the truth or just trying to sell me something. I think that matters, you know?”

Other students talked about the “power” of the media to influence “beauty” and ultimately “sell” them products. Although many of the females pointed out this issue, in one poignant statement, Female 4, from Focus Group 2 stated:

“You know they, ummm, the media can sell us anything. Creams that take away stretch marks, and lighten skin, and remove wrinkles. And if that’s not enough, you can just hit salon or the plastic surgeon. They like us to think we are making ourselves look like the girls in the magazines, but like you showed us, those girls don’t even look like that”

### **Implications**

Designing a media literacy curriculum (Appendix H) for an adult audience was a key component of the research. Using the information and curriculum designs put forth by the Center for Media Literacy, and evaluating adult learning theory of significant

learning put forth by Dee Fink in 2003, I was able to create a fast paced, curriculum component that offered foundational elements, as well as a specific concept: in this case, body image satisfaction. The core goal of introducing the students to the main components of media; that is, preparing them for discussions relevant to media by offering them a foundation came from the Five Key Questions and Five Core Concepts posed by Jolls, Thoman and Share (2005). This foundation was necessary to be able to introduce any type of relevant media literacy curriculum, especially one specific to body image satisfaction. The Key Questions were easily presented and discussed, allowing me to quickly move forward into the curriculum most relevant to body image dissatisfaction.

This study revealed the possibility of using a single class period to significantly influence students' perceptions of both the media, and a specific component of media (body image). In terms of the media literacy curriculum, I believe that, as suggested by Pinar, we can create interdisciplinary units of media literacy curriculum relevant to students' lives: biologically, socially, and psychologically. Using a Biopsychosocial model, I considered the key components of media and body image in relation to their potential biological, psychological, and social influences. Pinar discusses the lived experience of the individual as a placement in time, place, and history, all written autobiographically. Considering this perspective, it was extremely important to offer a curriculum that spanned the past, present, and future of all students; from historical events to technological advances. This also meant entering the classroom knowing that each person will have interpreted the media differently based on past experiences, will respond to the media literacy component differently based on past experiences and present states, and will hopefully (if encouraged) evaluate the future self through all of

these, including the information on media and media literacy presented in the curriculum. Pinar refers to the “biographic situation” in which the student experiences “...a structure of lived meaning that follows from past situations, but which contains, perhaps, unarticulated, contradictions of past and present as well as anticipation of possible futures” (p. 36). It is, I suggest, this biographic situation that should be considered, and hopefully pushed towards articulation in any curriculum, including media literacy.

As a teacher researcher, I am excited to see the potential this type of research has for the future of social science classrooms. As educators continue to fight to incorporate media literacy in K-12, postsecondary educators have a rare opportunity to introduce adults, and parents of many of those children that are in the K-12 classrooms right now, to the key components of media literacy. It is possible that by educating parents they may not only teach their students at home, but demand more media literacy in their schools. Although this study focused on analysis of media, there are several other areas, such as the incorporation of media literacy production that can be studied and/or implemented in the social science classroom as a key component of media literacy education. Last semester I challenged my students to choose psychological or sociological topics and provide real and relevant information through a creative, technological component. From lavish videos to intricate PowerPoint’s, the students created fantastic learning tools for their peers, but more than that, in my classroom evaluations, they noted how much they loved the opportunity to use and learn about a new technology. I believe it is our responsibility as educators to help students prepare for the “real” world. In the real world, how many times will they be given choices “a, b or c?” Are we going to continue to focus on a banking system of education in which we



deposit information that the child could realistically look up faster than we could possibly recite? I believe media literacy is an extremely important component of education that must continue to be studied and implanted across the curriculum.

### Limitations

Overall the data suggests participants did indeed benefit from the curriculum, however, the SATAQ-3/M suggested that after the curriculum internalization of media ideals increased in males and females. The results also suggested that media pressures increased in males, and the amount of information obtained by the media in reference to body image increased in males and females. At first glance, this would suggest that the curriculum had no influence on the student's body image, or that it actually lead to an increase in internalization of media. However, looking at the questions closely, one can immediately begin to see some possible reasons why participants who have completed a component in media literacy would have an increased level of body dissatisfaction. I will discuss several possible explanations for the posttest results.

First, I do not believe it was a "real" increase in terms of the participants actual internalization, but instead, I believe it was closer to the true impact of media overall, as the students were encouraged to take a wider look at the influence the media plays on body image. This suggests that the SATAQ-3/M may not be the best measure to determine whether a media literacy component can influence body image. Unfortunately, it simply has too many questions that could be answered "more accurately" after a media literacy curriculum, leaving the researcher with little information in terms of how accurate the pretest measure was. Schoeback (2011) defines information bias as "a

systematic distortion or error that arises from the procedures used for clarification or measurement of ....the exposure or other relevant variables” (p. 5). That is, the error itself results from the information provided about the relevant variables. For many, this was the first time they had been introduced to media literacy, and in particular, media literacy analysis. It is very possible that the information they were given helped them to provide more accurate answers than they did in the first place. It is possible that if they had this information beforehand, their scores would have been different, and internalization may have significantly decreased. However, because of the lack of information when completing the SATAQ-3/M in the first place, there was simply no way to compare the two numerically.

It is possible that completing pre-curriculum interviews and focus groups might help the researcher determine how accurate the first set of scores was. Or, in addition to completing interviews and focus groups beforehand, it might be relevant to consider offering a short curriculum in the foundational knowledge of media literacy (Five Key Questions / Five Core Concepts), without mentioning body image. This information may help the students more accurately complete the pretest.

As noted, the SATAQ-3/M scores suggested that the curriculum led to an increase in body image dissatisfaction rather than an increase in body image satisfaction. The fact that I only implemented a one-hour curriculum that included compelling evidence of the influence, both bad and good, of the media on the way we define ourselves, may actually explain the increase in body image dissatisfaction. When asked at the beginning on the SATAQ-3/M whether “TV and movies influenced the way they see themselves” participants may have immediately answered no, as they had never been

introduced to the skills to evaluate whether the media had an influence on them. Then, after the curriculum, the students were much more capable of recognizing the influence of particular mediums. The students only had one week to internalize what they had learned before they were given the posttest. It is possible that if the participants had been given more time, or the curriculum had been longer, allowing the researcher to address more complex media issues, the results could have been very different.

Another possibility is that without key knowledge concerning media literacy, the students were compelled to answer in a way they felt most appropriate. This would suggest they were influenced by social desirability, that is, what is/was the most socially accepted answer. For example, men are socialized to be “masculine” and “tough” and therefore answering “yes” to a question that asks whether you evaluate other men in magazines to determine how to look would be considered socially undesirable. Likewise, women are socialized into more submissive, motherly roles, and oftentimes encouraged to either be a mother, or a beauty, but not both. As a culture we make it topic of conversation when someone “looks good” after they have a baby.

Finally, as I later discuss in more detail, the wording of the SATAQ-3/M questions are quite ambiguous at times. For example, it asks “TV programs are an important source of information about fashion and being attractive.” This does not imply “I” or “We.” That is, is the question asking whether they are important for the person answering, or for one’s culture as a whole? Many of the questions were like this, and I had several participants note that this was one of the main reasons they were not sure on how to answer specific questions. The questions could possibly be more effective if they researcher was given permission to adapt the scale and add the specific “I” or “We”

depending on the desired outcome. Whatever method one uses, searching for a better means of measuring the influence of the media on body image before and after the curriculum will certainly need to be a part of any research using this curriculum in the future.

### **Recommendations**

The entire process, from idea formulation to curriculum creation has occurred over a four year period in which I have explored, expanded on, and articulated my understanding of, and feelings towards media literacy. In particular, I am concerned about the future of a nation in which, as Freire would call it, a “banking model” of education is still at the core of the secondary education system. Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams (2008) write: “At the end of 2006...Time magazine choses “YOU,” the online collaborator, as its “Person of the Year. [At this time] ...My-Space was growing at two million registrants per week” (preface). As the first 3-D televisions hit the market, and the gaming industry continues to explode as they figured out how to mass market to families, media and technology are more prevalent in our lives than ever. It is time to develop media literacy curriculum that can be incorporated across the curriculum, and across the time/space continuum of secondary and postsecondary education.

Overall, I was extremely satisfied with the outcome of the research. In particular, I felt that a mixed methods paradigm was critical. And yet, the SATAQ-3/M showed time after time the opposite of what the students were saying. I felt that knowing the questions and how the students responded, that I could have created a questionnaire better suited for the short term curriculum. I believe that it is possible that the questionnaire

was misleading in ways, as it often failed to specify whether it was referring to the person's opinion or society as a whole. Students that interviewed suggested they would have answered differently had they known whether the question was referring to them specifically or to society in general.

A few other things could be "cleaned up" if/when this study is replicated. First and foremost the informed consent is a nightmare, even for college students. It is four long pages of descriptions, restrictions, and signatures. I know that it is important for the students to understand what it is they are agreeing to participate in; however, I feel that I could have, as a good orator, offered a verbal explanation of the three projects, thus avoiding an entire page of descriptions. In addition, if I was able to go through the three portions of the project; the questionnaire, the focus groups, and the interviews with the students, and have them ask questions immediately, and then decide whether or not to give consent, the process would have been more streamlined. This easier and more efficient process may have led to a higher return rate, as several of the students forgot to bring their forms back, were not in class the next day, or were simply confused by the form and unwilling to put themselves out there as the one that "did not get it," so they simply did not sign.

I believe upon replication of this study a more random, general sample of students could be used. At most research institutions there are "research walls" in which all research projects are posted, and students are allowed to sign up. At Blue University, various professors from Liberal Arts to Social Science give extra credit to students that participate in these studies because of their value not only to the researcher, but to the student as he/she learns more about the research process by participating in it. This

would still remove the teacher researcher from offering a direct incentive (thus avoiding teacher/student conflict), but would also give the researcher a more representative sample of students, and a longer time frame to complete the consent forms, SATAQ-3 pretests, and the curriculum all at one time. In addition, the researcher would be able to immediately ask those students who had signed up to participate in either focus groups or interviews to stay and discuss times/dates for those portions of the research.

It may also be of significance to develop a single curriculum focused on the 5 Key Questions and Core Concepts of media literacy, as outlined by Jolls, Share and Thoman (2007). Discovering whether students' high schools implemented any type of media literacy curriculum, from media creation to media analysis, would be valid and relevant to developing specific curriculum designed around the gaps in knowledge. After gaining a better understanding of what students are (or are not) getting from their high schools in terms of media literacy, researchers would be better able to determine what types of information needed to be included in the media literacy curricula. In addition, this may be a way to get the attention of secondary education policy makers, pushing for the integration of media literacy as an interdisciplinary, multi-level educational tool that is vital for the future success of our students educationally, occupationally, socially, culturally, and at times, even biologically.

Although I was able to evaluate the influence of media literacy curriculum on students overall body satisfaction, internalization, and pressures, this particular questionnaire, the SATAQ-3, was originally designed for younger populations, and often used in studies concerning athletes. I believe that with some intense, in-depth research, a better measure could emerge to understand the influence of the curriculum on the body

image of the students who participate. Unfortunately, with 99% of the research to date completed on pre-college level students, there is very little specific research on which to obtain this data. On a positive note, this study may offer some insight and/or a precursor for future studies that will offer more valid and reliable measures.

In my opinion, one of the only major flaws of this study was the fact that I did not complete interviews and focus groups pre and post curriculum. By completing the focus groups and interviews post-curriculum, I was offered insightful information concerning what the students believed to be true about media, and more specifically about the media's influence on body image. However, I really cannot, without certainty, make conclusions that there were significant changes in the way they viewed certain components of media and media influence. Although the SATAQ-3/M offers some insight into their pre and post curriculum views, it would have been complementary to have pre and post curriculum focus groups and interviews from which to compare.

Finally, I would have liked to compare the long-term effects of the curriculum to the short term (one-week) effects that I measured. Although I felt that a week was a sufficient time period to internalize the concepts they had learned, particularly through their exposure to media during this time, many times our "passion" or "new awareness" wears off after a certain time period. For example, how long after 9-11 did the flags stop flying on our cars, or the news stop reporting on the event? In this study, one of the students mentioned finding out specific ways to ensure that her child would not be influenced, particularly in terms of body satisfaction, by the media. Would, six months later, this still be a priority? Was any action taken? Or, consider the young lady who suggested she would no longer be getting the shots to reduce body fat. Is she continuing

those shots? Has she altered her diet, or is she using other weight loss/fat loss techniques? Maybe she made a complete turnaround in the way she thinks about herself and others? A longitudinal study may help curriculum designers develop more persuasive and ultimately “invasive” curricula that have long term effects on the way the students perceive media.

### **Future Research**

One of my core feelings pertaining to media literacy is the need for an interdisciplinary approach that starts in Pre-K and continues throughout postsecondary education and beyond. Why? Well, as mentioned earlier, the media has become such an integral part of society, that “it” and “its users” were named People of the Year! From the time a child sees his or her first television program, the child becomes intimately involved in a world that revolves around media. Even in the most personal of technological “spaces,” such as MySpace or Facebook, advertisers litter the pages using your person profile to push products. As mentioned earlier, technology is moving faster every day, with 3-D televisions and handheld gaming systems aimed and 2 and 3 year-olds already on the market! If anything, our relationship with media is going to keep getting stronger. This, in my opinion, strongly suggests a need for an interdisciplinary, cross-educational media literacy curriculum.

Because of the time involved in studying a single aspect of media literacy curriculum integration in higher education, I was unable to focus specifically on another pertinent question: how does media literacy influence “self” and “other.” That is, in our Biopsychosocial sphere of influence, how can becoming more literate of the processes,



creation techniques, and reasons behind media influence our lives? For example, identity development is a core psychological experience of the infant, child, adolescent, and somewhat more tamed, but also in the adult. How does constant exposure to media influence this development, and what can we do as a society to ensure that, at minimum, no harm is being done?

Brown, Goetze, and Schwarz (2005) suggest that “if media literacy is to become part of the K-12 school experience, enabling both curriculum and teaching, then teachers need to become literate first” (p. 161). This is one of the most important parts about this study. I have to suggest that until No Child Left Behind is overturned or overhauled, it is unlikely that media literacy will be accepted across the curriculum as a core component of education. However, as noted above, teachers play a significant role in what is or is not taught in the classroom. Therefore, if we can open the doors to postsecondary educators by offering interdisciplinary media literacy curriculum, then we will be contributing to the substantial increase in the possibility that the next generation of teachers will incorporate media literacy into their classrooms. This leads to an interesting research question: How can new teachers incorporate media literacy into their classrooms without violating NCLB, lowering test scores, or failing to fulfill curriculum contract requirements? I believe that the study I just conducted, which focuses mainly on incorporating media literacy into the social science classroom, is a start. For example, similar designs can be used to study incorporating media literacy into the Science, English, Math, or Reading classroom, ultimately providing more information to offer future educators.

For now, most of the literature out there is on secondary schools, and does offer some fantastic ideas for incorporating media literacy into the classroom. However, unless they miraculously fall onto the websites, where will they be exposed to it? I suggest it is, at this point, still up to the postsecondary educators of future educators to introduce their students to the influence of media on their (and their students) everyday lives. In addition, teachers should be encouraged to explore the role that the media plays in our past, present, and future. Only then, I suggest, will we begin to make headway on the incorporation of media literacy across the disciplines from Pre-K to graduate school.

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## APPENDIX A

### Rogers State University IRB

William Hart, the head of the IRB at "University Blue" noted, in the email pasted below, that all I need to conduct this study is approval from the OSU Institutional Review Board.

**From:** William Hart  
**Sent:** Friday, September 17, 2010 9:38 AM  
**To:** ReAnne Ashlock  
**Cc:** Myra Haulmark  
**Subject:** RE: Question

I am not sure how OSU works it but, if you have OSU clearance, "University Blue" needs a copy of that letter plus any additional materials you submitted with your OSU request for our files.

**From:** ReAnne Ashlock  
**Sent:** Friday, September 17, 2010 9:34 AM  
**To:** William Hart  
**Subject:** RE: Question

Where do I find the form to determine whether my study (being conducted through OSU on "University Blue" campus) will be exempt? I, of course, will have full IRB approval through OSU as well before conducting this study.

## APPENDIX B

### Recruitment Script

My name is Professor ReAnne Ashlock, and I am the Elementary Education Coordinator, as well as a professor for the Department of Psychology, Sociology, and Criminal Justice. Your professor has been gracious enough to allow me into your classroom today so that I might do a guest lecture, and ultimately attempt to collect data to finish the requirements for my PhD at Oklahoma State University.

Today's lecture will be a type of Media Literacy curriculum. Media literacy, like other forms of literacy, is an attempt to make you literate, or more informed about a specific concept, in this case, literacy. Because our K-12 school systems are highly regulated, new curriculum is often hard to implement. So, while I believe that media literacy should be incorporated in K-12 schools, I am interested in whether college students can benefit from this type of curriculum. Today's world is more connected than ever before, and I believe that media plays a huge role in our lives today. Understanding the influence of media can help us become better informed, and hopefully more prepared for a future in a mediated world.

Each of you is cordially invited to participate in a study aimed at discovering whether media literacy curriculum can have an influence on college students. As a participant, you decide how much or how little you would like to participate, and of course, may choose to withdraw your participation at any time. Those that are interested in potentially participating can determine your level of participation by carefully reading the Informed Consent Form that your professor has passed out to you. Let's take a few minutes to read over the Informed Consent, and answer any questions that you have before you make a decision to participate or not.

Remember, there is absolutely no pressure or penalty to participate. I would just like you to consider the potential value your participation can offer to a study of media literacy at the college level. Thank you so much for allowing me in your classroom today.

APPENDIX C

**OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM**

Title of Project: **Media Literacy Curriculum and the Perception of Postsecondary Students**

Investigator(s): **ReAnne Ashlock, Professor of Psychology and Sociology, Department of Psychology, Sociology, and Criminal Justice, 918-343-7551. Advisor: Dr. Pam Brown, Oklahoma State University, 1-405-744-8004.**

- You are being asked to take part in a research study. If this consent form contains any words you do not understand, please ask the researcher to explain these words so that you understand them. This consent form contains important facts to help you decide if it is in your best interest to take part in this study.
- The purpose of this research is to discover whether or not media literacy curriculum has an influence on people's understanding of the media's influence on them, particularly in terms of issues concerning body image.
- The approximate number of participants involved in the study: 100-150
- Participants will not be compensated nor penalized for their participation in any way
- This is a layered consent form. That is, you may chose to participate in one or more of the following portions of the research. This research contains three portions. The procedures to be followed are:

**Part A:** Consent to allow the researcher to use your "Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire 3" test scores for analysis. The pre-test will be given before the 50 minute guest lecture: A media literacy presentation. You will be asked to complete the post-test within one week of completing the media literacy presentation. Both will be given during your regular class sessions.

**Part B:** You may consent to participate in a one-hour focus group with approximately 10 students. Focus groups will take place in a classroom on campus, and will be scheduled at a time most convenient for group members. Please note that this focus group will be audio recorded. The focus group will be conducted by Professor Ashlock, and last approximately one hour. The information obtained will be used for research purposes only. Once the focus group comments have been transcribed, the original audio will be deleted. In the transcribed copy, and all references to comments in research, pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. Only Professor Ashlock will have a copy of the original names, and will keep this list under lock and key. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript electronically, as well as your "pseudonym" and may choose to add, clarify, and/or omit any statement, thoughts, etc. It is your responsibility not to share your pseudonym with others. I will conduct no more than five focus groups with 10 students in each group. Students who have consented to participate will be randomly selected. Therefore, there is a chance that even though you agreed to participate, you will not be required to do so.

**Part C:** You may consent to participate in a one-on-one interview about your experience with media with Professor Ashlock. This interview will take place in my office on the third floor of Prep hall, where the conversation will remain confidential. You can expect the interview to last approximately one hour.



Please note that this interview will be audio recorded. I will conduct no more than 5 one-hour interviews. Students who have consented to participate will be randomly selected. Therefore, there is a chance that even though you agreed to participate, you will not be required to do so. The information obtained will be used for research purposes only. Once the Interview comments have been transcribed, the original audio will be digitally stored on a drive that will be kept in a locked cabinet. Data will be deleted upon completion of the study. In the transcribed copy, and all references to comments in research, pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. Only Professor Ashlock will have a copy of the original names, kept on a computer drive, and will keep this list under lock and key. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript electronically, as well as your “pseudonym” and may choose to add, clarify, and/or omit any statement, thoughts, etc. It is your responsibility not to share your pseudonym with others.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Any information about you that is obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The following information outlines confidentiality issues pertaining to all three portions of the study:

**Part A:** When completing the pre-test, you will be asked to put the two digit month, day and year in which you were born followed by the first two letters of your last name. These surveys will then be kept in a locked office, inside of a locked cabinet to protect your privacy. On the post test I will request that you put the last two digit month, day, and year followed by the first two letters of your last name as well. Once the post test is received, I will personally correlate the pre-test and post-tests, and then use a permanent marker to mark through the information you provided. I have already evaluated this procedure, and it completely removes visibility. Thus, once removed, there will be no correlation in the data between your survey and the results. After the data has been entered into the system for statistical analysis, all original surveys will be destroyed.

**Part B:** Each participant will be sent a copy of the transcript. In addition, even though pseudonyms are being used, to protect your confidentiality, you may always request that a certain portion of the material be deleted and/or not used. However, it will be your responsibility as an ethical researcher/participant, not to attempt to decode pseudonyms or share information with others outside of the focus group. After interpreting the results, I will send you a copy of the transcript as well as my interpretation. To improve my research, I request that you read the transcription and notes provide feedback; however, this is not a requirement of participation. The tapes will be stored in a locked office, inside of a locked cabinet, and destroyed once research is completed.

**Part C:** After the interview, I will personally transcribe the information into paper format, using pseudonyms in replace of your actual names. Each participant will be sent a copy of the transcript. In addition, even though pseudonyms are being used, to protect your confidentiality, you may always request that a certain portion of the material be deleted and/or not used. However, it will be your responsibility as an ethical researcher/participant, not to attempt to decode pseudonyms and share information with others. After interpreting the results, I will send you a copy of the transcript as well as my interpretation. To improve my research, I request that you read the transcription and notes and provide feedback; however, this is not a requirement of participation. The tapes will be stored in a locked office, inside of a locked cabinet, and destroyed once the research is complete.

**WITHDRAWAL OF CONSENT:** As noted before, your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relations with Rogers State University or your professor. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time without penalty. The Institutional Review Board at Oklahoma State University, as well as the IRB at Rogers State

University will have reviewed and approved the research before it is conducted. .

If you have any questions about your rights while in this research study, please contact the primary investigator, Professor Ashlock, rashlock@rsu.edu, 918-343-7551. Note that Professor Ashlock is not being compensated in any way for this study.

You may also contact my research advisor at Oklahoma State University, Pamela U. Brown, Ed.D at 405-744-8004, pamela.u.brown@okstate.edu. Questions regarding the rights of research subjects may be directed to the Institutional Review Board at Rogers State University: Rogers State University, Dr. Myra Hallmark, 1-918-343-7713, mhallmark@rsu.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405.744.3377 or irb@okstate.edu .

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ABOVE OUTLINED STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION ABOVE, AND HAVE DECIDED, OF YOUR OWN FREE WILL TO PARTICIPATE:

**I have read and been given information about this research study and the risks involved have been explained to me. Any questions I may have had were answered to my satisfaction and I have been told who to contact should additional questions arise. As a result, I give my informed consent to participate in this research. I will receive a copy of this consent form.**

Please sign EACH of the portions you wish to participate in:

Part A: Pre-test and Post-tests \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Part B: Focus Group \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Part C: Interview \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing below I hereby acknowledge that I witnessed the signature of the individual signing up for “participation” and that he or she signed of their own free will under no duress:

WITNESS SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D 1

### SOCIOCULTURAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS APPEARANCE SCALE - 3 (SATAQ-3)

Please read each of the following items carefully and indicate the number that best reflects your agreement with the statement.

Definitely Disagree= 1      Mostly Disagree= 2  
neither Agree nor Disagree= 3  
Mostly Agree= 4              Definitely Agree = 5

5. TV programs are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive."  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to lose weight. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I do not care if my body looks like the body of people who are on TV. \_\_\_\_\_
8. I compare my body to the bodies of people who are on TV. \_\_\_\_\_
9. TV commercials are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_
10. I do not feel pressure from TV or magazines to look pretty. \_\_\_\_\_
11. I would like my body to look like the models who appear in magazines. \_\_\_\_\_
12. I compare my appearance to the appearance of TV and movie stars. \_\_\_\_\_
13. Music videos on TV are not an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_
14. I've felt pressure from TV and magazines to be thin. \_\_\_\_\_
15. I would like my body to look like the people who are in movies. \_\_\_\_\_
16. I do not compare my body to the bodies of people who appear in magazines \_\_\_\_\_
17. Magazine articles are not an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_
18. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to have a perfect body. \_\_\_\_\_

19. I wish I looked like the models in music videos. \_\_\_\_\_
20. I compare my appearance to the appearance of people in magazines. \_\_\_\_\_
21. Magazine advertisements are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_
22. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to diet. \_\_\_\_\_
23. I do not wish to look as athletic as the people in magazines. \_\_\_\_\_
24. I compare my body to that of people in "good shape." \_\_\_\_\_
25. Pictures in magazines are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_
26. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to exercise. \_\_\_\_\_
27. I wish I looked as athletic as sports stars. \_\_\_\_\_
28. I compare my body to that of people who are athletic. \_\_\_\_\_
29. Movies are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive."  
\_\_\_\_\_
30. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to change my appearance. \_\_\_\_\_
31. I do not try to look like the people on TV. \_\_\_\_\_
32. Movie stars are not an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_
33. Famous people are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_
34. I try to look like sports athletes. \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D2

**SOCIOCULTURAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS APPEARANCE SCALE - 3 (SATAQ-3)  
MALE**

Please read each of the following items carefully and indicate the number that best reflects your agreement with the statement.

**Definitely Disagree = 1    Mostly Disagree = 2**  
**neither Agree nor Disagree = 3**  
**Mostly Agree = 4            Definitely Agree = 5**

35. TV programs are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive."  
\_\_\_\_\_

36. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to lose weight. \_\_\_\_\_

37. I do not care if my body looks like the body of people who are on TV. \_\_\_\_\_

38. I compare my body to the bodies of people who are on TV. \_\_\_\_\_

39. TV commercials are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_

40. I do not feel pressure from TV or magazines to look appealing. \_\_\_\_\_

41. I would like my body to look like the models that appear in magazines. \_\_\_\_\_

42. I compare my appearance to the appearance of TV and movie stars. \_\_\_\_\_

43. Music videos on TV are not an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_

44. I've felt pressure from TV and magazines to be thin. \_\_\_\_\_

45. I would like my body to look like the people who are in movies. \_\_\_\_\_

46. I do not compare my body to the bodies of people who appear in magazines. \_\_\_\_\_

47. Magazine articles are not an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_

48. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to have a perfect body. \_\_\_\_\_
49. I wish I looked like the models in music videos. \_\_\_\_\_
50. I compare my appearance to the appearance of people in magazines. \_\_\_\_\_
51. Magazine advertisements are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_
52. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to diet. \_\_\_\_\_
53. I do not wish to look as athletic as the people in magazines. \_\_\_\_\_
54. I compare my body to that of people in "good shape." \_\_\_\_\_
55. Pictures in magazines are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_
56. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to exercise. \_\_\_\_\_
57. I wish I looked as athletic as sports stars. \_\_\_\_\_
58. I compare my body to that of people who are athletic. \_\_\_\_\_
59. Movies are an important source of information "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_
60. I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to change my appearance. \_\_\_\_\_
61. I do not try to look like the people on TV. \_\_\_\_\_
62. Movie stars are not an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_
63. Famous people are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive." \_\_\_\_\_
64. I try to look like sports athletes. \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E

### Focus Group Questions

1. When did you first start “caring” about your appearance, and why do you think your perception of the way you looked changed (for example, a boy or girl, peers, new school, etc)?
2. Thinking back to that time, the time when appearance first became relevant, discuss what mattered most about your appearance.
3. Where did you get information about what you should look like?
4. Can you remember specifically attempting to find information about a specific look? Consider for example: hair, clothes, shoes, or even body size/shape.
5. Did you ever attempt to tweak your appearance to look like someone in particular? If so, who was it, and why? What types of things did you do or changes did you make?
6. Coming back to present day, do you still care about your appearance, why or why not?
7. Where do you obtain most of your information from in terms of what you should look like, how you should dress, etc?
8. Have you ever mimicked the way someone on TV dressed or looked?
9. Do you feel the media ever influences the way you want to look, dress, etc?
10. Do you feel pressure to maintain a certain weight or body size/style?
11. If so, where does this pressure come from?
12. Have you ever taken drastic measures to live up to some standard of beauty?
13. How do Americans define beautiful?
14. How do Americans form their perceptions of beauty?
15. Are you positively or negatively influenced by the American perception of beauty?

## APPENDIX F

### Interview Protocol

Interview questions will be similar to the following:

1. Take a minute to think back. Describe when you first start “caring” about your appearance, and why you think your perception of the way you looked changed. For example, most kids will wear just about anything just to get outside to play, often disregarding their hair, teeth, or any other aspect. For you, did this change? If so, when? For example, when did leaving the house without looking into a mirror become something you would no longer do?
2. Thinking back to that time, the time when appearance first became relevant, discuss what mattered most about your appearance.
3. Where did you get most of your information about what you should look like?
4. Can you remember specifically attempting to find information about a specific look? For example: how to fix your hair, what clothes or shoes to wear, or even what body size/shape you should be. If so, where did you go for this information?
5. Did you ever attempt to make small changes in your appearance to look like someone in particular? For example, someone close to you that you admired, or even a television or fashion star? If so, who was it, and why? What types of things did you do or changes did you make?
6. Coming back to present day, do you still care about your appearance, why or why not? How has your perception of the way you looked changed, if any?
7. Today, where do you obtain most of your information from in terms of what you should look like, how you should dress, etc?
8. Have you ever mimicked the way someone on TV dressed or looked? If so, who? Why?
9. Do you feel the media ever influences the way you want to look, dress, etc?
10. Do you feel pressure to maintain a certain weight or body size/style? If yes, has the pressure increased or decreased with age? Where does this pressure come from?
12. Have you ever taken drastic measures to live up to some standard of beauty? If so, describe.
13. How do Americans define beautiful?
14. How do Americans form their perceptions of beauty? That is, how did you (and others) come to know what “beautiful” was?
15. Are you positively or negatively influenced by the American perception of beauty?



16. What form of media do you think, if any, has the most influence on people's perceptions of themselves?
17. Do you believe that Americans perceptions of beauty are mediated? Why or why not? If so, what group or groups, if any, are most vulnerable to mediated perceptions of beauty and why?
18. Do you think that the media has changed the way we define beauty in the US? If so, how?
19. How much time do you spend on your own appearance each day? Let's multiply that by 50 years and see how much of your life will be spent on meeting the standards of beauty. Ok, after hearing this, what is your reaction?
20. In terms of media and beauty, what, if anything, is their relationship? Is it a healthy one, or one that should be changed? Could it even be changed? Elaborate.

## APPENDIX G1

### Media Literacy Curriculum on Body Image (Outline)

#### Activity 1: Defining the media's position in our lives (Instructors Guide) Part I

Students please take out a piece of paper and answer the following questions. After giving the students a few minutes to answer, provide the correct answer, asking them NOT to correct their own. Repeat several times "DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME"

a. How many senators represent the state of Oklahoma?

\*2

b. Who are they?

\*James M. Inhofe, Tom A. Coburn

c. How many state representatives do we have, and what is representation based on?

\*5, based on population

Part II: name as many products as you can base on the following advertisements (Shown on PowerPoint Slide). Give the students a few minutes to answer, once again, ask them not to change any answers after providing the correct ones.



## APPENDIX G2

A: ALL	L: LYSOL
B: BUBBLICIOUS	M: M N M'S
C: CAMPBELLS	N: NILLA WAFERS
D: DAWN	O: OREO
E: EGGO	P: PEZ
F: FRITOS	Q: Q-TIPS
G: GATORADE	R: REESE'S
H: HEBREW NATIONAL	S: STARBURST
I: ICE	T: TIDE
J: JELLO (SUGAR FREE)	U: UNCLE BEN'S
K: KOOLAIID	V: V8
	W: WISK
	X: XTRA LAUNDRY DETERGENT
	Y: YORK PEPPERMINT PATTIES
	Z: ZEST

## APPENDIX G3

### Activity 1 Part III

While completing the conversation below, have student worker tally up the score...the percentage of individuals that knew about politics versus the number that new about the symbols used by the biggest advertisers.

#### **Discussion while tallying:**

Were you surprised by your own ability to name your state senators versus your favorite candy brand? Why or why not?

According to [freepress.net](http://freepress.net), "The U.S. media landscape is dominated by massive corporations that, through a history of mergers and acquisitions, have concentrated their control over what we see, hear and read. In many cases, these giant companies are vertically integrated, controlling everything from initial production to final distribution. Here is information about the largest U.S. media firms."

Discussion: Depending on who you ask, somewhere between 5 and 10 companies own 99% of all the media we consume in the US, from television to billboards. [Freepress.net](http://freepress.net) suggests the big six own most, and include: Disney, NewsCorp, GE, Timewarner, Viacom, and CBS

Okay, here are the class results.... \_\_\_\_\_% knew that we had two senators and their names were Jim Inhof and Tom Coburn. \_\_\_\_\_% knew we had 5 representatives and that representation is based on population.

Of the 23 advertising logos presented, the average student knew \_\_\_\_\_% of them.

What is the problem with that? What does this suggest about the influence of media in our lives?

## APPENDIX G4

### Activity II, Part I: Media Influence on Body Image (Teachers Guide)

DIRECTIONS: Asks students to read out loud, 2 to 3 sentences each.

#### Study: Teens With Weight Issues More Likely To Contemplate Suicide

By Joel Arak

Suicidal impulses and attempts are much more common in teenagers who think they are too fat or too thin, regardless of how much they actually weigh, a study found.

Using actual body size based on teens' reports of their height and weight, the researchers found that overall, overweight or underweight teens were only slightly more likely than normal-weight teens to have suicidal tendencies.

But teens who perceived themselves at either weight extreme — very fat or really skinny — were more than twice as likely as normal-weight teens to attempt or think about suicide.

The study was based on a nationally representative 2001 survey involving 13,601 students in ninth through 12th grade. The findings appear in the June issue of *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, published Monday.

About 19 percent said they had considered suicide in the previous year and about 9 percent said they had attempted it.

About 65 percent of students were in the normal-weight range, but only about 54 percent perceived themselves as "about the right weight." Some thought they weighed too much; others thought they were too thin.

"Suicide ideation was more likely even among students whose perceptions of body size deviated only slightly from 'about the right weight,'" said lead author Danice Eaton, a researcher at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Because nearly half of the students perceived themselves as too thin or too heavy, "these results suggest that a sizable proportion of students may be at increased risk" for suicide, the researchers said.

Perceptions of being very overweight were linked with an increased risk for suicide attempts among whites. But black and Hispanic students who saw themselves as being very overweight were no more likely to say they had attempted suicide than blacks and Hispanics who thought they were about the right weight.

The link between perceptions of being very underweight and an increased risk for suicide attempts existed for whites, blacks and Hispanics alike.

The study did not determine which came first — perceptions of extreme weight or suicidal tendencies. But the results suggest that extreme weight perceptions might be a suicide warning sign, the researchers said.

In an accompanying editorial, Dr. Alain Joffe of Johns Hopkins University said widespread media images of perfect bodies might help shape adolescent perceptions of normal.

But he said it is also possible that adolescents who are already concerned with body image pay more attention to media images

#### References

**Arak, J. (2005).** Teens With Weight Issues More Likely To Contemplate Suicide **CBD**

**News.** Retrieved on October 8, 2010 from <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories>

## **APPENDIX G5**

### **Activity II Part II: Discussion Questions**

1. Why are teens so susceptible to body image issues? (identity development)
2. Who is responsible? Teens, media, parents?
3. According to Dr. Alain Joffe of Johns Hopkins University, “widespread media images of perfect bodies might help shape adolescent perceptions of normal.” Where do these images come from (TV, Magazines, sports stars)
  - Can these images simply be avoided?
4. Are adults immune to these types of influences? Why or why not?
5. Does the pressure to be thin, beautiful, etc, stop at adulthood?

## APPENDIX G6

### Activity III: Facilitators Guide

1. Pass out “real” pictures to students, as well as open PowerPoint on the board of same images.

#### 2. General Discussion

- The “real” woman is what men desire, but the “media image” is what women think men desire.
- Stice and Shaw (1994) found that exposure to the thin ideal resulted in subjects feeling unhappy, shameful, and guilty, depressed, and stressed, which in turn decreased their confidence....something men do find desirable.
- In addition, the cleavage show in this dress is an advertisement for the clothing of not only the 20 something’s in her age group, but the teens that idolize her as well.

#### 3. Image 2

- hair color, teeth white, and mole removed.
- Natural hair colors, natural discoloration of teeth over time, and natural moles, freckles, and beauty marks are all removed
- once again making men and women self-conscious of their bodies.

#### 4. Image 3

- This is actually a advertisement for a Photoshop agency. Now, if you are getting to know someone, in today’s “beauty” centered world, which image do you send?
- But, are you showing reality? Do you want to fall in love with someone that loves your “fake” photo, or your real one?
- Why do we feel compelled to use Photoshop?

#### 5. Image 5

- Magazines are notorious for Photoshop.....look at the original photo. Is she fat?
- And yet, why in the Photoshop version is her arm about twice as skinny?
- What does this do for her millions of fans that idolize her and her looks?

#### 6. Image 6



- Regardless of whether you believe a 55+ year old should wear this kind of outfit, what does this Photoshop image say to women in their 50's and 60's....(give students time) it's not okay to age?
- Same thing happens with men in the movies all the time. You have men reaching their late 60's who still look 40, have a full head of hair, and a 6 pack...
- Do any men you know in their 60's live up to this portrayal? Or women?
- In addition, is this picture suggesting a specific fashion for a specific group?
- How many of you have grandma's that still wear binkies with fur not less?

# The “Real” Star Before and After

**APPENDIX G8: PowerPoint 1**

**ANYTHING CAN CHANGE....**



**APPENDIX G9: PowerPoint 1**

**SAME HAIR? SAME DRESS?**



## APPENDIX G10: PowerPoint 1

### Real People? What is “real?”



APPENDIX G11: PowerPoint 1

Magazines



**APPENDIX G12: PowerPoint 1**

**We Never Age?**



## APPENDIX G13A

### Activity IV: Facilitators Guide 1 (PowerPoint II Corresponds)

#### Center for Media Literacy's Five Core Concepts

- *All media messages are constructed*
  - That is, someone created them. Whether it's Pepsi to sell a product, or Planned Parenthood to sell an idea, all media is created.
- *Media messages are constructed using a language with its own rules*
  - Just like scholars and gang members have their own language, most media genres do to. For example, visual images are a key aspect of the language of television, and it has specific rules that go along with it.
  - In an Oklahoma senate support video, a specific senator was shown standing in front of a window, however, to everyone's surprise (and according to him and his staff, their surprise too), the window pane, in the shape of a cross, began to glow brilliantly while he spoke. This subtle language spoke volumes to Christian viewers.
- *Different people experience the same media message differently*
  - A Planned Parenthood commercial on the accessibility of birth control may be conceived very differently by someone who does not believe in birth control.
  - What about someone who got pregnant on birth control? Or someone who is trying to get pregnant but can't?
  - What about a father of a teen who is sitting down with his teenage daughter watching TV?
- *Media have embedded values and points of view*
  - Most media creators have specific values and ideas they are overtly attempting to express.
  - And yet, like the "cross" magically appearing, which has an embedded view of Christianity, many of the values are covertly expressed in a way that still influences us, but can be denied when financially or politically expedient.
- *Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power*
  - In a capitalist society, the idea is to allow individuals the right to obtain profit. We sell goods in an attempt to make profit. We sell more goods in the attempt



## **APPENDIX G13B**

- to make more profit. And, with profit, or money, often comes power, which gives us a greater advantage in the market to control what is being said, valued, and sold.

### **Activity IV PART II: Have students watch video (provide warning and give the opportunity for them to leave the room)**

- Who created this message?
  - Calvin Kline
- What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
  - Sexuality
  - Cussing
  - Shock Value
  - Mediated good looks
  - Movie and sports stars
- What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from this message?
  - Abs, good looks, and sexual prowess are desirable in males
- Why is this message being sent?
  - TO SELL PRODUCT
  - To sell product is the manifest function...what are the latent functions?

# **The Center for Media Literacy: Evaluating the Evaluation**

## **FIVE CORE CONCEPTS**

- ▶ **All media messages are constructed**
- ▶ **Media messages are constructed using a language with its own rules**
- ▶ **Different people experience the same media message differently**
- ▶ **Media have embedded values and points of view**
- ▶ **Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power**

## DECONSTRUCTION

- ▶ Watch this video, paying close attention to the entire episode.
- ▶ Warning: This video may be disturbing to some viewers.
- ▶ This is an actual Calvin Klein Video.
- ▶ [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEtmQIRTYlk&has\\_verified=  
1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEtmQIRTYlk&has_verified=1)

## **DECONSTRUCTING THE MESSAGE**

- ▶ **Who created this message?**
- ▶ **What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?**
- ▶ **What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from this message?**
- ▶ **Why is this message being sent?**

## APPENDIX H

*Center for Media Literacy Permission for use of Five Core Concepts &  
Key Questions in Curriculum Creation*

**From:** Center for Media Literacy  
**Sent:** Monday, October 12, 2009 11:46 AM  
**To:** ReAnne Ashlock  
**Subject:** RE: Permission Question

Hi ReAnne,

Thanks for checking in; its fine for you to use the CML framework for your presentation and for your work on your project. I'm sorry to hear that getting together with Teri has been slow; I asked her about it. While it would be helpful for you to speak with her, please don't feel that it's a requirement for following through in your work with me and the Center. Since there is no budget for the project it makes it hard to get and keep people's attention, so let's do the best we can. Please keep me posted about your work and yes, I'd like to see examples of what you're doing. After you've had a chance to make some progress it may be good timing to provide some information on what you're doing to our newsletter readers for the Consortium for Media Literacy. Do you subscribe to the newsletter? It's a good way of keeping in touch. Thanks, Tessa

**From:** ReAnne Ashlock  
**Sent:** Monday, October 12, 2009 8:51 AM  
**To:** Center for Media Literacy  
**Subject:** RE: Permission Question

**Ms. Jolls:**

Attached you will find my proposal for a roundtable discussion I will be facilitating at the Oklahoma Sociological Association's annual conference. As I expand on the topic, I hope to integrate the Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions into the presentations as the "media literacy curriculum" I state can be incorporated into the social science classroom. I would be more than happy to provide you a final copy of the presentation before attending, but didn't want to base my hole presentation on these important concepts/questions without permission. As I mentioned when we spoke, I have no intention of changing the wording of the key questions/concepts, as I believe they are valuable in their current form. I plan to use them as a springboard for curriculum creation and for facilitation in our discussion of the importance of media literacy across the curriculum. The same (or similar) curriculum will be used for my dissertation for which I have attached my proposal.

Let me know.

PS: I am hoping to speak with Dr. Webb soon, our schedule conflict often, but I will certainly let you know when that discussion is set up.

ReAnne M. Ashlock  
SBS Faculty

**From:** Center for Media Literacy  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 01, 2009 11:03 PM  
**To:** ReAnne Ashlock  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** RE: Permission Question

Hello ReAnne,  
I'm pleased we had a chance to speak today. I subsequently spoke with Dr. Theresa Webb (Teri), who has been the Principal Investigator and close colleague on the evaluation of CML's curriculum on violence prevention and media literacy. Teri will be happy to speak with you about your research, as we are all committed to strengthening the argument that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy on the acquisition of content knowledge, process skills and in influencing attitudes and behaviors. I suggest that you arrange a time to speak with her (her email is above); if I can join you, that would be great. Please keep me posted as I will need to issue you a license to use the CML framework in your work, so perhaps you can get some progress made on the research questions and how to add to the credibility of the work already done.

Thanks again for your interest! Tessa Jolls, President and CEO, CML

**From:** ReAnne Ashlock  
**Sent:** Sunday, August 30, 2009 9:42 AM  
**Subject:** Permission Question

To Whom It May Concern:

I am currently working on my PhD at OSU in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I am designing a media literacy project for a Research Class, and plan to extend on this research for my dissertation (which I will be starting next semester).

My plan, from the beginning, has been to create and integrate a successful media literacy curriculum for bachelors level social science students. Knowing that many high school students are not getting the type of media literacy training that many of us would like, and understanding the incremental nature of our school system, I suggest that creating a college level media literacy curriculum is currently an important part of media literacy advocacy.

After endless hours of work, I found the CML's Five Core Concepts and curriculum to be an outstanding example of media literacy advocacy/curriculum.

I would like to take the handbook (and of course the core concepts/key questions) and use them as a spring-board for creating a college-level media literacy curriculum for integration into social science courses. I would not only be promoting the Five Core

Concepts, but CML and their objectives in general. I am a full time faculty member at another college in Oklahoma, where I would be conducting the research.

I would be more than willing to provide the center with a copy of the completed work, and hopefully the center would be interested in providing access to other college educators. I am open to following any procedures needed/desired, and would be more than willing to work directly with CML staff/researchers to ensure I am representing the best interests of the organization.

For your convenience, I have provided a copy of my resume (so you can feel more confident in my abilities). I would also be willing to send you my transcripts, and/or letters of recommendations, including a letter from Dr. Gretchen Schwartz who has done several studies and participates faithfully in the area of media literacy.

Please consider my request. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

ReAnne M. Ashlock, MS  
SBS Faculty



## **APPENDIX I**

**From:** Heidi Cody  
**Sent:** Monday, September 27, 2010 9:41 AM  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Re: Permission to use Alphabet- Important

Ms. Ashlock,

You may certainly use the alphabet in your dissertation. Best of luck

Heidi

**From:** ReAnne Ashlock  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 26, 2010 11:21 AM  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Permission to use Alphabet- Important

Ms. Cody,

I am attempting to obtain my PhD in curriculum studies, with a cognate in media literacy from Oklahoma State University, in Oklahoma. I am creating a curriculum for social science college students to study the influence of media literacy curriculum on body image. Most of my resources are being formatted from the literature available at the Center for Media literacy, with permission for Tessa Jolls. However, of all the available curriculum, this alphabet is one of the most creative and powerful elements to start a class on the influence of media in their lives. With your permission, I would like to use this "Alphabet" in my study, you would be given credit as the creator in both my study and in the references. I need written permission (simply a reply to this email) as soon as possible to get approval through my institutional review board. I would be glad to share my study and results with you. Thank you for your time.

ReAnne M. Ashlock, ABD

Professor of Psychology & Sociology

## Appendix J

### Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Wednesday, January 19, 2011  
IRB Application No: ED10155  
Proposal Title: The Influence of Media Literacy Education on the Body Image of Postsecondary Social Science Students at a Four-Year College in Northeastern Oklahoma  
Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 1/18/2012

Principal Investigator(s):  
ReAnne M. Ashlock Pamela Brown  
1501 W. Dupont #33 237 Willard  
Claremore, OK 74017 Stillwater, OK 74078

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The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 46 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, [beth.mcternan@okstate.edu](mailto:beth.mcternan@okstate.edu)).

Sincerely,

  
Sheila Kennison, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

VITA

ReAnne M. Ashlock

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy/Education

Thesis: THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA LITERACY CURRICULUM  
ON BODY IMAGE OF POSTSECONDARY  
STUDENTS IN OKLAHOMA

Major Field: Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Biographical: Professor of Psychology that loves spending time with her husband and beautiful four year-old daughter, Ariana.

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Educational Psychology at Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, Oklahoma in May 2006.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Social Science in at Rogers State University, Claremore, Oklahoma in May 2004

Experience: Professor of Psychology/Sociology, Elementary Ed. Coordinator

Professional Memberships: APA, SWASAP, TRiO Hall of Fame

Name: ReAnne Ashlock

Date of Degree: May, 2011

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA LITERACY CURRICULUM ON BODY  
IMAGE OF POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS IN OKLAHOMA

Pages in Study: 211

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Major Field: Teaching and Curriculum Leadership

Scope and Method of Study: As the world becomes more connected and continues to expand on the various literacies that people use daily in their attempts to inform, persuade, and educate, it is imperative that people learn how to analyze the information that they are being surrounded with daily. This study used a mixed methods approach to determine whether a one hour media literacy curriculum, created by the author for postsecondary social science students, could influence students' perceptions of body image satisfaction. The researcher used methods triangulation and data triangulation, including a questionnaire, focus groups, and interviews to determine whether students' perceptions of self could be influenced by a media literacy curriculum created by the researcher for the specific group.

Findings and Conclusions: The research suggests that a one-hour curriculum can influence students' perceptions of self in terms of media influence. In addition, the curriculum did not appear to make students negatively biased against the media, but simply more able to reflect on the intentions of particular media productions. The SATAQ-3/M showed the "opposite" results of what one would expect, and yet, when inspecting the actual questions in each section it becomes obvious that more informed students would initially score higher in areas such as "internalization," "pressures," and "information" simply because they are more informed. This finding does imply the need for either the use of a longitudinal study with the SATAQ-3, or a new questionnaire to measure the influence of media literacy curriculum on body image. The curriculum designed and implemented for this study shows a significant effect on undergraduates' body image.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Pam Brown

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Name: ReAnne Ashlock

Date of Degree: May, 2011

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA LITERACY CURRICULUM ON BODY  
IMAGE OF POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS IN OKLAHOMA

Pages in Study: 163

PhD in Education: Curriculum Studies

Major Field: Teaching and Curriculum Leadership

Scope and Method of Study: As the world becomes more connected and continues to expand on the various literacies that people use daily in their attempts to inform, persuade, and educate, it is imperative that people learn how to analyze the information that they are being surrounded with daily. This study used a mixed methods approach to determine whether a one hour media literacy curriculum, created by the author for postsecondary social science students, could influence students' perceptions of body image satisfaction. The researcher used methods triangulation and data triangulation, including a questionnaire, focus groups, and interviews to determine whether students' perceptions of self could be influenced by a media literacy curriculum created by the researcher for the specific group.

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ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Pam Brown

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