MEDIA LITERACY : A RECONCEPTION

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the problem of the impact of television on the information environment of contemporary education. This problem calls for a response from the educational system. Responses so far have been relatively sporadic and, perhaps, not as firmly grounded in foundational pedagogy as they could be.

Several methods of investigation of the problem are employed in this study. A literature review examines the impact of television on the educational environment. Subsequently, models of media literacy that have arisen in response to this impact are delineated. These models are then examined in the context of foundational pedagogical assumptions. As a result of this examination a conceptualization of media literacy curriculum emerges. A pilot video production course is then analyzed in the context of the conceptualization.

The study concludes that media literacy programs, which balance encoding and decoding activities, based on a foundation in theories of experiential learning, may be a reasonable response to the impact of the proliferation of media in North American society. Success and effectiveness of such media literacy curricula may require an expansion of the very concept of literacy itself.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Nancy,
without whom it could not have been written,
and to Danny,
without whom it would not have been worth writing.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

FOREWORD

The subject of this thesis is educational television.

My views on television have been coloured by a decade of life spent as a film and video cameraman, editor and field producer, mostly in news and documentary production.
I have had a love-hate relationship with the medium of television, being simultaneously attracted by television's potential to inform, and repelled by television's penchant for misinforming.

I cannot easily watch a television program without the awareness that someone constructed the images I see, using the basic tools of the trade - lenses, lights, cameras, props, subjects. Motion picture images, for me, are not only something that one watches, but rather something that one makes, and I have been fascinated by the creative exuberance of this process of making television programs.

My views on education have been strongly influenced by a three year sojourn on the ragged Northwest coast of Vancouver Island, during which time I helped to develop video production courses in two rural high schools.

My experiences there and the experiences of my students lead me to wonder if, in the past, proponents of "educational television" have not missed an essential point. Watching may be of less educational value than doing. When the students make the television programs themselves we have
a dynamic kind of educational television that may be of significant pedagogical value.

Restated, then, the subject of the following treatise will be a conceptualization of a student-produced educational television curriculum. This curriculum can be viewed as a response to changes in the information environment of contemporary education, resulting from the impact of television, and from the influence of a reconception of curriculum as experiential learning.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Television has an enormous impact on children growing up in North American society. This impact, through its effects on students' time, behaviour, cognitive development, and values, poses an educational problem. It is like an enormous variable thrown into the educational equation. To ignore its effects on students is to invite unexpected and perhaps unwanted educational outcomes. Television is recognized as an educational problem by many educators and communications researchers, many of whom suggest that a co-ordinated response is called for from the educational system.

Responses from the educational system so far have been relatively sporadic, unsystematic and, perhaps, not as firmly grounded in foundational pedagogy as they could be. I propose to examine these responses in order to formulate a conceptualization of a media literacy curriculum that will be grounded in a foundational pedagogy..

RATIONALE FOR THE CURRENT STUDY

Educational systems have responded to the problem of television in basically three ways. Most have simply ignored the problem. Others have proceeded in two largely unco-ordinated ways. Some have set up what are variously called "visual literacy,""media literacy," "or critical viewing skills" projects. Others have established high school TV production courses. Critical viewing programs rarely include a production component. Production courses rarely include a critical viewing component.

While there has been considerable research and recorded observation of critical viewing projects, the literature shows a striking lack of documentation, observation, or research on TV production courses. An ERIC search under a wealth of descriptors reveals no comprehensive critical study of a TV production course. An aim of the current study is to correct this scarcity of research by doing a critical study of a pilot video Production course, supplemented by field studies of other high school TV/Video production courses. In conducting this study I will inevitably be concerned with such things as course methods, logistics,

equipment, in short, the "how" of video production. However, I am more concerned with the question "why teach or learn video production in the first place?".

The purpose of the study will be to make a contribution towards a conceptualization of a media literacy curriculum, by establishing a connection between student-produced educational television and foundational educational assumptions about experiential learning.

STATEMENT OF THESIS

The impact of television on the educational environment of North America calls for the development of a media literacy curriculum. In order to be both effective and accepted, this curriculum needs to be firmly grounded in a foundational pedagogy.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

I have examined the learning-teaching experience of video production using a variety of methodologies, the outlining of which will convey the parameters of the study.

I shall include two literature reviews, one on the state of research and interpretive studies of the impact of television, another tracing the development of three models of media literacy.

From the literature reviews I will develop a synthesis of concepts that, it is hoped, will be a contribution towards a theoretical basis for a media literacy program.

Next by explication of foundational educational assumptions, I hope to make a contribution towards a conceptualization of media literacy that sees this expanded form of literacy as a logical development of reconceptualist curriculum.

Central to the development of my thesis is an illustrative study of a video production course developed and implemented at Gold River Secondary

School, in British Columbia, in 1985-86. The results of this study will be reported in two ways: 1. a personal narrative to establish what happened. 2. a critique of the Gold River curriculum, in order to determine the educational significance of what happened, in the context of the previously mentioned conceptualization.

In addition, the case study has been supplemented by interviews and questionnaires conducted with students and teachers in four other British Columbia video production courses from March 1987 to February 1988. These questionnaires and interviews extend the validity of the critique of the Gold River study.

MEDIA LITERACY - WORKING DEFINITIONS

A number of the terms used in this study require working definitions.

Media: Media here refers to the media of mass communications - television, print, radio, voice, computer. In the current study I am primarily concerned with the medium of television. However, I do not wish to limit the discussion to "television literacy" because the conceptualization of media literacy curriculum that will emerge could as easily include elements of photography, painting, writing, or computing.

Literacy: Literacy here refers to the ability to decode and encode a particular medium. This working definition is based on the model of print literacy which, because of its historical influence and contemporary universality, seems to be a not unreasonable model for the medium of television, which appears to be developing a similar degree of influence and universality of exposure. Language arts curricula do not customarily teach students how to read without teaching them how to write. Both reading and writing

are integral to widely accepted views of print literacy (Scribner and Cole, 1981). The conceptualization of literacy later developed will suggest that it is not unreasonable to apply the same criterion to other mass media, especially television.

Video/Television: The terms video and television are often used interchangeably. For purposes of clarity in the following study I should like to differentiate between the two. I shall use "television" to refer to professional, studio-based, large format (3/4 inch - 2 inch) multi-camera, broadcast television. I shall use "video" to refer to amateur, small format (8mm. - 3/4inch) portable, single-camera, student production. The terms, of course, are not mutually exclusive. Broadcast News production resembles "video" production more than it resembles studio television production, while several high school video courses have elaborate television studios. The differentiation is meant to be serviceable, not definitive.

Conceptualization: The Random House Dictionary of the English Language defines concept as " a general notion or idea...an idea of something formed by mentally combining all of its characteristics or particulars....a construct."

The conceptualization of media literacy curriculum that will emerge in the following thesis is a general "idea" that will be "constructed" by mentally combining ideational "characteristics" of media, ideational "characteristics" of literacy, ideational "characteristics" of pedagogy and "particulars" of media teaching and learning experience.

The Dictionary of the English Language's definition of conceptualize is "to form into a concept." I have chosen to speak of a conceptualization rather than a concept in order to emphasize that the conceptualization of media literacy curriculum developed in this thesis is very much in process of "forming" into a concept. Where the use of the word "concept" in this context might appear too definitive, "conceptualization" suggests a flexibility that seems to fit the circumstances.

Chapter II

THE IMPACT OF TELEVISION

EMPIRICAL STUDIES OF THE EFFECTS OF TELEVISION VIEWING

The following section will examine the degree of impact of television on several aspects of human experience:

1. Who watches television and how much do they watch?

2. Can televiewing influence human behaviour?

3. Can television influence cognitive and psychological development?

4. Can televiewing influence the development of values and attitudes?

In each of these areas the results of empirical studies that provide evidence that televiewing does influence these aspects of human experience will be reported. Under no circumstances should the reader assume that the studies described are definitive, nor that the effects described are exhaustive. I do not necessarily agree with all of the findings quoted. I wish merely to establish the degree of impact of television on North American society and especially on the information environment of education. It is neither my intention nor my desire to pass judgement on the quality of this impact.

Who Watches? How Much?

The average North American child, when she begins her first hour of classroom instruction in grade one, will have already viewed 3,000 hours of television (Nielsen 1981). During her school years she will view 20-30 hours of television a week. By graduation she will have watched 15,000 hours of television (Lloyd-Kolkin, Wheeler and Strand, 1980) more time than she has spent in school. As an adult she will watch 34 hours a week (Nielsen,1981) and she will belong to the 93% of North American families who own television sets. (Winship and Kim, 1988) She may even belong to the 57% who own two television sets. If she lives in an average North American household, the TV set in her home will be on for seven hours a day . (Winship and Kim, 1988)

A few simple computations reveal some startling statistics. If she watches a conservative 20 hours of television a week over the course of a 72 year life-span, she will spend 72,800 hours watching television. She could easily spend more time watching TV than doing anything else in her life except sleeping. If half of those hours were spent watching commercial television, she will view 655,200 commercials. Given that American network prime time

TV portrays five acts of violence per hour, (Gerbner,1980) if half of her viewing hours were in prime time, she will have witnessed 182,000 acts of violence.

North America is not unique in its television viewing habits. In industrialized countries where television statistics are readily available (Australia, Japan, U.K.) studies indicate that the average person watches television two to three hours a day (Murray, 1980), and that the statistical scenario quoted above is largely applicable. Notable exceptions would be in the number of houses with two sets and the amount of violence portrayed.

I believe the above statistics provide answers to the two initial questions. Who watches television? In industrialized countries, nearly everyone. How much? Very much.

Can Televiewing Influence Human Behaviour?

Perhaps no other area of empirical research into the effects of television has received so much attention as the supposed influence of televiewing on human behaviour. Approximately a third of all the studies published during a thirty year period from 1954

to 1984 dealt with the influence of television on aggressive behaviour. (Murray, 1984)

Though there is a dissenting minority, the majority of these research studies have affirmed a link between viewing violence on television and aggressive behaviour (Murray, 1984). Wilbur Schramm's monumental comparison of two towns, one with TV and one without found a correlation between preference for aggressive television content and aggressive behaviour. (Schramm et al., 1961) Singer and Singer (1984) describe typical ongoing research in this field:

> ...two groups of preschool children were each followed over a year's time. Home television logs were sampled over a two-week period several times during the year while direct observations of the spontaneous play and aggression of the children were recorded by observers (blind to the home-viewing scores) during these periods. (p.93)

From these studies Singer and Singer concluded that "heavy viewing especially of aggressive action adventure or cartoon shows was linked to overt aggression and that neither the preferential-viewing hypothesis nor the family aggression pattern could explain away such results"(p.93). Murray (1984) sums up recent research:

> ...studies have shown that a broad base of social scientists and communication professionals do agree that TV violence is

> causally related to aggressive behaviour in children. For example, a survey of 468 widely divergent communication professionals (Bybee, Robinson and Turow, 1982) and another study of 109 psychologists, sociologists, and communications researchers (Murray, 1984) show that the overwhelming professional opinion is that television violence is one of the factors involved in producing aggressive behaviour. (p.40)

Often the results of empirical research are couched in cautious inconclusive phrasing. Scientists do not wish to take a firm public stand in proclaiming the results of research today that will be proven unfounded tomorrow. Many of the statements of researchers on the impact of TV on human aggressive behaviour are, therefore, noteworthy for their abandonment of this cautious tone. A quote from a National Institute of Mental Health report may serve as an appropriate conclusion to this brief discussion of the impact of television on human behaviour:

> ...violence on television does lead to aggressive behavior by children and teenagers who watch the programs. This conclusion is based on laboratory experiments and on field studies. Not all children become aggressive, of course, but the correlations between violence and aggression are positive. In magnitude television violence is as strongly correlated with aggressive behavior as any other behavioral variable that has been measured. The research question has moved from asking whether or not there is an effect to seeking explanations for that effect. (Pearl, Bouthilet and Lazar, 1982, p.6)

In response to the question that began this subsection, "can televiewing influence human

behavior?", many researchers reply with an unequivocal yes.

Can Television Influence Children's Psychological Development?

In seeking to answer this question we shall be concerned with four areas of alleged influence of televiewing on chidren's psychological development:

1. alleged influence on academic achievement.

2. alleged influence on imagination.

3. alleged influence in encouraging passivity.

4. alleged influence on learning.

1. Academic Achievement: Williams et al. (1982) synthesized the results of 23 separate studies on the relationship between television viewing and academic achievement, covering the period from 1954 to 1980. They found a median correlation of -.06 between the amount of viewing and achievement. They determined that the impact of television was greater on children of high IQ. Their studies consistently revealed that viewing up to 10 hours a week had a positive effect on achievement, while viewing more than 10 hours was associated with lower achievement. Gadberry (1977)

found that not only was the amount of televiewing associated with school grades, but so was the type of viewing. Viewing educational and cartoon programs increased grades, but viewing comedies and action-adventures caused academic performance to deteriorate.

Fetler (1984) recounts a research project that seems to be representative of findings in the area of effects on school achievement. He reviews the results of a statewide California Assessment Program, involving over 16,000 sixth-graders. Effects of televiewing on reading, written expression and mathematics were assessed. Fetler reports that, "students who viewed more than six hours of television per day had sharply lower achievement scores in all content areas" (p. 111). Figure 1. graphically portrays the results of the study and shows a strong correlation between televiewing and lower achievement in all areas.

Figure I.

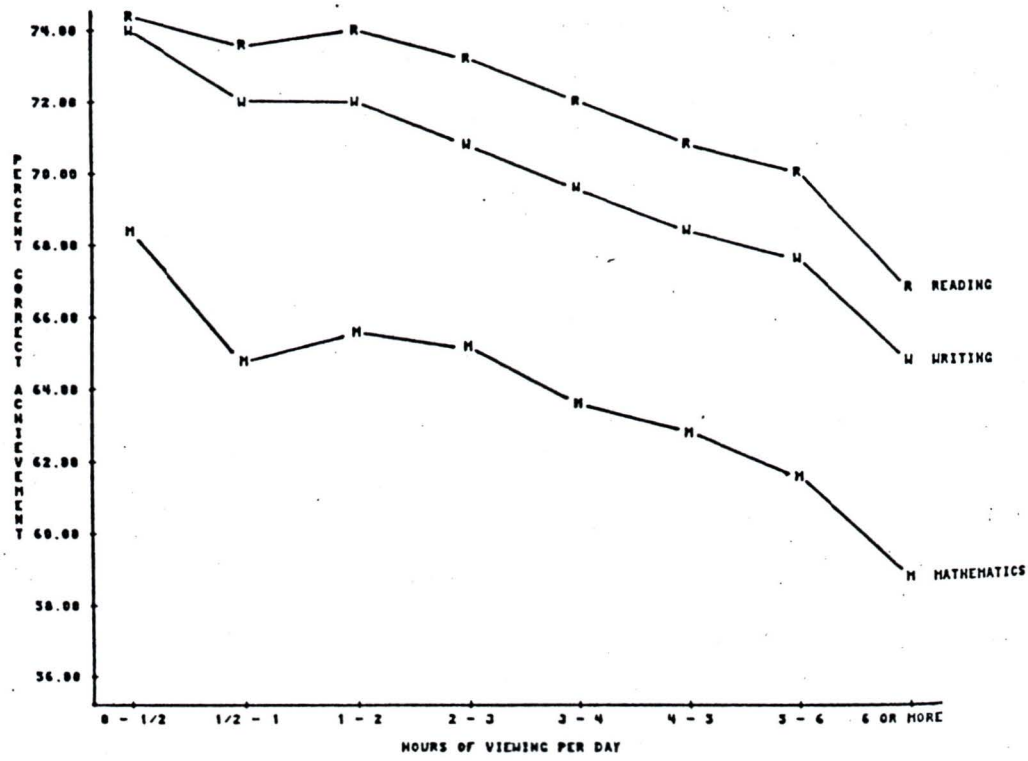

Figure 1: Plot of achievement in reading, written expression, and mathematics by amount of viewing (Fetler, 1984, p. 110)

However, the picture is not so simple as one might at first believe. Fetler reminds us that, "Other researchers have found that the relationship between viewing and achievement is diminished once intelligence is taken into account" (p.111). He suggests that his own study doesn't prove that TV viewing causes either decreased achievement or decreased intelligence. The results do show that intelligent achievers don't watch as much televsion as less intelligent underachievers. Nonetheless, though hesitant to declare a causal relationship between televiewing and academic achievement, he does state that "...the results of this study are striking, especially when considered in the context of other studies. There appears to be a 'threshold' amount of viewing beyond which television has a striking negative association with achievement which is not easily explained by other variables" (p.117).

Before moving on to examine the relationship between television and children's imagination, I should recap what appears to be the consensus on the issue of the relationship between television viewing and achievement in school. Though there is not unanimity on this issue, George Gerbner (1978) seems to express the view of the majority of communications researchers when

he says that"...heavy television viewing by school children is consistently related to lower IQ and achievement (especially reading comprehension) scores. Moreover, the amount of television a child watches is a better predictor of IQ than numerous other variables such as social class"(p. 177). In spite of the fact that such co-relational studies cannot be regarded as definitive indicators of causality, given these kinds of statements by researchers, it is not surprising that television is often stated to be a major cause of the continuing decline on Scholastic Achievement Tests. (Winn, 1977 & Postman, 1979)

2. Imagination: A number of studies record that television can have a powerful influence on children's development of both verbal and visual imagination. Zucherman, Singer and Singer (1980) in a study of 185 third to fifth graders found that imaginative behaviour, as rated by teachers, could be predicted from televiewing patterns as reliably as from IQ. Students who were rated as imaginative were more likely to watch fewer fantasy-violence programs. J. Singer and D. Singer (1983) also found that children who watch "considerable amounts of television" (p. 279) are less likely to create imaginary playmates. They interpret this finding as a criterion of a healthy inner fantasy

life. In a study of 200 preschoolers, Singer and Singer (1983) studied the interrelations of imagination, television viewing and overt aggression:

> They looked at what combinations of variables best predicted the liklihood of overt aggression by children in nursery schools. Boys who showed the least inner imagination as measured by inkblot responses or as estimated from parental observations and who also watched programming in which there was considerable depiction of violence were the most likely to be overtly aggressive in school. (p. 281)

In an often quoted study of the impact of the introduction of television into three interior B.C. towns, Harrison and Williams (1986) found that children's creativity as measured by ability to devise multiple uses for common objects declined after the introduction of television into their town. Also the advent of television, "was associated with significant deterioration in children's creative verbal fluency" (p. 112).

Lindlof (1980) hypothesizes negative "effects of high exposure to television on children's self-generated fantasies." (p. 290) His studies indicate that high exposure could limit the range and scope of children's imagery capacity. English teachers who complain of the difficulties of teaching metaphor to high school students may find his hypothesis attractive. His work suggests that these children could

manifest a fantasy repertoire less rich than children whose imaginative capacities are encouraged by parental mediation in their viewing habits.

Motivated by the suggestion that the explicit nature of television imagery may limit children's ability to develop their own visual imagery, Meringoff (1981) and Beagles-Roos & Gat (1983) conducted comparative research on radio, television and picture-book presentations. Children were presented with stories in each of the three media and were then asked to draw pictures about the stories. The authors noted that the radio stories elicited more imaginative drawings; the children "chose a wider variety of story content to represent graphically and incorporated more extra-story content in their drawings" (as quoted, Greenfield, 1984, p.90). Relatively speaking, television seems to limit the range and originality of children's imaginative responses.

However, if quality of the drawing rather than originality is taken as the criterion of judgement, the authors conclude that the TV children did better. Their drawings showed more detail and better use of perspective. This study demonstrates that the impact of television on children's imaginative development is by

no means all negative. In fact after many studies of the relationship between television and imagination, Singer and Singer (1984) found that "children who watch a little TV develop strong imaginative capacities, stronger than children who watch none, but much stronger than children who watch a lot" (p.90).

3. Passivity: During the 1970's and 1980's "social concern about the apparent passivity " of television viewing has generated research that "has been increasingly directed at the act of television viewing itself" (Anderson and Bryant, 1983, p. xiii). Two competing theories seek to explain the act of television viewing: the reactive theory and the active theory (Anderson and Lorch, 1983).

The reactive theory of television viewing maintains that television is such a powerful, dynamic, attention-demanding but easily understood medium that attention to it is involuntary and comprehension is automatic. Bandura (1977) has formulated the reactive position; "Models presented in televised form are so effective in capturing attention that viewers learn much of what they see without requiring special incentives to do so" (as quoted, Anderson and Lorch, 1983, p.4). In the reactive theory, then, media do

things to people and people react. "Two features of the reactive theory are that the direction of influence is from television to the viewer and that the influence of viewer intentions, plans, strategies, and experiences are minimized" (Anderson and Lorch, p. 4).

The image of the helplessly passive viewer manipulated by powerful television forms is rejected by proponents of the active theory of television viewing. "The contemporary era then is one in which American researchers examine what people as active participants in the communication process do with media rather than what media do to people" (Wartella and Reeves, 1984, p. 25). As a result of detailed and lengthy studies of television viewing behaviours, Anderson and Lorch deny that attention to television is involuntary, automatic, or simple:

> A basic notion is that ongoing cognitive processing of television is to a great extent schema driven. A schema is a mental construct composed of abstract knowledge reflecting prototypical properties of the individual's experiences.... visual attention to television is to a great extent driven by these expectational schemata.(p. 6)

Perhaps the most influential variant of the active theory of televiewing is embodied in Salomon's (1984) concept of AIME. "One way in which children can (and do) influence the quality of the televiewing experience

is through the amount of mental effort they expend in the processing of the available messages" (p.5). This amount of invested mental effort (AIME) can be defined as "the number of nonautomatic mental elaborations applied to the material" (p.6). As such, these elaborations are both demonstrable and measureable.

Salomon and Anderson's work recognizes a reality of television viewing and attending behaviour that is not readily apparent from statistics on time spent watching television. A person may view Hill Street Blues with complete absorption, while another simultaneously watches and does the dishes. A third viewer completes her homework assignment while attending occasionally. A fourth attends only to the pictures, while "Judas Priest" supplies the audio track from the Sony Walkman clamped on his head. For the viewing public there are many levels of attentiveness to television.

Salomon is not suggesting that TV affects us only if we chose to let it, but he does draw attention to the complexity of the possible effects. "...once AIME is introduced we would need to find ways to distinguish between automatic media effects and those effects that can take place only when material is processed with sufficient depth" (1984, p.60).

In conclusion, the central premise of the active theory of television viewing is "the cognitively active nature of television viewing" (Anderson and Lorch, 1983, p.27). "Efforts to account for the impact of television should consider what the viewer brings to television at least as much as it considers what television brings to the viewer" (p.30). Televiewing, it seems, may be a passive pursuit befitting the popular image of the couch potato, or it may be a deceptively active pursuit. Whether passive or active may depend largely on the nature of the viewer and, perhaps, on the nature of the viewer's education. This concept of active viewing is crucial to the development of the critical viewing skills movement, which we shall later examine.

4. Television and Learning: Anderson and Lorch (1983) contend that the active theory of televiewing is a "considerably more optimistic perspective than the reactive theory on the potential of television as an educational tool" (p. 29). They suggest that children are not simply victims of TV; rather they may be able to use TV as much as TV uses them. Wright and Huston (1984) reinforce this view. "Because television can induce active cognitive processing we are cautiously

optimistic about its potential to teach children in cost effective ways" (p.76).

Salomon (1984) emphasizes the caution in this optimistic view of television's learning potential, when he suggests that

> ...it is possible that TV affords its perception as a mentally-undemanding medium. Thus, it may facilitate children's tendency to rely only on automatic, effortless and mindless processing. (1984)

In addition, Greenfield (1984), warns that "automatic processing" is not learning. "Learning is impossible without active participation and mental effort, so the passivity encouraged by television must be overcome if television is to be a tool for learning"(p.6).

Greenfield conducted comparative experiments on the effects of print, radio and television on learning. A key component of the experiments was adult mediation to place television in an educational context. Students were asked to be active perceivers of important content communicated via the TV medium. "These experiments confirm the special power television has for learning. Children tend to learn what they see on television more thoroughly than what they read or hear on radio or tape." (p.80)

In comparing print and television forms Salomon (1984) found that children, especially children of high

ability, learned relatively little from television. They perceived television as less demanding, paid less attention to it, and learned less from it. However, "processing with greater AIME (amount of invested mental effort) has been found to yield better learning results in terms of recall, comprehension and inference making" (p.60). When children were told that the television program they were about to watch was important and asked to watch it to learn rather than to have fun, their performance as tested increased dramatically.

Greenfield (1984) extrapolates from such research to criticize what she considers a bias in the education system. Print, she suggests, is not an inherently more educational medium than television, as many educators seem to assume. Rather, she conjectures, its traditional use and context in the educational system have made it seem of greater educational value. She hypothesizes that television, if used with educational expectations (AIME) and in an educational context, could be of equal educational value.

The Effects of Televiewing on Human Values

In the following section I will report the results of empirical studies that seek to determine the impact of television on people's conceptions of reality, their beliefs about other people, their notions of what is important and what is not important, in short, their values. Two factors make it difficult to assess the impact of television on values. First, the pervasive nature of television itself makes its impact hard to isolate. Second, the metaphorical relationship between human values and the symbol systems of the media that express those values may not create the most suitable environment for empirical analysis. George Gerbner (1978) gives eloquent expression to the complexity of this relationship when he states that

> The repetitive pattern of television's mass-produced messages and images forms the mainstream of the common symbolic environment that cultivates the most widely shared conceptions of reality. We live in terms of the stories we tell - stories about what things exist, stories about how things work, and stories about what to do - and television tells them all through news, drama, and advertising to almost everybody most of the time.(p.178)

The following pages will examine the impact of television on these conceptions of reality in regard to

four areas of concern: 1) stereotyping; 2) mainstreaming; 3) agenda setting; 4) advertising.

1. Stereotyping: For years a common complaint of leading ladies on the silver screen was that they were only cast as whores or mothers. Until recently blacks in American film were portrayed as ignorant and subservient, while Indians in Canadian media have been subjected to similar stereotyping (Ungerleider and Krieger, 1985). Women's Liberation and the Civil and Native rights movements may have changed much of this, but Greenfield (1984) still reports that women on television are usually portrayed as lovers or mothers, and that on TV only 20% of married women with children work, while in reality the figure is 60%.

In many other ways the composition of social reality that is conveyed by TV does not match the reality of the objective world. On TV men outnumber women three to one; young people comprise only one third of their real numbers and old people only a fifth; professionals and law enforcement officers make up an enormous percentage of the population.

The work of Gerbner and his associates documents a fascinating aspect of the relationship between stereotyping and TV's version of social reality. In a

study of television and aging, Gerbner et al. (1980) report that older characters on TV are consistently portrayed in negative ways; "More older characters are treated with disrespect than are characters in any other age group" (p.45). The old are so often portrayed as "eccentric or foolish" (p.45) that "The more people, and especially young people, watch television, the more they tend to perceive old people in generally negative and unfavorable terms."(p.46)

Gerbner's (1980) research shows a pattern of age distribution on television such that, though it

> does not appear in our [U.S.] real life population, it does appear to reflect the distribution of consumer income by age. Television's prime time population may well be seen as a mirror of the audience referred to by the industry as the 'prime demographic market'. (p.39)

It would appear that TV doesn't reflect social reality; rather it reflects economic reality. Those with the most buying power are likely to receive both fulsome and favourable treatment; those with the least buying-power are liable to find themselves stereotyped as one-dimensional caricatures.

2. Mainstreaming: The studies of Gerbner et al (1980), on social reality and TV reality, have led them to enunciate the principle of "mainstreaming"; in

> the dynamics of the cultivation of general concepts of social reality the "mainstream" can be thought of as a relative commonality of outlooks that television tends to cultivate. By "mainstreaming" we mean the sharing of that commonality among heavy viewers in those demographic groups whose light viewers hold divergent views. (p.15)

The concept of mainstreaming is the product of a two part research procedure, consisting of "message system analysis" by which teams of communications researchers systematically monitor prime-time network dramatic programming and "cultivation analysis", through which the attitudes of the TV audience are surveyed, "to determine how conceptions of social reality are affected by televiewing habits." (p.37)

The results reported by Gerbner's (1980) method of systematic reality sampling are striking. Heavy viewers are more pessimistic, more fearful , and less trusting, especially of other people, than light viewers. Heavy viewers are more subject to anomie than light viewers. They are significantly more likely to report that "things look bad - so bad that it would be unfair to have children, that officials do not care about the public, and that the lot of the average man is getting

worse rather than better" (p.20). Heavy viewers are also more likely to believe that violence is an acceptable way to resolve a personal conflict. Gerbner concludes that

> these studies have provided massive , systematic, and fairly coherent evidence that exposure to television is significantly associated with having conceptions of social reality that reflect some of the patterns of facts and actions presented in the world of television drama. (p. 205)

3. Agenda Setting: Eminent British media educator Len Masterman (1986) has drawn attention to the phenomenon of convergence of opinion among televiewing audiences; "the range of opinion articulated by the media frequently seems narrow in comparision with the variety of views which exist within the population at large..."(p.194). Like mainstreaming, agenda setting, as Murray (1980) explains, is an hypothesis that seeks to explain this convergence of opinion:

> Another way in which television can influence the viewer's conception of reality is through selective overemphasis on a restricted range of topics or issues. In this instance, the nature of the influence is not a direct imposition of particular content on the viewer in the sense that the viewer is told not "what to think" but rather "what to think about." In other words the media set the agenda and select particular issues that are deemed important for public debate.(p.47)

However, Mcquail (1987) intones a cautionary note. Studies of deliberate attempts at agenda setting in political campaigns have been inconclusive. He says

> The evidence...consists of data showing a correspondence between the order of importance given in the media to 'issues' and the order of significance attached to the same issues by the public and the politicians....such evidence is insufficient to show a causal relationship between the various issue 'agendas'.(p. 93)

Though Mcquail points out that the correspondence has not been proven to be causal, we cannot help but wonder if there is a political campaigner in creation who does not assume a causal relationship between media agenda setting and public voting behaviour.

4. Advertising: Commercial television is premised on the assumption that TV advertisements have very definite effects on human values and human behaviour. Consequently, television "ads" are plentiful and profitable. As a result, by graduation the average high school student will have seen 350,000 ads. (Adler et al.,1980)

Many studies have sought to determine how effective TV ads are in altering children's attitudes and behaviour. Gorn and Goldberg (1978), in studying children from low income families, reported that three

viewings of an ad were sufficient to cause behavioural changes aimed at acquiring the advertised toy. In response to the charge "that advertising imbues overly materialistic values and fosters non-rational, impulse-oriented choices...", Rossiter and Robertson (1974) studied the effects of a Christmas advertising campaign on attitude, cognition and behaviour of grade one, three, and five children. They report what they call a "defense overide phenomenon", whereby even children who initially showed strong defenses to commercials, manifested in critical attitudes toward TV ads in general, and the toys advertised in particular, were, nonetheless, overwhelmed by the Christmas ad. campaign. They suggest that throughout the rest of the year these children might be able to resist the normal impact of TV advertising, but the intensity of the Christmas campaign overides their defenses.

Other studies, such as those of Himmelweit in the 1950's, have sought to examine the charge that TV by its very nature as a visual medium encourages the development of materialistic values.

> In the 1950's it was found that British children who had access only to the BBC, which carries no advertising, had more materialistic ambitions than those without TV. Adolescent boys who watched television, for example, were more focused on what they would <u>have</u> in the future; adolescent boys without TV were more

> focused on what they would be doing. The longer the child's experience with TV, the more this materialistic outlook increased. Apparently, the visual images of TV create an emphasis on visible and tangible objects, hence on consumption, in defining one's identity and lifestyle. (as quoted, Greenfield, 1984, p.51)

I shall save a general summation of the impact of television for the end of this chapter. At this point, however, I should emphasize that a wealth of empirical studies seems unequivocal in its conclusions that television has a demonstrable influence upon human behaviour, psychological development, and values. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the reliance upon correlational studies, common to much of the research, may not be proof of causality.

INTERPRETIVE STUDIES OF THE IMPACT OF TELEVISION

Television is too visible a social factor to confine a review of the literature on its impact to exclusively empirical studies. Philosophers, educators, art and cultural critics and many others have observed and interpreted the impact of television. Their writings produce a part of the literature that explores what we may call megatheories of the effects of television on contemporary society.

A classic statement of the effects of television has been made by Jacques Ellul, author of The Technological Society (1964). In our post-industrial technological society, human values are rapidly being replaced by technique. There is, according to Ellul, a single best most efficient technique for doing everything. This technique can be determined by experts through mathematical and statistical means. In the technological society technique also determines media usage; media no longer fit McLuhan's description as "extensions of man." Man now becomes the extension of the machine. The machine is no longer a tool serving man; rather man exists to serve the machine.

Ellul sees television as essentially a propaganda device for the technological society. As such it has two specific functions - adjustment and escape. As an organic creature, man does not naturally fit the technological environment. Mass media are used to adjust human values and behaviour to fit the technology. Techniques of advertising and journalism, says Ellul

> have as their goal the bringing to the individual of that which is indispensable for his satisfaction in the conditions in which the machine has placed him, of inhibiting in him the sense of revolution, of subjugating him by flattering him. In other words, journalistic content is a technical complex expressly intended to adapt the man to the machine (p.95).

Through techniques of psychological manipulation of the unconscious, by playing upon repressed fears and insecurities, the mass media help to create the very needs the technological society satisfies. Advertisements continually remind us that for every problem, whether spurious or real, there is a simple and facile solution - another technique, another product, another purchase.
Thus, by convincing us that we need the products and processes of the technological society, mass media, especially television, provide a motive force that keeps the whole machine rolling.

Another means of achieving this adjustment of man to the machine is by a process Ellul calls "massification". Man as an individual has a critical faculty. However, as the Nazi propagandists demonstrated, man en masse has a tendency to lose this critical faculty. Many contemporary advertising strategies are clearly designed to produce this kind of mass suspension of the critical faculty, by identification of the individual with the glamour surrounding a particular product. The "pepsi generation" and "coke is the real thing" commercials are interesting examples. One of the Max Headroom coke commercials, in fact, appears to borrow its production style from Leni Reifenstahl's films of the Hitler youth rallies at Nuremburg. Max appears on a huge screen before a chanting throng of eerily illuminated true-believing coke drinkers as he reassures them that they are the chosen multitude - the true "coke-volk" so to speak.

Having created the technological poison of a vacuous and meaningless existence as slaves to the machine, then the technological society, so Ellul tells us, as if by magic supplies the antidote in the fantasy escape of television and the movies. By identifying with the heroes and heroines of the electronic and

silver screens, the individual is transported, temporarily at least, from the high-speed, high-tech, high-stress world of the technological society. Thus the mass media function like "soma" in Huxley's Brave New World.

The two media functions of propaganda and escape are linked in John Berger's account of the effects of advertising in contemporary society, Ways of Seeing (1972). According to Berger, publicity portrays a shimmering ideal world of seductive glamour. This is the same world of fantasy escape portrayed in the movies - a world of action, wealth, and sex. The implicit message of advertisement is that you too are only one purchase away from this ideal world. If your world does not yet match this glamorous ideal it is only because you have not yet purchased enough of the miraculous products of technology. So buy more.

Neil Postman (1979) also delineates a theory of television as propaganda. So thorough are the effects of this propaganda, says Postman, that it can be likened to a whole other curriculum:

> Television is not usually acknowledged either to have a curriculum or to be one, which is probably why parents do not pay as much attention to the television education of their children as they do to their school education. Many parents, as well as educators, seem to

> believe that television is an 'entertainment medium,' by which they mean to imply that little of enduring value is either taught by or learned from it.
>
> But all of this can be seen in a clarifying light if we simply define a curriculum as a specially constructed information system whose purpose, in its totality, is to influence, teach, train, or cultivate the mind and character of our youth....Viewed in this way, television is not only a curriculum but constitutes the major educational enterprise now being undertaken in the United States. That is why I call it the First Curriculum. School is the second. (p.51)

Several characteristics of this TV curriculum may have repercussions on the effectiveness of the school curriculum. Television, according to Postman, appears to be an effortless medium compared with print. Supposedly, one does not have to learn to read television. No prerequisite curriculum is required. No hierarchy of learning skills is necessary. Rather than knowledge built upon linear rational discipline, television delivers its knowledge, as they say in TV news, "quick an' dirty." Postman emphasizes that "Perhaps the most powerful bias of television is, in fact, its stress on immediate gratification, for television has no need to put its learners on hold with a view toward later intellectual or emotional gratification." (1979, p. 60)

Television can be a flattering medium. TV programs rarely, and commercials almost never, confront their

audience with their need to improve. Beer commercials are perhaps the most gratuitous examples of audience stroking - "For all the things you do, this 'bud's' for you." "There's heart in this land, for all we say and do, so reach for 'the blue'." Postman describes one of the principal teachings of the media curriculum,

> namely "Except for your unaccountable ignorance of how the products of technology may help you to achieve happiness, you are fine just the way you are. How you speak, what you value, and what you know require no improvement for there is no other level of culture that is better than yours." (1979, p.159)

Complacency absorbed from thousands of flattering commercials may impair a student's ability to respond to the challenge of self-improvement that is often the beginning of the learning process.

In spite of its obvious mass appeal, television, so Postman contends, is not a democratic medium. Its communication is one-way. The viewer cannot engage in dialogue. He cannot respond. This inability to respond is part of a dangerously undemocratic trend in modern communications; "...while there has been a tremendous increase in media, there has been at the same time, a decrease in available and viable 'democratic' channels of communication because mass media are entirely one-way communication." (1969, p. 25)

TV learning is compressed, intense, and entertaining. TV conditioning may lead to the expectation that other learning situations will have similar characteristics. Many teachers complain that their students cannot pay attention for more than 10 minutes, about the normal duration between commercial breaks on television. Many teachers feel that they are expected to do a " song and dance routine" in the classroom to compete with "the tube". They fear that students come to school to be passively entertained rather than to actively learn.

IMPACT OF TELEVISION ON THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Postman considers the TV curriculum fundamentally hostile to conceptual, linear modes of expression, such as speech and writing, which are the core of the traditional school curriculum. Postman's "TV curriculum" theory is indicative of the concern that many educators feel for the impact of TV on the classroom environment. Much of the research previously cited has been motivated by the expressed concerns of educators and parents:

> Educators have been concerned for many years about the influence of television on their students. Among their concerns are viewer passivity, the limiting of socialization experiences, the link between TV violence and aggressive behaviour, the impact on

> physical health, the moral examples portrayed, and the contrast - or lack thereof - between "reality" and "fantasy" on television. Moreover, the continuing nationwide decline of test scores and the shortened attention spans of some students are thought by many to be related to television viewing (Lloyd-Kolkin, et al, 1980).

The national Parent Teachers Association of the United States has sought to identify areas of educational concern for researchers:

> Most of the available studies on the effects of television on children deal with violence and aggressive behaviour. However, parents and children are reporting more and more that children's behaviour patterns are being altered in more subtle ways.
>
> We find our children unable to stick with a problem. They lack the attention span and patience to work at a project until it is completed. Armed with the instant learning experience of even such acclaimed programs as Sesame Street, children are unwilling and unable to focus their attention on the relative boredom of the classsroom teacher - Big Bird is much more fun,...(in Young, 1981, p. 112)

D. and J. Singer (1984b) sum up the practical relevance for parents and educators of their research with the following warning:

> ...it seems clear from our own studies that heavy TV viewing puts the child at risk by early school age of failing to obtain significant world information, of poor reading skills, a poor discrimination of reality from fantasy, less imaginative skill, a more fearful view of the world, greater restlessness and more aggression - all contributory to a poor behavioural adjustment when the child is beginning at school. (p.11)

I should emphasize that Singer and Singer are talking about the risks of "heavy TV viewing"; nonetheless, the

above statements are typical in their assumption, by educators, of the largely negative influence of television viewing. The results of a questionnaire I administered to a graduate class in education at the University of Victoria echo this negative attitude. Sixteen of eighteen respondents thought their students watched too much television. Seventeen of eighteen thought the television they watched had a negative effect on their ability to learn in school. The responses of these teachers suggest that many educators feel that the impact of television renders the classroom environment and the pedagogical efforts of teachers themselves less effective than they otherwise might be.

SUMMARY OF IMPACT OF TELEVISION

In summing up the impact of television on education I am reminded of a prediction made by Marshal McLuhan in 1964; "Just as we now try to control Atom-bomb fallout, so we will one day try to control media fallout. Education will become recognized as civil defense against media fallout."(p. 267) McLuhan's statement is valuable in alerting us to two significant aspects of the impact of television on education. First, like the atom-bomb, that impact has

been enormous. Second, because the impact is so enormous a response is called for by the educational system. Beyond these two points the analogy to self-defense could be misleading, for McLuhan was a proponent, not of ignoring or denying the new media, but rather of increased use of them.

The purpose of this chapter has not been to argue that television per se is either good or bad. That might be likened to arguing whether the rain is good or bad. Television is going to rain down upon students and educators whether we like it or not. The purpose of the conceptualization of media literacy that will develop in this thesis is to provide first an umbrella, lest we become too soggy from the media downpour, and secondly a kind of rain-powered electrical generator, that may allow us to convert media fallout into creative light and warmth, through a media literacy curriculum.

Chapter III

THEORETICAL MODELS FOR A MEDIA CURRICULUM

Introduction

While the theorizing of Neil Postman, quoted in the foregoing chapter, is contentious, and perhaps deliberately so, he has made an especially valuable contribution to understanding the impact of television in his concept of "the information environment." He maintains that "the means by which people communicate comprise an information environment just as real as the terrain on which they live." (1969, p. 35) At various times in human history different communications media, particularly print and speech, have been responsible for delineating the dominant features of this information environment. Today television, so the studies quoted in the previous chapter have shown, has redrawn the landscape of the information environment. This redefining of the terrain has impelled communications theorists and educational practitioners alike to redefine the concept of literacy itself, and to begin to apply theories of literacy to media other than, and additional to, reading and writing. The result has been a series of models of media literacy.

A. THE VISUAL LITERACY MODEL

1. Visual Literacy - Beginnings

One of the most systematic responses by educators to the impact of television was the visual literacy movement, which can be said to have been born in 1969 at the First National Conference on Visual Literacy, held in the United States. The conference defined visual literacy in the following terms:

> Visual literacy refers to a group of vision competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences. The development of these competencies is fundamental to normal human learning. When developed they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visible actions, objects, and symbols natural or man-made, that he encounters in his environment. Through the creative use of these competencies, he is able to communicate and enjoy the masterworks of visual communications. (Debes, 1969, p.27, my underlining)

Though the impact of television was a motive factor in the Visual Literacy movement, it should be emphasized that the movement was also an explicit reaction to a narrow view of literacy in a world of proliferating media. At some point someone had to recognize that print was not the only medium of educational value. Such a recognition was the starting point for visual literacy. I should

like to draw the reader's attention to key words, which I have underlined, in this definition of visual literacy - "integrating", "discriminate", and "communicate". These words form the basis of a model of media literacy that may be one of the visual literacy movement's major accomplishments. I shall deal more fully with these key words and the concepts they embody shortly but, first, it is necessary to look at the development of visual literacy theory.

2. Visual Literacy - Theory

The significance of the visual literacy movement is best revealed in the work of John Debes and Roger Fransecky.
Both were pioneers in the development of the concept of visual literacy.

In his essay, "Some Foundations for Visual Literacy" (1968) Debes helped initiate a research tradition that regards visual literacy as a complement to print literacy, rather than as a rival. He also contributed to the theoretical foundations for early experiments in student-produced audiovisual projects. He believed that children have a need to produce and manipulate images of their own creation in order to

combat what he regarded as the passivity of the television viewing process.

In 1972 Debes and Roger Fransecky co-authored Visual Literacy: A Way to Learn - A Way to Teach in which the authors contrast the old "audiovisual viewpoint" with the new visual literacy viewpoint:

> The concern of the audiovisual communicator in education has traditionally been to provide the teacher with superior messages that would transmit ideas more effectively to students. The audiovisual viewpoint puts the tools of visual communication in the hands of the teacher; the visual literacy viewpoint puts the tools of visual communication in the hands of the students and the teacher, with emphasis on the student and what happens to him when he tries to communicate visually. (p.8)

This is one of the clearest statements of the pedagogical significance of "visual literacy", or "media literacy", or "television literacy" that I have come across. The statement is admirable in its simplicity but extensive in its implications. In its expression of two major principles of the visual literacy movement it anticipates the meeting of media literacy and reconceptualist theory that forms the basis for the conception of media literacy that will be examined in the next chapter. By putting "the tools of visual communication...in the hands of the students" educational media becomes something one does rather than something one watches, or studies. The statement

thereby suggests a fundamental departure from traditional curricular practice.

The authors hereby suggest a learning principle that, while not stated explicitly in the literature of visual literacy, is frequently implied. That fundamental learning principle is the experiential premise that students learn primarily by doing.

That students learn by doing also underlies the second learning principle implied in Fransecky and Debes' statement. Fundamental to their theory of literacy in general and visual literacy in particular, is that full literacy necessitates both decoding and encoding abilities and activities. Of necessity they put the "emphasis on the student and what happens to him when he tries to communicate visually." The most novel aspect of the visual literacy movement was not that students should learn to decode media other than print but that they should learn to encode these media as well. However, what I should like to emphasize here is that in visual literacy projects initiated by both Debes and Fransecky there is a balanced approach to encoding and decoding. For example, Fransecky's Milford

Communications Program included as many activities designed to enhance visual discrimination as it had for visual communication.

Fransecky and Debes deal with the implicit threat to print literacy presented by visual literacy by asserting the basic similarities between the two as languaging processes:

> Visual literacy suggests a broader model of discourse, a new literacy, intertwined with the "traditional" and important verbal language activities. Far from being a "retreat from the word", visual literacy activities draw on a multi-language model - a model firmly grounded in the total experience of children. (1972, p.11)

In this model communicating (or languaging) is primary. The medium of communication (the specific language of print or the specific language of photography, video, mime, etc.) that is chosen to carry the communication is secondary.

From reading the works of Debes and Fransecky several educational principles fundamental to the visual literacy movement emerge. These principles constitute a model of media literacy that recalls the three key words of the 1968 conference's definition of visual literacy - integrating, discriminate, and communicate.

1. Media literacy necessitates the ability to discriminate or decode media information.

2. Media literacy necessitates the ability to use media to communicate or encode information.

3. Proliferation of information media requires an expanded model of literacy necessitating the ability to integrate information from a variety of media.

3. Visual Literacy - Projects

Because of his fundamental concern for the concept of expanded literacy, Fransecky researched the relationship between visual literacy and print literacy. - In 1968 Roger Fransecky initiated a visual literacy project with the disadvantaged children of migrant farm workers in New York state. Students used instamatic cameras to visually express perceptions of the community in which they lived. They also kept notebooks in which they were encouraged to translate impressions from visual to verbal media. His conclusion was that

> Studies have demonstrated that youngsters who are given the opportunity to become visually literate sharpen self-concepts, deepen their environmental awareness, and discover new parallels in verbal language - in its phonology,

> morphology, and syntax....Our study attempted to demonstrate how visual literacy training might extend and enrich the language facility of migrant youth...(p.118)

Tests using the Dailey Language Facility Test showed that students who had the visual literacy course scored higher on print literacy tests than a control group who did not have the visual literacy course.

One of the first integrated visual literacy projects began in Milford, Ohio in 1970. Production of audio-visual materials - photography, audio recording, videotaping, etc. - was integrated into curriculum from K to 12. The overall goal of the project was communication, no matter which medium was used. The emphasis was not on visual literacy or print literacy, but on integrated literacy:

> Teachers... noticed discernible attitudinal changes in some students. Previously uncomfortable in classes which were print-oriented, these students discovered a medium through which they could effectively communicate their ideas; and, therefore, gained a purpose for being in school. Often these children experienced positive changes in self-image as teachers and other students praised their work. (Fransecky and Ferguson, 1973, p.49)

The Milford project was an early demonstration of an aspect of media literacy that is of special significance to educators from other backgrounds, particularly those leaning towards experiential

learning. For students in the Milford Project the community itself became an expanded classroom:

> Milford students armed with cameras and a "new look at seeing" have explored their community with fresh eyes, and in so doing they have discovered amusing and telling visual juxtapositions and ironies. In many of the high school students, the exercise has produced a rededication to the possibility of community. Visual literacy activities have made their classrooms "rooms with a view", for these activities have offered a boundless curriculum with unlimited expertise. (Fransecky and Ferguson, 1973, p.46)

B. THE CRITICAL VIEWING MODEL OF MEDIA LITERACY

Over the past 15 years "visual literacy" has been followed by other conceptions of how to deal with the media. According to Donna Lloyd-Kolkin et al (1980) "The notion of 'media literacy' appeared on the national [U.S.] scene in the mid 1970's"(p.120). This media literacy was to be the product of critical viewing of television and as such the critical viewing movement presents a model of "media literacy" that is significantly different from that developed by the visual literacy movement.

I have emphasized that visual literacy was a response to a perceived need for an expanded conception of literacy, more than a reaction to the T.V. medium per se. The critical viewing movement appears to have been the opposite. It originated very much in reaction to the impact of television, particularly the perceived or assumed negative effects of television.

The Journal of Communications special edition on Critical Television Viewing (1980) quotes a paper presented by J. Doolittle in 1977:

> Since television has been identified as a source of antisocial learning, it is suggested that schools might consider developing methods of counteracting television's negative influence...[The] approach would be to interfere with the broader television learning process so as to reduce children's acquiring of antisocial influences. (Anderson, 1980, p. 66)

This is not a generous view of the educational value of the mighty medium of television. Rather television is seen as a negative influence from which our children need self-defense. This self-defense is critical viewing. "Commercial television programming provides its own curriculum of values, lifestyles, and persuasive messages which can influence careless viewers more powerfully than it influences thoughtful, critical viewers." (Lloyd-Kolkin, 1980, p. 91)

James A. Anderson, in Education for the Television Age, identifies two assumptions that underlie critical viewing or what he calls "receivership skills":

> 1) that children can utilize certain viewing skills and analytical procedures to modify source, message and medium effects toward pro-social consequences and
> 2) that these skills and procedures can be taught in the ordinary classroom using curricular materials and instructional approaches specially designed for that purpose. (p. 22-23)

It is not the purpose of this thesis to examine the educational results of critical viewing curricula. The literature reports both successes and disappointments. Rather, I am more concerned with the

model of "media literacy" suggested by the critical viewing approach.

The critical viewing movement's model of "media literacy" is, I think, clearly evident in the Report of the Television and Children Conference (1976), sponsored by the Ford Foundation, the Markle Foundation, and the National Science Foundation. The report recommended that a media literacy curriculum should include

> such subjects as production conventions, analysis of media appeals, the character and roles of non-verbal cues, overview of the history and structure of the broadcast industry, the economic basis; for television, analysis of typical formats for entertainment programming, major concerns about negative effects of programming, analysis of the values portrayed in television content, standards for criticism of television content, and <u>if possible, some direct experience with television equipment</u>[my underlining]. (Lloyd-Kolkin, et al, 1980, p. 120)

The imbalance of the emphasis on viewing rather than production in this statement clearly reveals that this model of media literacy is significantly different from the visual literacy model. Much is said about discrimination. Communication seems almost to be thrown in as an afterthought. And nothing at all is said of integrated literacy.

A survey of Canadian Provincial Ministries of Education that I conducted recently reveals two interesting examples of this truncated model of media literacy. Of the 10 provinces responding, only two, Alberta and Prince Edward Island, actually have provincial media literacy curricula. Responding for Prince Edward Island's Ministry of Education, A. Hammond states that in Prince Edward Island's media course, "Awareness, video literacy and evaluation are emphasized rather than production" (O'Neill, 1988). In Alberta, the "Viewing in the Secondary Language Arts" program is based on the following definition of visual literacy:

> the ability to observe, to process elements and to interpret; this viewing aptitude involves understanding both content and purpose of any image and appreciating structural and aesthetic composition in visual communication. (Esdale and Robinson, 1982, p.4)

The definition makes no mention of any kind of encoding activities.

It is neither my intention nor desire to castigate the critical viewing movement, which has made needed contributions to the understanding of modern media. Rather, I wish to establish that the model of media literacy first suggested by Debes and Fransecky, under the auspices of critical viewing, appears to have suffered a "sea change", and perhaps not a tempestuous,

empowering, magical change at that. This change may make critical viewing curricula seem, in the context of the foundational educational issues we shall examine in the next chapter, rather limited.

It is, nonetheless, interesting to speculate briefly on why the model changed. Perhaps the critical view encouraged such a negative attitude towards television that educators simply felt they didn't want to dirty their students hands with the vile medium. The writings of Marie Winn (TV - The Plug-in Drug) and Neil Postman (Amusing Ourselves to Death) might lend credence to such errant speculation. Or perhaps the previously prohibitive cost of production equipment forced pedagogical decisions that were based neither on desire nor philosophy but on mundane expediency.

C. VIDEO PRODUCTION COURSES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

1. Introduction

Simultaneous with the "critical viewing" movement, but essentially separate from it, various kinds of video production courses have been developing in North American schools. Through a review of the literature on these courses, we can examine the model of media literacy they imply.

As previously mentioned the literature on the pedagogy of video production is scarce. What does exist consists mostly of reports by participants. There are also a few notable studies, both interpretive and empirical, contributed by eminent scholars and researchers.

2. Reports of Video Production Courses

Dennis G. Kraynak (1987) reports on Video Production at Rocky River High School, Ohio, where with equipment supplied by the local cable company, he has taught a broadcasting course since 1976. Classes limited to 10 students prepare two cablecasts a month. Kraynak emphasizes the elective nature of the course, pointing out that it is taken by two types of students

- "students interested in a career in broadcasting or those who just find the thing fun....Real on-the-job pressure is simulated by the fact that the entire grade for the course is based on tape-day performance." (p. 54)

Patricia Mcdonald and George Hudiburg (1983) report on another cable-company assisted Public Communications class initiated at Chanute High School, Kansas, in 1982. Mcdonald, also a language arts teacher, taught the class which was also limited to 10 students. They sum up the first year of the course by stating that

> the class was successful, not only because the students learned television journalism, but also because they learned how to schedule their time, how to work with others, how to present themselves to the public, and how to be proud of a job well done. (p. 6)

Jonathan L. Shorr, Director of Communications and Theatre Arts at the University of Baltimore (1986) reports enthusiastically on a school video news project at Friends Middle School in Baltimore, Maryland:

> The class or school-produced television news show is a good way to gain and maintain student interest, demonstrate an obvious need for a variety of communication skills, and turn out students with increased expertise and appreciation for the integration of language arts abilities. (p. 1)

Further emphasizing the integrative aspect of this particular media literacy project, Shorr concludes that "Because the work helps integrate language arts skills across the curriculum, a TV news project can be an excellent learning experience." (p. 3)

The E.R.I.C. Document Resume Service (1984) reports a highly acclaimed California video production project at Vallecito Middle School, which was chosen by the California School Administrators Task Force on Public Confidence as an exemplary project "worthy of highlighting for the California educational community"(p. 1). The Vallecito report asserts that video production has been found to be a vital and useful tool that can be used by teachers in other subject areas. School-produced productions [which appear on local cablevision] have been used for teacher training and community relations."

The Vallecito staff also report "many positive changes in learning, attitudes and behavior resulting from the use of television" (p. 3), resulting in improved oral expression, self-confidence, group cooperation, satisfaction in entertaining others, and meaningful sequencing of ideas and actions. Students who produce the school news program report that

> they are better able to edit and paraphrase information and can discriminate fact from opinion. They are more confident about their ability to speak publicly and are no longer intimidated by cameras, lights or tape recorders. Students are now better able to listen to and use constructive criticism from teachers and peers. (p. 7)

3. Empirical and Interpretive Studies

Any scholar who had to rely for sustenance on empirical studies of video production courses need have little fear of obesity. There are few.

However, significant research is reported by Chava Tidhar (1984). Tidhar studied children making silent films in order to determine if the experience "enhances the development of specific cognitive skills" (p. 957) His findings suggest that the faculties of discrimination and communication may not operate independently:

> The mental skills affected by the experience of filmmaking were similar to those shown to be critical for contending effectively with media messages in Salomon and Cohen's (1977) research. In other words, mastery of these skills is important for the development of literate consumers of the visual media. (p. 958)

Tidhar asserts that the process of making meaning out of a collection of visual elements (shots), basic to the editing process,

is also crucial to the development of logical inference skills. He suggests that film editing may be an extraordinarily effective tool for teaching these skills because editing provides immediate feedback, i.e. the edited sequence either has meaning or it does not. With striking enthusiasm, Tidhar concludes that,

> The findings of the present study point toward one of the most promising consequences of this process, [the increasing availability of electronic media] the substantial improvement in mental skills applicable to a variety of learning tasks. It is possible that this contribution may be as powerful as that attributed to the influence of print on the development of scientific thinking. (p. 964)

Moss (1983) describes the work of the Schools Council Communication and Social Skills Project in Great Britain, whose mandate was to study the effects on learning of production of audio-visual materials by students themselves. The project reported that experience in production in video, film and slide-tape formats enhanced communication and social skills and also understanding of other subject areas. One project evaluator is quoted as saying

> I have observed groups of children labelled of low ability, from manual working backgrounds, speaking with confidence and ease... I have seen 16-year-olds confess that their film-making classes are the only ones from which they do not regularly play truant, and I have seen the same children working responsibly and collaboratively in groups, making decisions, accepting arguements

> and moving from leadership to the acceptance of leadership and much more. Clearly, this kind of education can dramatically change the way youngsters see themselves, and from this can develop levels of ability otherwise untapped and unsuspected."(Lorac and Weiss, 1981, p. 121)

Ferguson, in "Practical Work and Pedagogy"(1981), has criticized some of the audio-visual production programs lauded by the Communication and Social Skills Project. He asserts that what he calls a "liberal" tradition of media studies has created an over-emphasis on self-expression in media production courses at the expense of "incisive analysis or the structured development of cognitive or intellectual skills." He suggests that media courses are often all action and no thought, or all practical work and no pedagogy. This situation, he says, fosters an "educational prejudice...that if a subject on the curriculum is popular, it should not be too intellectually demanding" (p. 41). The result, he maintains, is a lot of parents, teachers and students making an enormous fuss over some rather nondescript programming, as if it were some sort of miracle that students can produce TV programming at all. He recommends that more emphasis be placed on the communicating of meaning in media courses, both in analysis and production of programming.

4. Production Model of Media Literacy

The purpose of this section on production courses has been to examine the model of media literacy they represent. The multiplicity of video production courses, both those described in the literature and those I have examined personally, makes generalization hazardous. Nonetheless, there are certain patterns evident.

By their nature production courses are concerned with encoding (communication). Frequently these encoding or production skills are taught in a context of potential job training. Video production courses at Elphinstone, Cowichan, and Spectrum secondary schools, in British Columbia, report a high success rate in placing graduates in the broadcast industry. Most production courses encountered put a premium on doing. They are action oriented with several of them encouraging the kind of affective "communication and social skills" described by Lorac and Weiss. Two courses explicitly emphasized integrative literacy as a goal. Others consider at least oral fluency to be an outcome of their production courses. Significantly, no production course reported in the literature includes critical viewing (discrimination) as a goal of the

course. I asked teachers of video production in four B.C. high schools if their courses contained a critical viewing component. All four replies were negative. Compared with the three part visual literacy model, the production model of media literacy seems also to be diminished.

MODELS OF MEDIA LITERACY

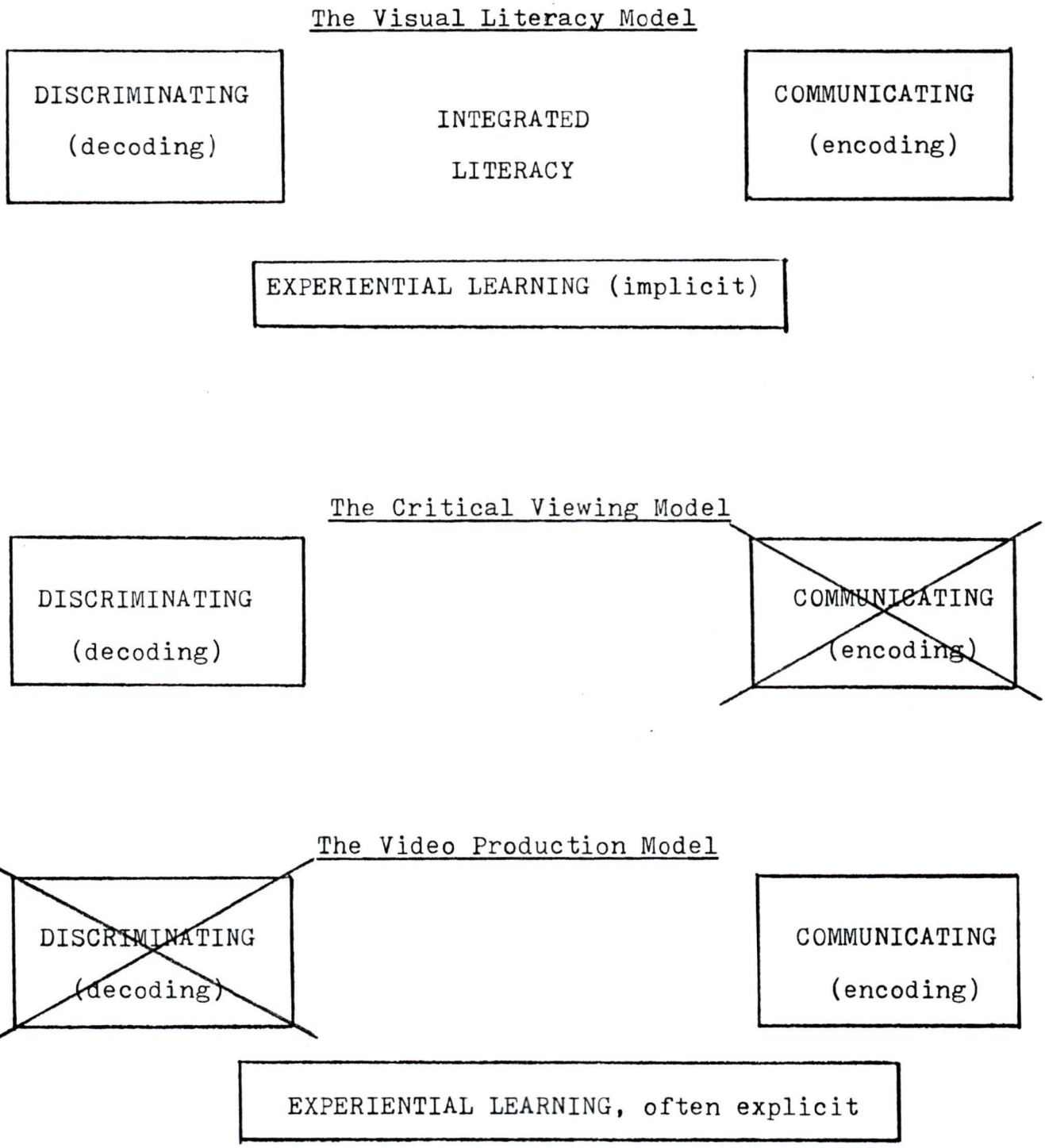

Figure II. Models of Media Literacy.

Chapter IV

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS FOR A MEDIA CURRICULUM

A. INTRODUCTION

WHAT KNOWLEDGE IS OF MOST WORTH?

The models of media literacy presented in the previous chapter are based on certain educational assumptions. The visual literacy model assumes the value of integrated literacy. Critical viewing assumes the value of analysis. The production model assumes the value of experiential learning. These values form the educational foundation for the various models. In some of the models these values are stated explicitly; in others, particularly in the production model, they are implicit.

One of my own educational assumptions is that the foundational pedagogical values upon which curricula are based should be explicit. I also suspect that media literacy programs have not proliferated because the foundational pedagogy upon which they have been based has not been stated explicitly enough. Anyone who is ever likely to be affected by media literacy courses needs to know where these programs may fit in the broad context of the relative worth of knowledge.

It is now about a hundred years since Herbert Spencer sparked the deliberate study of curriculum with his famous question, "What knowledge is of most worth?" It would appear that the study of curriculum has not passed beyond answering that question. Perhaps, it is such a vital question that we may not wish to go beyond it.

In raising the issue of the relative worth of knowledge, Spencer was reacting against the "liberal education" of his age which denied a place for science in the education system. Spencer's reply to his own question in 1886 was unequivocal. A knowledge of science was of the most worth. Spencer's conclusion was debatable then. It still is. Nonetheless, the question itself may still produce some useful insights into contemporary educational values.

Unlike the Victorian Spencer, with his supreme confidence in a mechanistic universe ruled by absolute laws of physics and ethics, discoverable by science and reason, we live in a world of relativity and relative values, where one's values are determined by one's point of view and reciprocally one's point of view is determined by one's values.

I will not presume to pontificate upon the absolute truth of my response to Spencer's question. Rather I shall assume that there is no absolute truth, at least not on this sublunary sphere, and certainly not in education. What I hope to present are some usable truths, a working answer, that helps to cast a few illuminating rays into the stygian gloom that currently obscures the relationship between education and the medium of television.

In answer to Spencer's question, then, the following chapter will attempt to delineate a foundational pedagogy into which media literacy fits. I do not suggest that the fit is definitive, merely that it does fit.

B. THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

Neil Postman (1969) has contributed a conception of knowledge that relates to both the media and Spencer's monumental question. When Postman affirms that "the means by which people communicate comprise an information environment just as real and influential as the terrain on which they live." (p.35), he provides us with an image that allows us to visualize a relationship between communications media and educational values. He maintains that,"...it is the

business of education, at all times, to monitor and adjust the information environment whenever possible so that its inherent biases and drift do not monopolize the intellect and character of our youth."(p.35)

This concept of the information environment is both graphic and useful. Historically there seems to be little doubt that a key role for education has been in dealing with information environments and the media for communicating information. Tribal education can be seen as largely a matter of learning the symbol structure of language through which the oral culture of the tribe was communicated from generation to generation. Education in the Greek polis focused on learning the skills of oratory without which the Athenian or Theban citizen could not make himself heard in the assembly.

Only with the proliferation of paper and the development of moveable type in the fifteenth century, did writing replace oratory as the dominant means of transmitting information. Before that time books were so rare and so expensive that few people could afford to utilize them. As the information environment of paper, print, reading and writing became dominant during the Renaissance, schools proliferated. (Innis, 1972)

The Latin grammar school which Shakespeare attended was representative of the type, The primary focus of the young bard's studies was reading and writing the new print medium. For these purposes study of the classics, mostly in Latin, with a little Greek, was sufficient. Before the development of vernacular literature, Latin was the international print language and well past the Renaissance it remained the international language of science. (Innis, 1972)

Science also can be regarded as an information environment. It is a method of collecting, validating and disseminating information. In Spencer's day, though science was an information system of crucial contemporary significance, because of tradition and inertia it was not taught in the schools.

The work of Spencer and others made science an integral part of the twentieth century educational environment, along with the three R's. This was an environment that was dominated by print media, embodied in the ubiquitous textbook. William Torrey Harris, the influential superintendent of the St. Louis School System in the 1870's, spoke for generations of school superintendents when he asserted that the textbook was the perfect tool for the "preparation of a people for a newspaper civilization [my underlining] - an age

wherein public opinion rules" (In Pinar, 1975, p.29). Public opinion may still rule but research cited in chapter II indicates that today most people get the information on which they base their opinions, and much of their behaviour and values, from television. If the latter half of the nineteenth century was a newspaper civilization, the latter half of the twentieth may be a television civilization.

Horace Newcombe (1981) has recently given us an intriguing analysis of this "television civilization", or television culture. He defines culture as a system of shared meanings and values expressed through symbols. As such, culture is an ongoing process of discovering meaning. He sees pop culture as a field on which transformations of cultural significance are conducted. Television, he affirms, is "the central symbol field in contemporary American culture" (p. 11). Further he suggests that thought is not private but rather depends upon a publicly available stock of symbols. Television, as "our most publicly available stock of symbols" (p. 12) has a position of cultural domination in North American society.

Philosophers from Plato to Wittgenstein have viewed media, especially reading and writing, "as a formative influence on higher forms of thinking."

(Scribner and Cole, 1981, p. 9) On this basis it may not be too radical to expect that other forms of encoding and decoding language, such as those involved in reading and writing motion-picture images, may have similar "formative influence on...forms of thinking."

If, as is suggested by Plato and Wittgenstein and Horace Newcomb, our conceptions of reality are based on symbol systems ("the available stock of symbols"), and if print is one symbol system and TV is a different symbol system, then presumably the realities composed by these different symbol systems are also different. This concept of different realities produced by different symbol systems may illuminate some of the difficulties contemporary teachers have in "getting through to" some of their students. They may simply be living in different worlds.

I am not about to suggest that we compromise standards of print literacy in order to deal with television. It would be a mistake to suggest that television is <u>the</u> dominant medium in contemporary culture. I doubt that ever again is any culture likely to be dominated by a single medium as Greece was by oral language, or as the Victorian era was by print language. Contemporary culture has many information systems, among which the dominant media, so it seems,

are print, computers, and television. If the role of education is to teach the information environment, if the knowledge that is of most worth is still that which allows one to use the dominant information media of the culture, then our education system is doing a good job on two out of three counts. But what about television?

Television is ignored by most educators. Though most of the population gets much of its information from television, our schools do not teach students either how to produce television images or how to understand and criticize television images produced by others. At the present time computer literacy is avidly and justifiably taught in our schools on the assumption that most people will have to use a computer at some point in their lives. However, most people in North America do not spend three to four hours a night gathered around the family computer, nor, perhaps regrettably, do they spend that time reading aloud from Dickens or the Bible.

C. QUANTITATIVE BIAS

1. Historical Background

Much of modern society rests on the largely unproven assumption that if you can measure it, you can control it. Any and every phenomenon of existence can be explained through statistical analysis. While statistics may not be an overnight phenomenon, the notion that mathematics can allow man to control his world gained its major impetus relatively recently, in the Renaissance (Mumford, 1964). Kepler gave classic pronouncement to this quantitative bias about 400 years ago; "As the ear is made to perceive sound, and the eye to perceive colour, so the mind has been formed to understand not all sorts of things but quantity." (Mumford, p. 54)

In The Pentagon of Power Mumford blames Galileo for establishing this quantitative bias as an integral part of modern science. He describes what he calls the "crime of Galileo";

> Galileo divided experienced reality into two spheres, a subjective sphere, which he chose to exclude from science, and an objective sphere, freed theoretically from man's visible presence, but known through rigorous mathematical analysis...(p. 57)

To dismiss as irrelevant everything that is unquantifiable is to equate existence with measurement. This equation is absurd, but just this equation was to be the basis of the experimental method of "positive " science. According to August Comte the method of attaining knowledge appropriate to modern times is the "positive"; that is, science posits explanations of effective physical laws which can then be proven experimentally. What cannot be proven experimentally cannot be true.

The quantitative bias of Positivism was carried one step further in the "Logical Positivism" of Ludwig von Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell, who maintained that not only science but also philosophy must be scientific, analytical and "verifiable by sense experience." Logical Positivism in the 1930's culminated in the work of A.J. Ayer. Ayer reduced the scope of philosophy to empirical testable statements. All other statements were to be considered literally meaningless. Love, peace, ethics, divinity - all were neither true nor false. They were simply nonsense.

Roland Stromberg describes the progress of Positivism that culminated in Ayer as "a severe retrenchment or cutting back, intellectually and culturally in order to get the advantages of clarity

and certainty." (1975, p.459) Statements are verifiable, therefore meaningful, or they are unverifiable, therefore meaningless. There is an elegant and seemingly reasonable simplicity to this proposition that must have been tempting after the rampant irrationality of "the Great War".

However, by this proposition the statement, "The average weight of a flea is .0013 grams," has more meaning than the statement, "God is dead." The former is verifiable; the latter is not. This suggests a basic shortcoming of positivism, which is a reductionist tendency to trivialize the world, for frequently the facile, the obvious and the uncomplicated are measureable, while the real multi-dimensional world of human experience is not.

In setting off the chain reaction that led to Positivism, "By his preoccupation with quantity, Galileo had, in fact [literally] disqualified the real world of experience."(Mumford,p.55) Mumford's use of the term "disqualified" in the above quote is significant. For centuries science has studied a supposedly objective, quantifiable, mechanical world. By implication, if not by outright dictum, what is studied is what is important. The objective and the

quantifiable are important. The subjective and qualitative are unimportant.

2. Quantitative Bias in Education

This same emphasis on quantitative rather than qualitative experience has pervaded our school system for generations. Contemporary educational evaluation rests on this same unproven Positivist assumption that if you can't measure it, it doesn't exist. So parents are less concerned with what their child learned, than with the percentage he got. Principals are less concerned with the teaching methodology their staff uses, than they are with maintaining a normal curve in the distribution of marks. Superintendents are less concerned with the quality of the learning experience than they are with scores on standardized tests. All in all the school system seems more concerned with the quantity of the learning experience than with its quality.

We may be seeing a further development of the quantitative bias in education in the proliferation of computers in our schools today. A comparison of the educational use of computers and video will illustrate this bias.

There are certain basic similarities between the two media. Both are high tech. and modern. Both achieve a high profile through media exposure. Both computers and video have recently been the beneficiaries of technical advances that have shrunk the size and cost of each. The cost of a personal computer is comparable to that of a portable video camera. Both media are recognized as having a massive impact on contemporary society. Most people have TV sets in their homes. Most people will operate computers at some time in their lives.

Every school in B.C. has several computers which are integrated into course work. However, here the similarities stop. Most schools do not have video production equipment. And very few schools have integrated video production into course work.

There may be a variety of reasons why media literacy is not taught in our schools while computer literacy is. However, I suspect that one reason is the quantitative bias of our society. The computer is a quantitative technology. Its use in a classroom is a relatively static, individual, easily measured physically contained process. Video production is a qualitative technology. Its use in the classroom is dynamic, social, and experiential. Evaluation of video

production, though based on specific criteria, is usually subjective.

Jacques Ellul warns that our society is in danger of losing its freedom and its soul to the predictable, measureable regimen of quantifiable technology. However, some kinds of technology - the qualitative technologies of photography, music, and video - themselves offer the possibility of balancing that quantitative bias. I suspect that the seemingly insatiable teenage appetite for rock music and rock videos and TV is a result of the imbalance produced by this quantitative bias.

D. EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY

John Dewey (1938) asserts that in a democratic society "the ideal aim of education is the creation of the power of self-control..." in its young citizens (p.64). If one cannot control oneself, presumably, one will be controlled by someone or something else. This external control, this lack of self-determination is tyranny, not democracy. Dewey, for pragmatic and political reasons, maintained that education in a democracy should be experiential, student-centred, and process-oriented.

1. Phenomenological Foundation of Experiential Education

As Dewey provides a political basis, so Edmund Husserl, one of the founders of phenomenology, provides a philosophical basis for experiential student-centred learning. In maintaining that the only thing we know first-hand is the clarity and distinctness of our own cognitions, he makes personal experience the starting point for developing meaning. The student moves outward from the certainty of his own immanent cognition to the uncertainty of the supposedly objective world. This is a reversal of the "objective" method of positive

science where the external world is viewed as certain, while the world of thought and feeling is viewed as uncertain. The external world, then, says Husserl (1964), is not a given but rather is "constituted" by internal mental processes:

> ...it is nevertheless, apparent that it makes no sense at all to talk about things that are "simply there" and just need to be "seen". On the contrary this "simply being there" consists of certain mental processes of specific and changing structure, such as perception, imagination, memory, prediction, etc. and in them the things are not contained as in a hull or a vessel. Instead, the things come to be <u>constituted</u> [my underlining] in these mental processes, although in reality they are not at all to be found in them. (p. 9)

Husserl"s phenomenology asserts the primacy of individual perception. If knowledge is "constituted" not given, not proclaimed by king, or president, or dominant ape, then all men really are equal - ontologically equal. From a phenomenological point of view the truth is fundamentally democratic.

The phenomenological concept of reality as constituted rather than given is one of the most influential ideas of the twentieth century; perhaps, ultimately it will be as influential as evolution or relativity. This concept of "constituted reality" forms a surprising link between two seemingly disparate worlds, that of the reconceptualist school of curriculum theorists and the world of film and video

production. "Constituted reality" is fundamental to the reconceptualist vision of education. The idea that reality is constituted is also implicit in film and video production. I believe this concept should also be explicit in media literacy education. Hollywood mass produces realities, a different one for every season, a different reality for every mood. Students need to perceive the constructed nature of these realities in order to understand the information environment in which they live.

2. The Reconceptualist View - Education as Dialogue

The reconceptualist view, dreadfully oversimplified I'm sure, but in essence, I hope, is that the purpose of curriculum is not to embody and transmit "the reality" which can then be absorbed into the mind of the student where the content of this reality can be conveniently contained. Rather the function of education is to engage the student in dialogue with the world, whereby, with the aid of a curriculum, the student can constitute the reality of her own experience. In her essay on "Existential and Phenomenological Foundations" for the reconceptualist view, Madeliene Grumet (1976) states that reconceived

"...education emerges as a metaphor for a person"s dialogue with the world of his existence." (p.34)

Lest one encourage a sterile solipsism, it must be emphasized that this process of constituting reality is essentially social, interpersonal, intersubjective. It is dialogue not monologue. William Pinar, in describing the reconceptualist view, or what he calls "currere", states that it "involves the investigation of the nature of the individual experience of the public:" (1975, p. 530). The ultimate aim of this reconception is "social reconstruction via the curriculum and the public schools." (Gress,1978, p.543) The concept of curriculum as social reconstruction relates to Freire's concept of "education as the practice of freedom" which I will address later, but for the time being I would like to examine the connection between the Reconceptualists and existentialism, as it derives from phenomenology. Surprisingly, these philosophies are germane to the development of media literacy.

3. Existentialism - Foundation for Learning as Doing

The recognition that reality is constituted by self-awareness inevitably leads to concern with the terms of existence by which we are made aware, which in turn leads to a philosophy of existence or existentialism. "Thus I was brought to the path of the question of Being, illumined by the phenomenological attitude..." (Martin Heidegger, 1956, p.239) Two fundamental concerns of existential philosophy may explain its appeal to the reconceptualist view of curriculum - its concern with the nature and importance of experience and its emphasis on choice and action.

In the existential view the starting point of all knowledge and understanding is the experience of existence now:

> Before there can be any truth whatever, then, there must be an absolute truth, and there is such a truth which is simple, easily attained and within the reach of everybody; it consists of one's immediate sense of oneself. (Jean Paul Sartre, 1956, p.361)

Because this subjective experience of existence is the starting point for consciousness, existence must come before essence:

> ...if indeed existence precedes essence, one will never be able to explain one's action by

> reference to a given and specific human nature; in other words there is no determinism - man is free, man <u>is</u> freedom. (Sartre, p.353)

Man then is free to determine his own essence by his own thoughts, his own actions, and above all else, his own choices. "Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism" (Sartre, p. 349). Conceived thus, existentialism becomes " an ethic of action and self-commitment" (Sartre, p. 360). For the reconceptualists, concerned with individual experience and action arising out of experience, existential philosophy is seminal.

4. Reconceptualist Foundation for Experiential Education

So what do all these - phenomenology, existential philosophy, the reconceptualists - have to do with what happens in the classroom, particularly the media literacy classroom? These philosophical considerations provide the foundation for a pedagogy which maintains that students learn primarily from the experience of doing in the present, while receiving knowledge that will supposedly help in some ever-receding future is of secondary importance. Experience is the focus, not content, not behavioural objectives, not examination

results. "...the starting point for a model of curriculum is not the statement of objectives but the activity (learning experience)" (Kliebard, 1975, p. 79). "...selecting and organizing experiences may be translated into the language of events and will become the primary focus of curriculum" (Macdonald, 1971, p. 6). If the class environment provides immediate experience, if the class environment is literally eventful, as Macdonald uses the term, then learning will be facilitated. The future will take care of itself, rather than being held up as a vague consolation for hours of boredom in the present class.

In advocating experiential education, Dewey emphasized that

> We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future.(p.49)

In experiential or process education the process of doing the educational activity now and per se is the pay off. We are here reminded of Aristotle's concept of "the Good", in the Nichomachean Ethics, as that which is done in and for itself and not because it leads to anything else, for whatever else it leads to would, of course, be "the Good".

Some common examples of experiential or process education are discussion groups, experiments in science, inquiry learning, model parliaments, theatre, and, of course, video production - where the process of performing the learning activity is its own reward. In the case of video production, students are called upon to make choices. They decide what issues are important to them and, therefore, worth videotaping. They learn about the world they live in by active dialogue with that world, by questioning it, at times, by literally interviewing representatives of it. In constructing a version of reality to communicate via videotape, they direct others and take direction from others. In fact, the give and take of this social process is often of greater educational value than the video programs produced. Harkening back to McLuhan, the medium of production may be the message.

A useful example of the contradictions inherent in the opposite of process education is seen in the traditional content and behavioural objectives model of Social Studies curriculum. A main goal, if not <u>the</u> main goal, of Social Studies is to build enlightened participants in a democratic political system. To educate these future democrats, they are herded into classes, and directed to sit silently in rows, where

they are forced to listen to a superior authority, namely their teacher, while he tells them what is true and what is not true. There is little discussion of even the concept of democracy, let alone the method by which democracy is learned.

There is here a contradiction between the end - encouraging active democratic behaviour - and the means used to reach that end - a passive authoritarian medium of instruction. The result is liable to be students who may be able to spell "democracy", and perhaps even define it, but who may not be able to understand what it might mean in practise. The issue here, and in all process and experiential education, is whether or not you can teach democracy by non-democratic methods, or is the medium really the message?

E. THE POWER OF LITERACY

In Empire and Communication, (1972) Harold Innis describes the power of language in ancient civilizations. Because the ability to speak was both the source and sign of man's power over animals, he suggests, it is not surprising that "the word" and "God" are almost identical theological concepts in both the Hebrew and Egyptian languages.

Man exercises power over the world by naming it. Language turns the external world into internal symbols and then by manipulating the symbols we control the external world. This is both sympathetic magic and the basis of all technology.

Communications media have historically been the means for elite groups to exercise political power, as is evidenced in the advice of an Egyptian scribe from the second millenium B.C. "Put writing in your heart that you may protect yourself from hard labour of any kind and be a magistrate of high repute." (In Innis, p.72)

Paolo Freire (1981) portrays the effects of print literacy as more than just the skills of reading and

writing. Through literacy "the word takes on new power. It is no longer an abstraction or magic but a means by which man discovers himself and his potential as he gives names to things around him...."

This ability to "name the world" is a kind of psychological empowering, through which we control the information environment of our own psyches. But what of a world where the information environment is dominated by visual images produced by the mass media of magazines, film, and television? Does mankind have need for a similarly empowering visual literacy?

Freire suggests that the illiterate are objects rather than subjects in their own lives. Literacy allows one to participate in dialogue with one's world and thus to become a subject, rather than an object. An information environment that is not dialogic, he suggests, is a kind of oppression.

Until now television has admitted few possibilities for dialogue. Freire maintains that this lack of dialogue has submerged modern mass man in what he calls a "culture of silence." Communication via television has been one-way. All the visual symbols have been named for us by an external monologue, emanating from a machine, controlled by an elite

technocracy. Now, however, technological and pedagogical advances can disseminate that control.

The question of control of the images generated by the media is crucial to the issue of democratic education in a technological society. Earlier I alluded to John Dewey's belief that "the ideal aim of education is the creation of the power of self-control." Dewey goes on to expound the relationship between self-control and freedom in terms that can be applied to the media:

> But the mere removal of external control is no guarantee for the production of self-control....It may be a loss rather than a gain to escape from the control of another person only to find one's conduct dictated by immediate whim and caprice; that is, at the mercy of impulses into whose formation intelligent judgement has not entered. A person whose conduct is controlled in this way has at the most only the illusion of freedom. Actually he is directed by forces over which he has no command.(p. 64)

Dewey was addressing the charge that progressive education, by removing the external control of authoritarian parents and teachers, does not necessarily produce freedom. Dewey understood perfectly that without self-control the student liberated from parents and teachers becomes the slave of his own whims and passions.

Approximately 50 years after Dewey wrote these words, we live in a society in which parental and teacher authority has been severely diminished. At this point we may very well ask if it may be a loss rather than a gain to escape from the control of parents and teachers only to find our children's conduct dictated by the caprice of advertising and the whims of immediate TV gratification, at the mercy of materialistic impulses to buy, buy, buy, into whose formation intelligent judgement has not entered. A person whose conduct is controlled in this way may very well have only the illusion of freedom. He may be directed by media forces over which he has little command. If there is any truth to the above scenario, by developing the faculties of "intelligent judgement" and discourse in its students, media literacy may be what Freire means when he speaks of "education as the practice of freedom."

Chapter V

TOWARDS A CONCEPTUALIZATION OF MEDIA LITERACY

A. THE CONCEPTUALIZATION EMERGES

The purpose of the following short chapter is to delineate a conceptualization of media literacy, by establishing a connection between student-produced educational television, described in Chapter III, and foundational educational assumptions about experiential learning, described in Chapter IV.

In the visual literacy movement we have found an integrated model of student-produced educational media. Among the reconceptualists we have found a rationale for experiential learning. From the meeting of the visual literacy model and the experiential learning rationale emerges a conceptualization of media literacy as a form of experiential or dialogic education, arising as a response to changes in the information environment, conditioned by the impact of television.

This conceptualization expresses an aspect of the traditional "liberal education" that was recently recognized by George Gerbner; "Liberal education today is the liberation of the individual from the necessity of drifting with the swift cultural tides of our time and the preparation for such self-direction as may be necessary and possible." The value placed on

"self-direction" finds confirmation in the concept of experiential learning developed by the reconceptualist view of curriculum expounded by Pinar, and Grumet, and in the concept of education for freedom of Paolo Freire.

B. WITH DISCOURSE AS THE BRIDGE

The purpose then of the present conceptualization is to provide a bridge between the conception of media literacy derived from the visual literacy movement and the conception of curriculum derived from reconceptualist theory. The concept that bridges these two seemingly disparate educational movements is expressed by the word "dialogue" or "discourse."

What was central to the visual literacy movement - what seems to have been lost in both critical viewing programs and video production courses - is the concept of literacy as discourse. "The basic structure of visual language is a set of relationships between visual thinking, visual reading and visual writing - the structure of discourse itself" (Fransecky and Debes, 1972, p. 12). This concept of discourse is central to the experiential education of the reconceptualists by which "education emerges as a

metaphor for a person's dialogue with the world" (Grumet, 1976, p. 34). This conception of discourse, as it pertains to the foundations of literacy, is perhaps most eloquently expressed by Freire in his concept of dialogic education, by which students become subjects rather than objects in their own information environments.

A CONCEPTUALIZATION OF MEDIA LITERACY

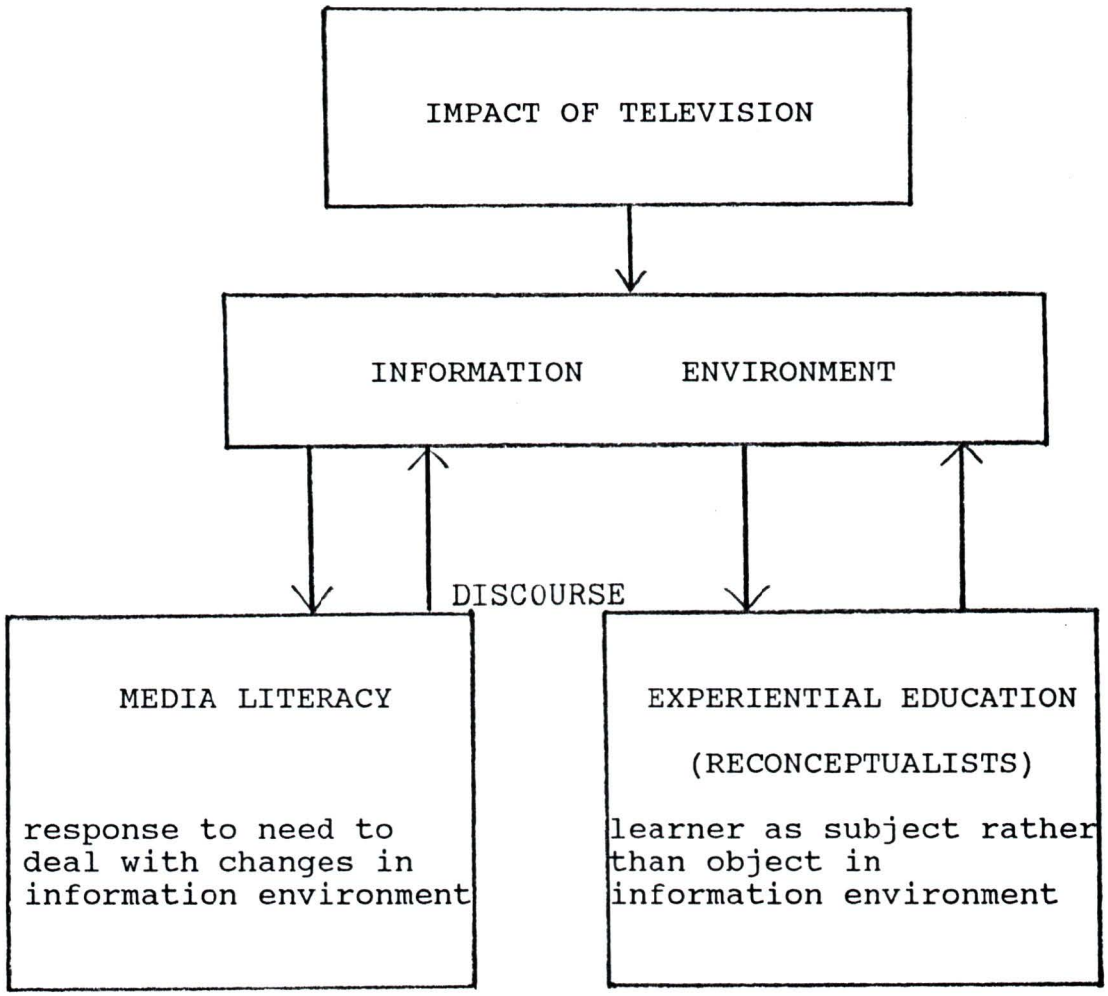

Figure 3.

A conceptualization of media literacy, as a form of experiential or dialogic education, arising as a response to changes in the information environment, conditioned by the impact of television.

There are probably many reasons why visual literacy did not, or has not, caught on. Educational prejudice against non-print media, quantitative bias, previous expense of equipment, mistaking the value of the content of broadcast media for the value of the medium itself - all may have impeded the development of visual literacy programs. Perhaps also there has been a lack of effort to ground media literacy upon a secure foundation of educational theory. It is hoped that the conceptualization presented here, by providing a bridge between media literacy and reconceptualist curriculum, may provide a firmer foundation for a media literacy curriculum.

CHAPTER VI

AN ILLUSTRATIVE STUDY OF A MEDIA LITERACY CURRICULUM

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Media literacy courses are not commonly found in our schools today, but they are not new. England has a fifty year tradition of high school film criticism courses, some of which have developed into film and video production courses (Masterman, 1986). The previously mentioned Milford Project in the United States has spawned later generations of video progeny. British Columbia currently has a half-dozen high schools that offer courses in video production. One of them, Cowichan Senior Secondary School, has operated a television production course since 1965.

Over the past four years I have observed and studied video production courses in five Vancouver Island high schools. Central to my examination of the educational uses of television is a study of the implementation of one of these high school production courses, which I designed and taught in Gold River in 1985-86. As a participant in the study project, I cannot pretend to have an unbiased view. Nonetheless, I hope that the events and experiences described will illustrate the conceptualization of media literacy developed in the preceding chapters.

B. PRINCIPLES OF A MEDIA LITERACY CURRICULUM

This conceptualization, which can be stated in the following principles, can act as a frame of reference in examining the illustrative study:

1. Communication: Through hands-on use of video production equipment students should learn to produce meaningful programs that communicate to an audience.

2. Critical Viewing: By developing discriminating viewing skills students should achieve an understanding of the methods, production values, influence and structure of the medium of television in contemporary society.

3. Discourse: Students should be encouraged to use the medium of video as a tool for experiential learning so that the individual student may engage in dialogue with his/her world.

4. Integrated Literacy: Media literacy should be taught in a context of integrated or expanded literacy, with a primary goal of communication, no matter which medium is used.

C. NARRATIVE OF A VIDEO PRODUCTION COURSE

1. Gold River

Gold River is a small town on the northwest edge of Vancouver Island. It is nestled amid majestic snow-capped mountains nine miles from the head of the Muchalat Inlet. Gold River is a mill town, but you'd never know it to look at it. The fuming belching pulp mill, that is the town's reason for being, is tastefully located at tidewater, out of sight and, usually, out of olfactory range. Modern houses with manicured lawns and immaculate gardens surround a small shopping centre that is the town's core. The village atmosphere suggests intimacy, security, and isolation.

Approximately 200 of Gold River's 2000 inhabitants attend Gold River Secondary School. The building itself is modern and well-maintained. Its location at the confluence of the Heber and Gold rivers is ruggedly beautiful.

I had been invited to Gold River to develop and teach a course in TV production. During the previous year, while teaching at another high school in the same district, I had implemented a TV production course for

gifted students. In spite of favourable reactions from students, parents, school board and superintendent, the school administration did not continue the course. Gold River Secondary School principal, Tom Miller, had heard positive reports about the course from the superintendent and from school board members. When a temporary position became available as a result of the pregnancy of one of his teachers, Tom invited me to Gold River to implement a TV production course.

Without our knowing it at the time, the course would become at least a partial solution to more than one local problem. However, the administrative perception of the new curriculum as a solution to one sensitive problem was a strong initiatory impetus. Students in isolated communities like Gold River often see themselves as disadvantaged compared with students in urban communities. Lack of elective courses, particularly technological courses, is interpreted, by both students and parents, as lack of equal opportunity in education.

In these times of fanatical restraint, Tom had a modest budget for the course. Five thousand dollars for new equipment purchases had been secured in advance, and the district's new colour portapak video camera was booked for the duration of the semester-long course.

At Tom's behest, I submitted a course description and list of equipment requirements in June 1985. The following curriculum was approved by him at that time:

INTRODUCTION TO GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Graphic communications is primarily a Television production course, utilizing the latest in small format portable video equipment. The general purpose of the course is to develop media literacy. Perhaps the easiest way to comprehend the meaning of media literacy is to imagine a society in which everyone could read, but few people could write. A society in which everyone watches television, but few people know how to "write" it is, in a very real sense of the word, "illiterate". In addition to producing their own video programs, students will view, discuss, and analyze motion picture productions in both cinema and broadcast TV formats.

GOALS

1. Students will gain "hands-on" experience in the use of TV production equipment and techniques.

2. They will develop the social skills required to work as part of a production team.

3. They will develop a critical awareness of broadcast TV as a medium of communication.

4. They will develop an appreciation of Cinema as art.

MATERIALS

- 2 portable colour video cameras and half-inch portable VCR's for full-time use in recording and editing.

- 1 panasonic mini editing console.

- 3 TV sets.

- 2 half-inch console VCR's which can be used for editing and playback purposes.

- 3 portable audio cassette recorders.

- lights, tripods, microphones, cables, video and audio tape.

METHOD

Goals 1&2 - Students will receive 'hands-on" instruction in the use of production equipment and production techniques in both news-documentary and commercial-dramatic approaches. Each student will produce and direct at least one term project program

employing the other members of the course in production roles, such as cameraman, VCR operator, reporter, actor, audioman, scriptwriter.

Goal 3 - Students will view broadcast TV programs, and will discuss and criticize these programs in weekly seminars. Students will use the text, Television and Society, by Ungerlieder and Krieger, in their investigation of TV as a medium of communication.

Goal 4 - Students will view videos of film classics such as John Huston's African Queen and Charles Chaplin's The Great Dictator. They will use these classics as models of production technique. They will also write reviews and critical studies of these films.

STUDENT EVALUATION

1. Students will be evaluated in the development of the following production roles: scripting, shooting, editing, directing, reporting, and acting. They will be marked on the same A-E scale used for other subject areas. Marks will be given for performing specific roles in class and individual student productions. These marks will be partially determined by peer evaluation of production performance.

2. Production logs will be kept on each student indicating which roles they have performed on specific productions, and recording marks attained on those productions.
3. Students will be given objective written tests on the text. They will also be graded on research projects related to the text.
4. Students will be graded on at least 1 movie review per term.

Student evaluations will be weighted as follows:

Goals 1 and 2 development of production skills	60%
Goal 3 analysis of broadcast media	20%
Goal 4 appreciation of cinema as art	20%
	100%

2. Implementation

The first day of classes in September began with more than the usual confusion. Not only were we initiating a new course, but also I was starting at a new school. Confusion was compounded by word from the district resource centre that one portapak supposedly reserved for the course had been sent to a school in Kyuquot, a remote fishing village accessible only on an irregular basis, and by floatplane. In addition, though I had been expecting to have to turn away hordes of disappointed teenage videophiles, only 10 students showed up for the first class. My class list showed 16 names, but six of them had timetabling conflicts.

This shortage of students could be a serious problem. While too many students create obvious organizational problems, I was afraid that so few students might not be able to generate the group dynamics necessary to produce enough video programming to make the course a success. By the end of the week we had our two cameras but we still had only 10 students.

As it turned out, the class was a productive group. There were eight grade 10 and two grade 12 students. Though they were not obviously gifted in

performing arts abilities, the students were mostly high academic achievers. In fact, in order to facilitate implementation, applicants for the course had been screened by the counselor to avoid slow or troublesome students. In the previous spring, when the course was under consideration, students had been surveyed to determine whether or not they would be interested in a TV production course. Tom characterized the student response as "overwhelming". From the respondents 16 had been selected, and chance had now reduced their numbers to 10.

3. A Sample Class

According to the stated goals of this course, students were to "gain 'hands-on' experience" working "as part of a production team." Perhaps the simplest way to show how these goals translated into actual learning activities is to describe a sample class.

My day book records that the fifth class of the semester was entitled "Components of News Programs", subtitled, "The Talking Head". The students' previous homework assignment was to watch a television news program. In class, students viewed selected parts of the C.B.C. National News from the previous evening. Using a V.C.R. with search and freeze frame functions,

I identified components of the news for the students. These were listed on the blackboard and students were asked to note each of the components - anchorman live copy, stand-ups, voice-overs, actuality sound, talking heads. I then explained that the one component I wished to isolate and deal with first, and for the rest of the week, was the informal, on-camera interview, better known as the "talking head'.

The reporter, the newsproducer or the feature film producer are all faced with a problematic situation. They have something they wish to communicate using a motion-picture medium. They have a number of components (listed on the blackboard) which they can use. Which will they use to get their information across? Students are asked to put themselves in the reporter's shoes, which is exactly what they will be doing throughout the course. If you have something to say one of the simplest techniques is to simply go in front of the camera and say it. This is called a "stand-up", an example of which they have just viewed. Another way to communicate information is to ask someone a question the answer to which is what you wish to get across, or the answer to which will help develop your story. This is a talking head, and news and documentary

programs rely very heavily on this kind of informal interview.

The class is then divided into two groups. They will spend the remainder of the period practising doing talking heads, shooting and interviewing each other. Their assignment for that evening will again be to watch the news. This time they are asked to record the questions asked by reporters. Subsequent classes will include a discussion of the questions asked on the evening news. Do the students think the questions are important? Why? Why not? What questions would they ask instead?

The last question quickly becomes "What question will they ask, as they spend the rest of the week conducting "man on campus" interviews with their fellow students eliciting answers to their chosen questions. These interviews will be viewed and discussed in class. They will also be critized by the teacher for technical and aesthetic considerations.

4. Some Procedural Guidelines

I should point out here that as much as possible students are given hands-on experience with the equipment first and then shown the standard production

techniques. I think that the hands-on method encourages discovery learning. Also by not being immediately told the standard production technique students may produce more imaginative results. After all standardized techniques are not necessarily the most creative. Often they are just the most economical.

There were three types of production projects - individual student projects, group projects and teacher initiatated projects. Out of the various questions asked in the practice sessions, one concerned the issue of a local curfew that generated considerable controversy. This issue subsequently became the class's first group production. Later in the course students would be expected to initiate individual productions, which they would direct, using their fellow students as crew. As filmworthy events arose during the year, I assigned crews to cover them. In this way I could ensure that students would get more varied experience in production roles than they might otherwise.

A media teacher could easily be convinced that there are only two kinds of people in this world - those who like to be in front of the camera and those prefer to hide behind it. The former often fear technology, while the latter are more often comfortable with it. If left entirely to their own devices, most

classes will quickly divide into the two groups. The reporter-actresses will perform until there is no one left to film them but be content never to learn how to operate the camera or edit. Meanwhile the shy technicians will shoot and edit unstintingly but never themselves be seen on television.

Students are told that as journalists dealing with the public, they need to develop a personal "bedside manner". There are ambiguous chuckles at the mention of this, unsure whether the analogy is medical or seductive. They are told to think out their questions in advance, to phrase them clearly and simply, to always have a back up question. They are counselled to be polite. What they are learning here is the power of the media. They very quickly discover that operating a camera, especially as part of a group, is a "power trip". This feeling of power can produce a heady sensation that can easily lead teenage, or adult journalists, to violate a person's right to privacy. Nonetheless, as they are taught to respect a person's right to privacy, they are also counselled to respect themselves. As members of the media they have a right, and even an obligation, to ask questions.

As these students sally forth into the community in subsequent weeks I watch carefully for signs that

they have understood my lectures. I cannot help but think that in this community, I will be judged by my students' bedside manner. If they use their cameras to bully and harass the local citizenry, I will assuredly hear about it. If they behave with so much trepidation that they are afraid to ask anyone a direct question, this also will appear on tape.

5. A Journalistic Approach

My own background as a news and documentary cameraman influences me to emphasize a journalistic approach to TV production.Such an approach in Gold River proved to be helpful because the school, unlike most other schools offering TV production courses, does not have a TV studio. Students were told early in the course that they would have to make the town their studio. The result was something unusual in contemporary education. A journal entry from September 17, 1985 describes a typical production day.

"Fri. 2 camera crews from the TV production course were let loose on the town. They were stationed at opposite ends of the town square where they interviewed the general populace about a subject of concern to both students and the public at large.

The issue was, 'Should there be an 11:00 o'clock curfew in a local park frequented by teenagers?' Families living near the park have recently complained about loud drunken parties in the park, which has been littered with broken beer bottles. A petition was taken to the village council to institute a curfew.

Earlier in the week TV students conducted 'man on the campus' interviews with students at the high school to get their opinions on the issue. After Friday's adult interviews, it was obvious that the town was split along age-lines on this issue. Most - but interestingly not all - adults were in favour of the curfew. Most - but again not all - teanagers were against it.

Whatever comes of this at least people in the town seem pleased at being given an opportunity to express their opinions. If freedom of speech is essential to democracy, such a student program has some interesting implications."

In their study of a prototype visual literacy program in Milford, Ohio, "New Ways of Seeing: The Milford Visual Communications Project," Fransecky and Ferguson (1973) maintain that the community itself became an expanded classroom for students in the project. "Milford students armed with cameras and a

'new look at seeing' have explored their community with fresh eyes,...In many of the high school students, the exercise has produced a rededication to the possibility of community. Visual literacy activities have made their classrooms 'rooms with a view'" (p. 46). This phenomenon of the "expanded classroom" was repeated in Gold River. A quote from my journal of September 20 emphasizes another aspect of this "room with a view". "My wife's co-worker in the elementary school library had an interesting observation. TV students interviewing people in the community make the high-school and its programs very visible to the populace. 'People can really see what the school's doing'."

6. Logistics: Small Town, Large City

Originally I had feared that such a small town would not have enough happening in it to provide a variety of subjects for TV programs. While the small size is still a limitation that cannot be discounted, I now feel that this limitation is more than compensated by ease of student access to whatever is happening in the town. TV students in Gold River regularly interviewed the mayor, Native Band leaders and other civic spokesmen to whom they would be less likely to

gain access in a large city. Also, in an urban area transportation and supervision of students and equipment can be a logistical problem. In Gold River the students simply walk up to the village square and begin shooting.

I often deliver the camera equipment to shooting sights and pick it up later. Sometimes I observe the shooting without getting involved. At other times I intervene to make suggestions. Often I just make sure that I am available if the students have questions or problems.

Sometimes I take the equipment back to the school after shooting. Frequently the students take the equipment home with them overnight or over weekends. Much of the shooting in Gold River was done on weekends, some with teacher supervision, much without. I did not publicize this weekend student use of equipment because I feared disapproval by administrative assistants or school board officials. Nonetheless, I had complete confidence in the students' responsible use of the equipment.

In several years of teaching and observing high school T.V. production courses I have not seen or heard of a student seriously damaging equipment. In my

opinion students have to be trusted completely with the equipment if they are to use it creatively. Evidence so far indicates that they respond well to such trust.

On any given Friday afternoon two camera crews will be about the school or the town shooting. Friday afternoons are ideal because we have video production last period in the day. Students can tackle more involved productions by continuing shooting after normal class time ends. When queried about such afterhours dedication D. replies, "This isn't like school, like working. You know like I want to do this." Meanwhile the other camera crew has raced back to my car with the equipment, so they can be released at the crack of three. Win a few, lose a few!

7. First Community Cablecast

In November we had our first community cablecast. At 7:00 on a Thursday evening we pulled the plug on the local cable outlet and for a half-hour substituted Gold River Secondary School student programming. The next day Tom told me that he had heard several favourable comments from townspeople. He was visibly pleased. The course was not only working but was seen to be working.

From that time until the end of the first semester in January of 1986, Gold River Secondary School broadcast to the community. Interest in student programming grew steadily. Much to my surprise, we began to receive requests for copies of student productions, and we also began to receive letters praising the effects of the course and its telecasts on the local community.

D. ANALYSIS OF PROJECT IN TERMS OF FOUR PRINCIPLES OF MEDIA LITERACY

1. Communication: Through hands-on use of video production equipment students should learn to produce meaningful programs that communicate to an audience.

Perhaps this first principle can best be illustrated by reporting the reactions to student productions on the part of the principal, other teachers and townspeople.

In describing the effect of the course on students, principal Tom Miller stated in an interview, "There is an excitement to the course that the kids don't get a lot of in other courses. The kids feel the excitement of production, of doing something the product of which they and everybody else can see." The Milford project, mentioned earlier, described effects on students in terms of "rededication to the possibility of community." In a written evaluation of the first year of the TV course Tom described similar effects on Gold River students. "Having been principal of this school for several years, I was put in the position of having been very familiar with the performance of each of the students in the program in other areas and in the

school generally and I feel very confident in stating that by the end of the course,... I was able to see a marked difference in maturity displayed and the sense of responsibility felt by each of these students. In short, I firmly believe that they are now better citizens because of their involvement in this program." (1985, p.2)

In developing the course we expected positive effects on students. What we didn't expect was the effect the TV course would have on the community. The following are excerpts from letters we received in response to the course:

"On behalf of the Board of School Trustees and myself, I would like to congratulate you and your Graphic Communications class on the excellent program recently aired on the local cable channel."

J. David T. Price
Superintendent of Schools

"Bringing education into the home in Gold River, via television, really proved that it is worthwhile for the 'mountain' to occasionally make a call on "Mohammed'. May we hope this is the beginning of a new trend in education in Gold River."

Miriam Trevis

President Gold River Chamber of Commerce

"I am sure that this visual literacy project helped the students gain insights into our heritage and taught them many creative communication skills."

Helen McInnes

Village Historian

"I have requested and received copies of the 'Friendly Cove', 'History of Gold River' and 'Salmonid Enhancement' segments for use as promotional material....The tapes have become a useful resource to the community and we have had the opportunity to experience first hand the education system in progress."

Shannon Messer

Economic Development Officer

"...we wish there was more of this happening in the school and the community. One of the salient points was the interaction between the students and the adults, (not teachers), during the production of the videos."

Anne Fiddick

Mayor

"The tapes you have produced have been a real event in our community and I have heard nothing but praise for your initiative in organizing such a timely way to teach young people modern day communication skills."

Dan McInnes

Principal Ray Watkins Elem. School

"I would strongly recommend the implementation of such a program in any secondary school regardless of its size because of the very positive results that accrue to both the school and the community which the school serves."

Mr. Thomas J. Miller

Principal G.R.S.S.

(See Appendix I. for full text of letters.)

Though perhaps not the most important factor in continuation of the course, the community response was the most dramatic. Gold River does not have its own TV station. It seems that the people of Gold River adopted the school telecasts as their own.

The other teachers at G.R.S.S. also spoke favorably of the course. Mr. Miller stated that in a staff meeting called to discuss the possibility of

continuing the course, teachers spoke of the "positive publicity" the course generated. The consensus was that there was "a spillover of this positive attitude towards the school into other departments as well". The TV medium, it seems, has the potential to make other school activities, such as sports, drama, and music more visible to the community.

2. Critical Viewing: By developing discriminating viewing skills students should achieve an understanding of the methods, production values, influence and structure of the medium of television in contemporary society.

In chapter III I have suggested that what is lacking in most Video Production courses is a critical viewing component. A stated goal of the Gold River course was to develop "a critical awareness of broadcast TV as a medium of communication". Essential to this "critical awareness", is an understanding of the constructed nature of the TV reality. In both questionnaire and interview I asked Gold River students if the course had changed their attitudes towards TV. Many of their replies seem to indicate a developing awareness of this constructed reality:

"I respect television more."

"It has changed the way I view movies and watch TV."

" I look at TV shows now and think that I know what they do to make things happen."

"I look at camera angles, and edits and evaluate shows more, criticizing bad edits, poor shots etc."

" It made me realize that most of the news is staged and that most things on TV are staged."

"It makes movies look real fake."

"I think the course has given me a deeper understanding of the TV business, and what goes on 'behind the scenes'."

"I don't take it for granted anymore because now I know the hard work and all the time that it takes to make just one show."

"This course has made me more critical of the programs on TV and has helped me to be able to decipher between 'garbage' and good viewing material."

(See Appendix II. for full text of questionnaires.)

A cautionary note is in order here. Though these statements show some signs of critical awareness, they are hardly conclusive and could, perhaps, be improved upon by a more explicit program of developing critical viewing skills.

The student responses quoted impelled me to jump to a conclusion about media production courses that may have been unwarranted, but is worth explaining. The above statements led me to hypothesize that Video Production by its very nature would develop the critical awareness of television aimed at by the critical viewing skills movement. As a result , in 1986 and again in 1987 I tested students in Video Production and in a control group at Cowichan Secondary School, for their critical attitudes towards television. Video production students did score higher on the critical viewing scale but not significantly higher.

I am not about to maintain that the test results are definitive proof that video production courses do little to encourage critical viewing skills. I still believe that in many ways they do. However, it would appear that without s specific critical viewing or media analysis component, video production cannot be assumed to produce critical viewers. Given my recollections of working with graduates of the British

Columbia Institute of Technology in commercial news production, I no longer find this lack of critical viewing surprising. Graduates of B.C.I.T.'s television or journalism course, who undertake rigorous studies in media production, sometimes manifest a less than critical attitude towards the medium in which they work.
The dynamics and glamour of media production may not in themselves be conducive to critical thinking.

Despite the inclusion of critical viewing among the stated goals of the Gold River course, the critical component was neglected. Originally 60 percent of the grade was to be given for production, with the other 40 percent for critical studies. As it turned out the weighting was closer to 80 percent for production. Students did write reviews of classic feature films, such as The Great Dictator, as intended, but they did not analize broadcast TV programs. Such analysis might not only have developed a critical awareness of broadcast programming but it might also have provided valuable insights into the students own productions.

I had intended to hold weekly seminar discussions of media issues arising from student productions and from assignments based on the textbook Television and Society. However, time for seminar discussion was

allowed to be absorbed by the excitement of production. This is a tendency that most students will encourage, but that should probably be resisted by teachers.

Both the teacher and the course are also more likely to be judged by the community, including superintendents, school board members, principals etc. from the visible quality of the programs produced than by a less tangible media understanding possessed by the students. The desire to produce a course that not only worked but was seen to work, therefore, influenced me to put more of an emphasis on production, and less on understanding, than I would recommend in an established course.

3. Discourse: Students should be encouraged to use the medium of video as a tool for experiential learning so that the individual student may engage in dialogue with his/her world.

The comments of the townspeople already reported illustrate what this kind of dialogic education might look like from a social or communal point of view. The comments of the students themselves reveal what this process of discourse between the student and his/her environment might look like to the individual.

Perhaps we can best illustrate this dialogic conception of media literacy by examining the student comments alongside the foundational statements mentioned earlier.

Previously I quoted John Dewey; "The ideal aim of education is the creation of the power of self-control."

Students responded to the course with the following remarks:

"I think being in front of the camera sort of brought me out a bit more."

"I feel more confident about myself and I present myself so much better now."

"I've decided to go into television broadcasting. So this course has helped me find what I want to do with my life."

"I feel a little more confident about myself."

"It's taught me to have more patience."

(Madeleine Grumet) "...education emerges as a metaphor for a person's dialogue with the world of his existence."

(Student response) [The course] "gave me some satisfaction and self-confidence and I learned a lot about people's viewpoints on certain things."

(William Pinar) "[Education] involves the investigation of the nature of the individual experience of the public."
(Student) "It makes me feel that we can approach the public to voice their opinions on certain subjects without being afraid."

(Jean Paul Sartre) [Existentialism is] "an ethic of action and self-commitment."
(Student) I liked the fact that the students were relied upon to make their own choices, and then trusted to carry out their choice. I think this freedom builds self-confidence and trust, as well as enabling students to express themselves."

(See Appendix II. for full test of student questionnaires.)

I should like to conclude this section on dialogic learning by reference to a non-student comment that is, nonetheless, apropos to the student experience.

(Paulo Freire) "Literacy allows one to participate in dialogue with one's world and thus to become a subject, rather than an object."
(Mayor Anne Fiddick) "One of the salient points was the <u>interaction</u> between the students and the adults, (not teachers), during the production of the videos."

4. Integrated Literacy: Media literacy should be taught in a context of integrated or expanded literacy, with a primary goal of communication,, no matter which medium is used.

Integrated literacy, in terms of a balanced approach to both decoding and encoding, was part of the stated rationale for the course. However, as we have seen, much more emphasis was placed on encoding than on decoding.

What John Debes regarded as a critical point of integrated literacy was the ability " to translate from visual language to verbal language and vice versa." (1969, p.27) In Gold River students wrote documentary "treatments", scripts and movie reviews, all of which required this ability to translate from one medium to another. Emphasis was placed on the need for directors to communicate their vision of a program first to their crew in a written script or treatment, and then orally in directions, before the vision could ever take shape in taped sounds or pictures that an audience could see and hear.

However, these considerations of integrated literacy were dictated by the demands of production, not by pedagogical values. Students may have developed

an implicit understanding of integrated literacy, but a fully developed understanding, I now believe, required another teaching strategy. What could have made this implicit understanding of integrated media literacy explicit was more group discussion of production values, in the context of a critical examination of how and why the media are as they are in contemporary society. For this purpose I think the intended weekly seminar would be ideal both as a discussion forum and as a means of making meaning out of all the various aspects of the media course. In short, making meaning, not just making programs, may be a more useful goal for media literacy.

E. A PERSONAL STATEMENT

I believe that central to the learning experience at Gold River was the discovery by students of the constructed nature of media reality. This discovery was a double-edged sword at once freeing them from adherence to the literal truth of media images, and placing upon them the responsibility of developing their own media truths.

My own experience as a documentary cameraman and producer has coloured my attitude towards media and media education. The knowledge that the images I see are made rather than natural, constructed rather than real, is an implicitly critical consciousness. My basic attitude is one of disbelief. To overcome that attitude requires, to borrow the Keatsian vocabulary, a willing suspension of disbelief.

The power of documentary television is derived largely from its ability to convince us that what we see is real. This ability of the camera to construct another reality and transport us to that reality is a seemingly magical power. Previously only wizards and hypnotists could create such convincing illusions. The essential experience of motion pictures, then, is a

kind of magic by which we are transported by a convincing illusion to another reality - perhaps another place, another time, another life. Not for nothing is Hollywood called the dream factory.

But of course the images are not real, and the magic is the magic of illusion. It is literally all a trick done with mirrors and light, and the illusionary spells are not necessarily cast by kindly old Gandalfian wizards out to save the earth from the powers of darkness. Some of the spells are cast, if not by sinister necromancers, then at least by a rather motley host of hucksters, political hacks, yuppies, crass materialists or wayward idealists, bent on suborning us into buying a car, a candidate, a life-style, or a religion, all of which we, our children and the world at large may not actually want.

The illusion of reality that is projected by the media bears careful analysis. The camera controls the reality of television by selecting and omitting. The unspoken imperative of what the camera selects is that this is important. The silent ideology of what the camera omits is that if it is not on television it is not important. The cameraman controls reality, in turn, by deciding what to select and what to omit. This is a

more than human power, and the experience of operating a motion-picture camera can make one dizzy with its power. My own experience has been that people treat news cameras with a degree of awe that can be aptly described as iconic. The news cameraman is like a walking shrine to the gods of the media who with the flick of a switch determine what is real and what is not.

As a news cameraman, I can go to any event and reproduce that event on film or videotape. The way the event will be communicated to the public will be the way I see it, with literally my point of view, my focus, my zooming in on who and what is important, my exclusion of what is not important. According to the old cliche," the camera doesn't lie", but the cameraman always selects. In order to understand the unpoken ideology of the media, one must continually ask why the selection process has chosen one image, or story, or subject, rather than another. These choices will be determined by the values of cameramen, reporters, editors and directors. These values may not appear in boldface on the screen, but they will determine what does appear on the screen.

Most newsmen believe that they report reality. They resent the suggestion that they construct reality.

There are two important and opposite views to balance here. Good reporters try to be impartial. They shun what they call advocacy journalism. They stick to the facts. Many reporters do this conscientiously and well. Many cameramen and reporters consider themselves the embodiment of society's right to know. These journalists will stop at nothing to discover and divulge information that they feel the public should know.

However, no degree of professional dedication or responsibility can evade the basic nature of the medium. Television programs, whether fictitious or documentary, are constructed. They are not the inevitable outcomes of natural processes; rather their construction is the result of a series of deliberate choices. Some of these choices are technical. Some of these choices are aesthetic. Some of these choices are ideological. One microphone may produce a fuller sound than another. One type of lighting may produce a more pleasing image than another. One subject is important and worth shooting, while another is not. One question will be asked and another will not be.

A series of choices in the planning and production stages culminates in the editing stage. A film or video editor will literally build a program out of long

shots and close shots, actuality sound, voice overs, music, etc. In film editing the components are actually glued or taped together. In video editing they are assembled by electronic re-recording of selective parts. The word "assembled" itself is significant. There are two types of video editing - "insert" editing and "assembly" editing. The terminology itself affirms the nature of television programs as manufactured objects.

The power of the camera is hardly a novel concept. I have known Native Indians to refuse to have their pictures taken, because the camera might steal their spirits. Pictures can be used either to harm or help their subjects. In working as legislative news cameraman for BCTV, I remember the sense of power, not exactly to make or break, but certainly to help or hinder, that came with the job. TV interviews with anyone, illustrious politician or man in the street, are called, rather ignominiously, "talking heads." I and the reporter with whom I worked used to joke about head-hunting in the corridors of power, collecting the talking heads of the rich and powerful, for whom we did not always feel the appropriate veneration.

I recall a provincial election campaign in which influential Social Credit officials demanded to meet

with B.C.T.V. management to complain about news cameramen deliberately trying to make their candidate look bad. Though I can't comment on the reliability of this particular accusation, I do remember a C.B.C. cameraman boasting that with the wide-angle lens on his camera, by standing as close to the premier as possible, he could distort the premier's features giving him a faintly rodent-like countenance. I personally recall regretting that I was not taller than the aforesaid premier because at least one six-foot, two-inch cameraman delighted in towering over the premier and shooting down at him, thus making him look small and helpless.

I am not trying to suggest that television newspeople, or commercial and theatrical producers are either more or less ignorant or more or less scrupulous than the rest of suffering humanity. What I do wish to emphasize is the constructed nature of motion picture images. Be they newsprograms, commercials, feature films or sit coms, motion pictures are all manufactured out of images and sounds, which have been filtered through a screen that is composed of bias, point of view, and ideology.

We live in an age of proliferating media. Developments in satellite transmission, cable-casting,

narrow-casting, and the use of home V.C.R.'s have already produced a multiplication of the programming available to the average adult or child in our society. Students in our school system need to be able to adjust this filter if they are to see clearly.

Media growth is not an inevitable phenomenon; it is man-made and can be controlled, directed and inspired by men. Uncontrolled growth is cancerous. The weapons industry is a haunting example of this uncontrolled cancerous growth of technology. To continue producing weapons or any other technology simply because we have the capability of producing them may be disastrous. In order to control the development of technology we need a philosophy of technology. In order to control the proliferation of media we need a philosophy of media.

I do not wish to advocate censorship or political control of the media. Presently our information media are controlled indirectly by political influence and directly by economic influence. If it can make a buck it gets on the air. If it can't make a buck it doesn't. Political control of media is antithetical to the concept of democracy. Economic control of anything so important as information may simply be irresponsible.

I believe that a reasonable alternative to either political control or economic control is the development of a philosophy of media through an extensive program of media literacy. We don't have to control the producers if we have educated consumers, who are also capable of producing their own information. The essence of this media philosophy for educated consumer-producers would be, not a dogmatic set of values, but rather a method, the method of discourse, developed through an understanding of, and participation in, the information environment.

Chapter VII

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH and IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

A. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The starting point for this thesis has been the perception of television as a problem. Evidence was reported to suggest that the impact of television on students' behaviour, cognitive development, attitudes, and values is regarded by many researchers and educators as worthy of educational concern.

If media literacy curricula are to be expanded as a response to these concerns about the impact of television, researchers will have to attempt to answer some of the following questions about media literacy courses:

1. How do critical viewing programs affect student attitudes towards television?

Donald F. Roberts (1980), Aimee Dorr, Sheryl Browne Graves, and Erin Phelps (1980), and Wanda Rapaczynski, Dorothy G. Singer, and Jerome Singer (1982) have researched this question but their reports are inconclusive. If critical viewing curricula is a response to the impact of television, researchers need to be able to show how such programs mediate that impact.

2. How do production courses affect student attitudes towards television?

I have attempted to research this question without conclusive results. Students in Gold River, and in the other video production courses I observed, stated consistently and emphatically that their production experience changed the way they view television. These altered ways of viewing deserve research more systematic than my meager resources could supply.

3. What are the results of media literacy curricula on the affective domain, in terms of student self-concept, sense of community, and sense of individual efficacy?

If literacy really is empowering, the benefits of this empowering should be demonstrable. In conducting extended and repeated interviews with 18 students in three different high school video production classes, I was impressed by the students' repeated assertions that such courses increased their self-confidence. These kinds of student reports, along with the stated popularity of video production courses, are themselves worthy of a research study. Unfortunately such popularity is not the rule among secondary school courses.

4. What are the results of media literacy curricula on the development of cognitive skills?

The research of Tidhar (1984), quoted earlier, is a valuable first step towards an understanding of the relationship between media production experience and the development of cognitive skills. His research was done in the exclusively visual medium of 8mm. silent film. Video, with its integration of print, visual and acoustic media, may have different but equally significant effects on the development of abilities of logical inference.

B. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

1. Implications for Rural Education

Both community and student response to the Gold River course suggest that the course met real needs among the students and in the community. There are many such isolated rural communities in Canada with presumably similar needs. Any town too small to have its own commercial TV station presents a potentially fertile field for student-produced video news and current affairs. The use of television technology in developing a sense of community was an unexpected outcome of this educational project. The window on the world this technology provides may make education more relevant for students. The window into the school it provides may make the school more relevant for the community.

In times when schools are both under fire and increasingly accountable, community cablecasts of student productions have great potential public-relations value. The image of Gold River Secondary School as seen in the student telecasts is dynamic and attractive. At a time when educators often lament their lack of access to the media, this kind of

educational television may be a partial solution to this access problem.

2 Implications for Curriculum Development

i) The Decreasing Cost of Production Equipment

The quality of video production equipment continues to improve as the cost decreases. The Gold River project would not have been possible without the availability of an inexpensive editing controller for VHS tape. The new 8mm. format may bring costs down even further. I suspect that inevitably more schools will take advantage of the availability of this high quality inexpensive equipment, in order to implement new media production courses, and media production units in established courses.

I should emphasize that an editing system is a crucial component in any video production course. Without the ability to edit what they shoot, students are not likely to experience graphically the construction of realities that is an essential attribute of the film/video media.

ii) Computer/Video

Developments in computer-imaging software suggest that we may be in the trough of a new wave of computer technology about to envelope North American society, in general, and education, in particular. Computer/video, computer/painting and computer/music composition systems such as the Amiga may provide a qualitative creative outlet for computer students who have previously been limited to a more quantitative mathematical, computer orientation. Similarly the range of artistic expression possible through computer digitization of images and sounds may provide hands-on experience with technology that was previously undreamed of for the more artistically oriented students.

The inclusion in student video productions of computer-generated images, as either titles or special effects, follows from software developments as easily as day follows night. Concomitantly, schools that possess computer-imaging hardware are soon likely to find themselves coveting video production equipment as well, in order to allow their computers to work to their potential. We may experience a kind of

technological leap-frog, in education, where the use of one medium implies the use of the other.

iii) Integration vs. Add-On

There are two recognizably distinct approaches to developing media literacy curricula - the integrated approach and the add-on approach. The critical viewing movement for the most part has used the integrated approach, whereby individual instructional units on critical viewing skills have been integrated into established courses, usually language arts courses. Alternatively, most video production curricula have developed as discrete courses that have been added onto the established curriculum.

I suspect that many urban high schools that already offer a wide variety of elective courses may not be eager to complicate their timetables with another elective. I also suspect that many rural schools would follow the lead of Gold River and several other small towns in British Columbia that have video production courses in their schools, if they knew that such options were available. Consequently, we should not be surprised to see more urban schools adopt an integrated approach while rural schools prefer the add-on option.

Media literacy units emphasizing a balanced decoding and encoding approach can be developed and integrated into many courses and grade levels. Social Studies students can do man/student in the street interviews as part of an analysis of social and political issues. Science students can record observations and experiments on videotape. Language Arts students can compose and analyze video essays. Drama students can produce video skits of their own work or criticize production values of broadcast programming. There is no shortage of ways that school boards and ministries of education can take action to integrate a balanced media literacy program into the curriculum.

However, both the integrated and add-on approaches require at least three conditions that seem at present to be problematical: 1) to overcome an apparent bias within the education system against television; if media literacy is viewed as a competitor with print literacy rather than as a necessary adjunct to it, media literacy curricula will not succeed. 2) to approach media literacy systematically; a unit on critical viewing in grade four, followed by a unit on news production in grade 10 may be too sporadic to produce significant results. 3) Teachers need to be

media literate before they can teach media literacy. Unfortunately, not all teacher training institutions include educational media courses in their calendars.

The example of the University of Victoria is relevant here. Its Communications and Social Foundations Department offers courses in educational media whose graduates are visible proof that teachers can be, and are being, taught the media literacy skills required to teach media production courses. The developer-teacher of the Alberni, British Columbia, Secondary School Media Production course, for example, received his masters degree from the Communications and Social Foundations Deptartment, where he researched the development of media curriculum.

iv) Combining Student Production and Critical Viewing

I have not come across a compulsory media literacy course in a public school. All the courses to which this study has referred are elective, non-core curriculum programs. When asked why there was no critical viewing component in the production course he taught, one teacher replied that the course is an elective. "It's supposed to be fun" (J. Stubbs, 1987). Ferguson has criticized media courses in the U.K. for exactly this notion of not wanting to spoil a popular

course by making it demanding. Another media production teacher explained the lack of a critical component in his course by stating that video production at his school is part of a performing arts program for talented young people. In his view performance and analysis are antithetical.

Media production courses can be used to teach specific skills that may be marketable. Critical viewing programs can be used to teach students to be cautious media consumers. Neither of these functions are usually conceived of as part of basic education. The conception of media literacy suggested in this study, however, considers media literacy as part of a "new basics" approach, in which an exclusively print literacy is seen as insufficient educational preparation in a technological, multi-media information environment. Media literacy then may be a new basic.

Given that educational systems are notoriously slow to change, one need not expect provincial Ministries of Education to stampede towards a "new basics" approach to literacy. My survey of Canadian Ministries of Education, in fact, indicated that only one ministry was even considering such a move. However, that one may be a bellwether province. Ontario is embarking on a major K-12 program of integrated media

literacy, including both critical and production components. Full credit, elective courses in media literacy will be offered at the secondary level, while both critical and production components will be integrated into the core curriculum prior to the senior secondary level. The development of Ontario's media literacy program should be worth watching.

C. IN CONCLUSION

I have stated that the impact of television calls for the development of a media literacy curriculum. However, TV is not the only medium that is changing the information environment. What may be required in order to develop a media curriculum is an expanded concept of literacy itself.

Today we have a situation that may have been paralleled in the development of print literacy in the nineteenth century, in response to changes in the information environment, precipitated by the Industrial Revolution. The dissemination of information in tabloids and pulp novels, the need for literate managers and workers in the new industries, the need for a literate electorate in the spread of democratic government - all were factors that changed the information environment of the nineteenth century and quickened an awareness of the need for literacy. The resulting curriculum development in both Europe and North America, though often critized, may be viewed as an educational accomplishment of gargantuan proportions. In 1800 the vast majority of Europeans were illiterate. Today the vast majority (ninety percent plus) read and write.

An implication of the foregoing thesis is that changes in the contemporary information environment, precipitated by the proliferation of media, especially television, call for a similar growth of literacy, but that now a wider concept of literacy is required.

There was much of value in the old concept of literacy - the reading and writing, decoding and encoding model. Language teachers have traditionally perceived both activities as essential to literacy. Teaching this balanced approach seems to have been relatively successful with print literacy; consequently, it seems to be an appropriate model for an expanded media literacy. In addition, from considerations of an active democaracy, just teaching decoding may be too passive, perhaps, even dangerously inactive in a society that values democracy and self-reliance.

The implications for the future, from technological and pedagogical patterns in the present, are that, perhaps, a number of years from now, the phrase "media literacy" may be redundant. The word "literacy" itself may carry connotations of multi-media competence and fluency in a variety of languaging forms.

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APPENDIX I

APPENDIX I

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86-01-08

Mr. Michael O'Neill
c/o Gold River Secondary School
Box 339
Gold River, B.C.
V0P 1G0

Dear Mr. O'Neill:

On behalf of the Board of School Trustees and myself, I would like to congratulate you and your Graphic Communications 11 class on the excellent program recently aired on the local cable channel.

Considering the amount of time you have had to work with these students, the production was outstanding. Not only was the camera work and editing quite sophisticated, but also the on-camera performance of the students was very poised considering their limited experience.

Thank you for an excellent job well done.

Yours very truly
BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

[redacted]

J. David T. Price
Superintendent of Schools

JDTP:pm

cc: Mr. T. Miller, Principal

Gold River & District Chamber of Commerce

39

Box 518 Gold River, B.C. Canada V0P1G0 283-7123

February 11, 1986

School District #84
P.O. Box 100
Gold River, B.C.
V0P 1G0

Attention: Mr. D. Price
Superintendent of Schools

Dear Sir:

Over the past few weeks, members of the Gold River Chamber of Commerce have commented on the fine documentary films produced by Mr. Mike O'Neill and students from the Secondary School.

As I am sure you are aware, the Chamber has been putting most of its energies over the past two years towards improving the community's potential as a tourist destination. One of the major problems we have encountered is just how little information has been acquired over the past twenty years on the beginnings of our village and the history of its environs. As the birthplace of British Columbia, the void of information was unforgivable. It was, therefore, great delight that members viewed the first film-history of Gold River and trip to Friendly Cove. I know that the copy of the film Mr. O'Neill has kindly made available to the Chamber will be put to very good use in the Tourist Information Office. It will be an excellent opportunity to show off our beautiful West Coast.

After the euphoria of the first film, we were not disappointed with the subsequent productions.

The film of the Rod and Gun Club's Salmonoid Enhancement program was excellent and was, I am sure, very informative and thought provoking for those who viewed it. It certainly gave a whole new perspective of fishing for those anglers who are only interested in "catching the big one".

The opportunity to see education in progress during the filming of Mr. Shold's law class' re-enactment of a trial, was very interesting. As a parent, one can only imagineand call on one's own educational experiences in order to attempt to understand what is happening in today's schools. Programs have changed so much in the last few years that few parents can possibly hope to understand exactly what their children are being taught , unless given the kind of opportunities provided by Mr. O'Neill.

. . ./2

In a small community, particularly where residents are devoid of local radio or television coverage, the experience of having a small window into the world of education is very important. Schools can beg and plead for parents to be involved, but human native being what it is, these pleas usually fall on deaf ears. Bringing education into the home in Gold River, via television, really proved that it is worthwhile for the "mountain" to occasionally make a call on "Mohammed".

The students, I am sure, gained from the experience; I know the community did.

May we hope this is the beginning of a new trend in education in Gold River? We certainly hope that this program which has achieved such a promising start will not be allowed to die.

Yours truly,

[redacted]

Miriam Trevis
President-Elect
Gold River Chamber
of Commerce

MT/sr

cc R. Alexander, Chairman, School Board
Mr. M. O'Neill

February 14, 1986

Mr. M. O'Neill
Gold River, B.C.
V0P 1G0

Dear Mr. O'Neill:

I am writing to request a copy of the Friendly Cove and Gold River History video tape that you made with your Grade 11 class at Gold River Secondary School.

These programs were presented on the local cable channel and I was pleased to see them. I was particularly impressed by the quality of narration and the music for the trip to Friendly Cove. The camera work as well as the marvelous photographs by Edward Curtis made this show very interesting and informative.

This summer, I would like to make this tape available to visitors in our Tourist Information Office.

I am sure that this visual literacy project helped the students gain insights into our heritage and taught them many creative communication skills. Keep up the good work.

Yours truly,

[redacted]

Helen McInnes
Village Historian

Ray Watkins Elementary School
(SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 84 - VANCOUVER ISLAND WEST)
OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL

TELEPHONE: 283-2220

P.O. BOX 70
GOLD RIVER, B.C.
V0P 1G0

86 02 13

Mr. Mike O'Neill
P.O. Box 901
GOLD RIVER, B.C.
VOP 1GO

Dear Mike:

This is just a brief letter to congratulate you on the excellent series of tapes you produced in your Graphic communications class. The tapes you have produced have been a real event in our community and I have heard nothing but praise for your initiative in organizing such a timely way to teach young people modern day communication skills.

Some of the young people in your course were students I taught when they were attending Ray Watkins Elementary and whenever I have talked to them about their participation in the video tapes their eyes lit up and they b e a m e d with pride because they were involved in the production of a first rate television production.

The topics you chose, I know will make the tapes valueable historical and educational broadcasts. I find our little isolated community and our students are very television oriented and most people watch several hours of T.V. each week. However, before your course with the high school students, absolutely no local programming has been available.

I feel the community is suffering a real loss when your family leaves Gold River because I have a feeling that your work this year was just a start of what can be done with local video production in the community. I particularly enjoyed your history of Gold River and Friendly Cove video tapes because the history of the Nootka area is so very rich and yet very little exists, particularly in video format. Your class was able to really capture a sense of history in the productions and I know many of the students will get a copy that they will treasure as their first video production.

Again - congratulations Mike, and wishes for the best of luck.

Yours truly
RAY WATKINS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

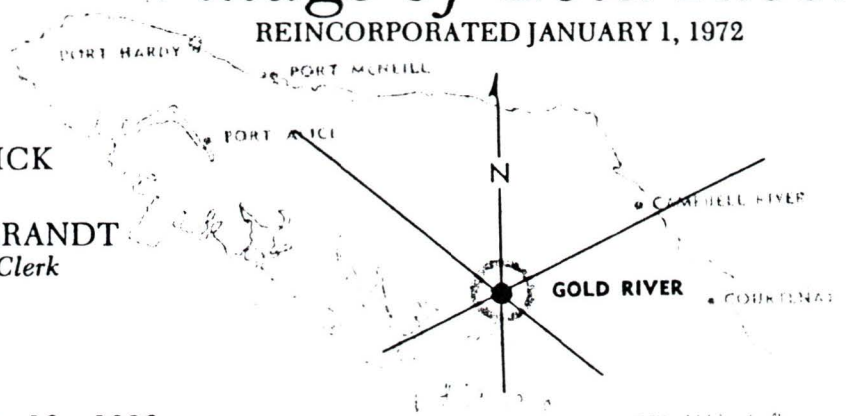
[redacted]

Dan McInnes
Principal

DMcI/blm

Village of Gold River

REINCORPORATED JANUARY 1, 1972



CAVING CAPITAL OF CANADA

A. FIDDICK
Mayor
HILDEBRANDT
Municipal Clerk

February 10, 1986

Mr. J. David T. Price
Superintendent of Schools
School District #84
P.O. Box 100
Gold River, B.C.
V0P 1G0

Dear Mr. Price:

The students of the Graphic Communications Class, under the direction of Mr. Michael O'Neill, are to be congratulated on the success of their video productions aired recently on the local community services channel.

I have requested and received copies of the "Friendly Cove", "History of Gold River" and "Salmonoid Enhancement" segments for use as promotional material.

Not only has this class proven to be educational for the students, but for the community as a whole. The tapes have become a useful resource to the community and we have had the opportunity to experience first hand the education system in progress.

As a viewer, it was interesting to note the poise and confidence that was so obviously gained by the students, and the mature manner in which they conducted themselves while interviewing adults and business people.

The benefits of a program such as this in our schools are far reaching. It has provided the students with academic, technical and social educations that would not otherwise have been available to them.

Yours truly,

[redacted]

Shannon Messer
Economic Development
Officer

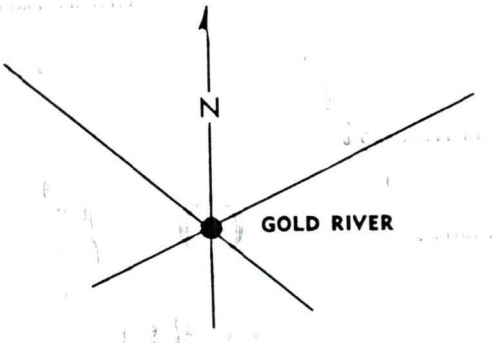
SM/sr

Village of Gold River

REINCORPORATED JANUARY 1, 1972

.A. FIDDICK
Mayor

. HILDEBRANDT
Municipal Clerk



February 10, 1986

Mr. M. O'Neill
Gold River, B.C.
V0P 1G0

Dear Mr. O'Neill:

It was a pleasure to be involved with you and your students of the Composition 11 Class. The 'Curfew' video and the 'Nootka Island' excursions were most enjoyable for all concerned.

Community reaction has been very positive, after viewing the students finished videos on the local cable channel. Some comments were that "we wish there was more of this happening in the school and community". One of the salient points was the interaction between the students and the adults, (not teachers), during the production of the videos.

The response of the students to this method of teaching was positive by my observation, particularly the cruise to Nootka Island. It gave the individuals involved time to comtemplate, plan and observe while they wrote and filmed. Altogether a useful scholastic and community exercise.

Yours truly,

[redacted]

M. Anne Fiddick
Mayor

MAF/sr

APPENDIX II

COURSE EVALUATION

GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS 10-12

1. What did you like most about the course? I liked most was how we got right into things. As soon as we started this course we learned the the parts of the equipment & then went out & used it (& editting)
2. What did you like least about the course? I least liked how little equipment we had & would have been easier & more efficient if we had more equipment.
3. Do you feel the course has personally changed you? I guess it did a bit & feel more comfortable going in front of an audience & dealing with video & audio machinery.

4. Have you developed new abilities in this course? What?
Yes. I had never operated a camera before, or editted.

5. Do you think the experience of operating cameras and appearing in front of them has been valuable for you? If so why? Yes, very much. In the beginning of this course I hated going in front of a camera & now its not that bad. I feel a little more confident about myself
6. How has this course changed your attitude towards television?
I respect television more & know just how the edits are done & the elements that make up the program.

7. Any other comments, or constructive criticism? I don't think there should be a final in this course. I feel it should be based on what we did, our final products.

COURSE EVALUATION

GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS 10-12

1. What did you like most about the course? interviews
(Editting & taking camera shoots of action, students & the public. Also the tests

2. What did you like least about the course?
writing up a treatment

3. Do you feel the course has personally changed you? Yes I feel it has.
It makes me feel glad to approach the public to voice their opinions on certain subjects without being afraid.

4. Have you developed new abilities in this course? What? operating the camera.

5. Do you think the experience of operating cameras and appearing in front of them has been valuable for you? If so why? operating
-the cameras has been valuable for me because I know it will come in handy in the future.

6. How has this course changed your attitude towards television?
It makes movies look real fake. Observation

7. Any other comments, or constructive criticism?
I found this course to be a very enjoyable course. Needs alot of input by individual persons.

COURSE EVALUATION

GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS 10-12

1. What did you like most about the course?

I liked the fact that the students were relied upon to make their own choices, and then trusted to carry out their choice. I think this freedom builds self-confidence and trust, as well as enabling students to express themselves.

2. What did you like least about the course?

What I disliked was the lack of equipment. This created many problems in the production of programs.

3. Do you feel the course has personally changed you?

I think the course has given me a deeper understanding of the T.V. Business, and what goes on "behind the scenes".

4. Have you developed new abilities in this course? What?

I've developed the knowledge of how to run the various equipment ~~into~~ involved in the course, as well as how to put a program together.

5. Do you think the experience of operating cameras and appearing in front of them has been valuable for you? If so why?

Operating in front of cameras has eliminated any camera shyness I had. Operating the camera was a good extention of photography, which is valuable experience.

6. How has this course changed your attitude towards television?

This course has made me more critical of the programs on T.V., and has helped me to be able to decipe between "garbage" and good viewing material.

7. Any other comments, or constructive criticism?

I believe this course should be offered to as many people as possible.

COURSE EVALUATION

GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS 10-12

1. What did you like most about the course?

I LIKE WORKING WITH CAMERAS AND ALL THE OTHER EQUIPMENT

2. What did you like least about the course?

THE ONLY THING I DONT LIKE IS THAT THE GRADE 12 STUDENTS IN THIS CLASS ALWAYS GET TO EDIT BEFORE THE REST OF US DO

3. Do you feel the course has personally changed you?

YES, THIS COURSE HAS GIVEN ME BETTER KNOWLEDGE ABOUT T.V. PRODUCTION

4. Have you developed new abilities in this course? What?

YES - FILMING YES I HAVE - SETTING UP EQUIPMENT DO AN EDIT - AND WORKING WITH ALL THE EQUIPMENT - UTR, CAMERA, LIGHTING ETC.

5. Do you think the experience of operating cameras and appearing in front of them has been valuable for you? If so why?

YES IT HAS BEEN VALUEABLE BECAUSE IT COULD COME IN HANDY IN THE FUTURE

6. How has this course changed your attitude towards television?

IT TELLS ME THAT BEING INVOLVED WITH TELEVISION WOULD BE EASIER THAN IT LOOKS

7. Any other comments, or constructive criticism?

YES - THERE SHOULD BE MORE CABLES FOR EDITING AND MAYBE ONE MORE CAMERA AND UTR.

COURSE EVALUATION

GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS 10-12

1. What did you like most about the course?
I liked filming & putting a program together.

2. What did you like least about the course?
I didn't like reading the textbook.

3. Do you feel the course has personally changed you?
No, not really.

4. Have you developed new abilities in this course? What?
Yes, I now know how to edit & do V.O. & how to work a movie camera.

5. Do you think the experience of operating cameras and appearing in front of them has been valuable for you? If so why?
Yes, it's made me less nervous.

6. How has this course changed your attitude towards television?
I don't take it for granted anymore because now I know the hard work & all the time that it takes to make just one show.

7. Any other comments, or constructive criticism?
No No.

COURSE EVALUATION

GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS 10-12

1. What did you like most about the course?
seeing our finished products and filming

2. What did you like least about the course?
sometimes editing and the 20 page long chapter(s) in the text - Television + Society

3. Do you feel the course has personally changed you?
Yes, it's taught me to have more patience

4. Have you developed new abilities in this course? What?
To learn how TV programs are created, both in the mind + physically and how they work

5. Do you think the experience of operating cameras and appearing in front of them has been valuable for you? If so why? Yes, gave me some satisfaction + self confidence and I learned all lot about people's viewpoints on certain things

6. How has this course changed your attitude towards television?
I think about how they filmed this scene or how it was put together.

7. Any other comments, or constructive criticism? I think everyone should have a chance to learn everything the 9 of us did in this class.

COURSE EVALUATION

GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS 10-12

1. What did you like most about the course? filming projects

2. What did you like least about the course? editing and the fact that steven Reynolds always got to edit and that the same people always had to get the equipment

3. Do you feel the course has personally changed you? No not really but it made me relise how much work goes into a proied, so Im less critical of the projects

4. Have you developed new abilities in this course? What? Yes al know how to operate the video equipment & edit now

5. Do you think the experience of operating cameras and appearing in front of them has been valuable for you? If so why? Yes because it could help me in getting a future job

6. How has this course changed your attitude towards television? it made me realise that most of the news is staged and that most things on T.V. are staged

7. Any other comments, or constructive criticism?
Yes when the sunsets were shot steven & Kelly shot them not Sharon and yet she got credit for it & not Kelly. Besides a few problems al thought this couse was good and al would take it again next year

COURSE EVALUATION

GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS 10-12

1. What did you like most about the course?
The experience I got from working in front of and behind the camera, and all the equipment.

2. What did you like least about the course?
Reading the chapters from the textbook.

3. Do you feel the course has personally changed you?
In a way yes, because I feel more confident about myself & I present myself so much better now!

4. Have you developed new abilities in this course? What?
Yes, I am able to be in front of a camera, and I can act naturally and also I feel comfortable (in front of the camera)

5. Do you think the experience of operating cameras and appearing in front of them has been valuable for you? If so why?
Yes, because I feel so comfortable in front of them I've decided to go into television broadcasting. So, this course has helped me find what I want to do with my life.

6. How has this course changed your attitude towards television?
No, well actually I look at camera angles, and edits and evaluate shows more, criticizing bad edits, poor shots etc.

7. Any other comments, or constructive criticism?
I think this was a good course because it gives people the opportunity to learn more about how things are done on TV and gives them a hands on experience.

COURSE EVALUATION

Jan 1986

GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS 10-12

1. What did you like most about the course?

I liked the filming out at Friendly cove and the making of our own productions. I also liked seeing the finished Products (I guess liked being out on a shoot

2. What did you like least about the course? the most

I liked least doing the movie reviews and a few of the movies I didnt particullarly enjoy. I also didnt like the text book work I thought the text was extremely boring

3. Do you feel the course has personally changed you?

Not exactly personally although it has changed the way I view movies and watch T.V. I notice bad edits much more and wether or not they match.

4. Have you developed new abilities in this course? What?

I learned how to operate a video camera and how to use editing equipment and how to go about editing

5. Do you think the experience of operating cameras and appearing in front of them has been valuable for you? If so why?

I would say operating a camera has been valuable, so that it will give a more interesting account of my life using video instead of just photos if I do get ~~the~~ to use ~~of~~ a movie camera in -

6. How has this course changed your attitude towards television?

I look at T.V. shows now and think that I know what they do to make things happen. In a way I think now knowing what + how things are done sort of ruins some movies

7. Any other comments, or constructive criticism?

No. except that I think the course should be more filming not movie watching + text book work

) the future And I think being in front of the
amera sort of ~~brings out~~ brought me out a
bit more I used to hate getting my
picture taken - now it doesn't bother me.

VITA

Surname: O'Neill Given Names: J. Michael

Place of Birth: Winnipeg Manitoba

Date of Birth: Aug. 25 1946

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria, Victoria	1964 TO 1968
University of Ottawa, Ottawa	1969 to 1970
University of Victoria, Victoria	1982 to 1983
University of Victoria, Victoria	1986 to 1988

B.A. 1968 University of Victoria, Victoria

University of Ottawa Fellowship, 1970

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Title of Thesis

Media Literacy : A Reconception

Author 

J. MICHAEL O'NEILL

April 25 1988