Media Literacy Education in the Social Studies:
Teacher Perceptions and Curricular Challenges

By Laura Stein & Anita Prewett

Introduction

Despite the pervasiveness of U.S. media at home and abroad, the U.S. lags behind a number of countries in the study and practice of media literacy education in middle and high schools (Kubey, 2003; Megee, 1997). Media literacy education entails teaching people "to decode, analyze, evaluate and produce communication in a variety of forms" (Aufderheide & Firestone, 1993; Carnegie Council, 1995). While Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and others have had formal media literacy education initiatives and programs in secondary schools for decades, the U.S. only began incorporating media literacy education into their state educational standards in the 1990s.[1] Although there are many reasons to consider treating media literacy education as its own area of study, educational policymakers have generally envisioned media literacy education as being embedded within existing core curriculum, particularly within the areas of English language arts, the health sciences, and the social studies disciplines of history, government, and economics. Film studies found some early, informal inroads into the language

Laura Stein is an assistant professor in the Department of Radio-Television-Film and Anita Prewett is a grants specialist in the Center for Social Work Research, both at the University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.

arts classroom as part of a movement to study the popular arts in the 1960s and 1970s. Many teachers viewed films, like literary texts, as artifacts that students could analyze and appreciate as an art form. The desire to protect children against the widespread marketing of unhealthy products such as alcohol, tobacco and sugary foods was the impetus for the introduction of media literacy education into the health sciences (Carnegie Council, 1995, p. 118). Although media literacy education may have come late to the social studies, many social studies teachers perceive a need for media literacy education in their classrooms. One survey of high school social studies teachers found that a majority viewed media literacy education as a necessary and appropriate subject for social studies classes (Tuggle, Sneed, & Wulfemeyer, 2000). However, to date, few states have undertaken curriculum development and teacher training around media literacy education in the social studies.

Media literacy education is relevant to the social studies for a number of reasons. Media provide compelling fiction and nonfiction narratives about people, places and events. Indeed, many young people's knowledge of world events and cultures comes from media representations (Postman, 1985). Media also help shape attitudes and opinions about history, government and politics (Gerbner, 1999; Graber, 1984; Iyengar & Kinder, 1982). As citizens, students rely on media for information about elections, public policy and political processes. Consequently, media literacy education in the social studies can promote student understanding and appreciation of the role media play in shaping and disseminating particular views of the world. For example, teachers can employ media literacy education to hone students' abilities to evaluate media as evidentiary sources, to identify bias in mediated constructions of history and society, to understand how media frame issues, to separate fact from opinion and to assess the credibility of media sources. Moreover, media literacy education can help build analytical and reasoning skills (Hobbs, 1999) and serve as an important tool for examining issues of democratic citizenship and the political process in U.S. society (Considine, 1995).

More than thirty states include media literacy education components in their education standards for social studies classes, including history, economics, geography, and civics (Kubey, 2004; Kubey & Baker, 1999).[2] Despite the growing recognition of media literacy education as a field of study, few researchers have focused on its implementation. Instead, most explore why media literacy education is germane to the social studies classroom. For example, several scholars highlight the common goals media literacy education shares with social studies disciplines, particularly creating a more democratic society by fostering an informed, knowledgeable and active citizenry (Hobbs, 1998a; Katz, 1993; Kubey, 2005). Others argue that media literacy education has become a pedagogical imperative given the influence media have over students' conceptions of history, politics, culture and knowledge, and their learning styles (Trask, 2002). Scholars have paid less attention to how social studies teachers view media literacy education. Yet, their views are likely to influence how media literacy education is taught. One prior

study, Tuggle, Sneed and Wulfemeyer (2000), examined teachers' views on whether media literacy education should be taught in high school social studies classes, which media literacy education topics should be raised, and whether teachers felt prepared to address them.[3] However, these authors did not investigate the range of aims teachers might associate with this subject, presuming rather that teacher interest in media literacy education stems from a desire to teach critical thinking skills. Nor did they investigate teacher opinions on how media literacy education should be integrated into the social studies classroom. This article focuses on social studies teachers' familiarity with media literacy education in the classroom, their understandings of its role and place in the curriculum, and the implications of these views for curriculum development and training. The study presumes that the usefulness of media literacy education resources, as well as their adoption, depend in large measure on whether these materials speak to the overarching goals teachers bring to media literacy education and their understanding of its place in their classrooms.

This article reports on the results of a survey of a small group of social studies teachers seeking to integrate media literacy education into their classrooms. This exploratory research aims to help educators, administrators, consultants and theorists begin to understand the particular curriculum development and teacher training needs of social studies teachers engaged in media literacy education. The article concludes by discussing several factors that may place an additional drag on the ability to develop training and curricular resources, and by briefly reviewing some positive developments in the provision of primary and secondary teaching resources. Before reporting and analyzing the results of the survey, we offer a brief discussion of how the communication and education literature has understood and conceptualized the aims of media literacy education. This review illustrates the broad range of goals that might influence teachers seeking to incorporate media literacy education into the social studies classroom and provides a context for our survey.

Goals of Media Literacy Education in the United States

David Considine (2002a, pp. 11-12) categorizes the goals of media literacy education in the United States according to the alliterative mnemonic, "protection, preparation and pleasure." The protectionist approach sees media literacy education as a way to reduce the risk of unhealthy behaviors promoted by the media. Preparation refers to the acquisition of information and communication skills necessary to citizenship and work in modern democratic society. And pleasure recognizes that students derive pleasure from media texts and acknowledges a place for the critical appreciation of media as a popular art form in the classroom. As Considine's mnemonic recognizes, media literacy education is linked to a wide range of goals and purposes. Similarly, the proceedings of the 1992 Aspen National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy, a founding document of the US media literacy movement, asserts that the teaching of media literacy necessarily encompasses a

variety of emphases (Aufderheide & Firestone, 1993). Media literacy education advocates articulate a range of reasons for media literacy education, and many in fact have strong disagreements about its primary goals (Hobbs, 1998b; Kubey, 2003; Tyner, 1998). Drawing on the literature in the field, we elaborate and extend Considine's insights to distill five primary goals for media literacy education in the United States. These are: protection from harmful media; the promotion of health and social development; the promotion of citizenship and democracy; the acquisition of tools for learning and self-expression; and the enjoyment and appreciation of media as a creative art form. The degree to which social studies teachers share these goals is a principal object of our study.

Protection or Health and Social Development

Historically, media literacy education in the U.S. has had a strong protectionist vein. That is, media literacy has been seen as a way to protect youth from harmful media influence (Davis, 1992; Kubey, 2003; Piette & Giroux, 1997; Schwarz, 2005a, 2005b). The protectionist argument asserts that by learning to critically evaluate the meaning and intent behind the media, students become more capable of resisting media messages that might negatively impact their health and social development. This approach is apparent in media literacy education initiatives that focus on media messages related to alcohol, drugs, smoking, violence, racism, and sexism (Considine, 2002a; Jenkins, 2000; McBrien, 1999). Closely related to the protectionist framework is the inverse view that media literacy education can promote healthy behaviors and practices (Considine, 2002a; Kubey, 2005). While these goals have spurred the incorporation of media literacy education aims into state educational standards for the health sciences in more than forty states, they could also be factors motivating media literacy education in the social studies.

Citizenship and Democracy

Extant scholarship also considers media literacy education important for promoting citizenship and democracy. Many argue that media literacy education is essential to the social studies goal of preparing students for participation in democratic society (Considine 2002a, 2002b; Hepburne, 1999; Hobbs, 1998a; Katz, 1993; Kubey, 2004; Megee, 1997; Tyner, 1998). These advocates build on the insights of philosophers, like Dewey and Habermas, who highlight the importance of communication in democratic societies. If democracy entails the ability of the public to represent and know itself through communication processes (Dewey, 1954/1927) and the ability to formulate authentic public opinion within spheres of deliberation and debate (Habermas, 1991/1962), then being able to access, analyze and construct media messages becomes critical. Because media constitute the primary sphere of public communication in modern societies, they are a vital means by which the citizenry comes to know both itself and the broader world. To

be adequately informed, citizens must be able to access media that represent a full range of social experiences and perspectives, as well as to critically analyze and evaluate the messages they receive. Moreover, people should be able to participate in public discourse and offer their own representations and perspectives on the social world. By teaching students how to construct and produce media, as well as how to deconstruct it, teachers enable students to engage in self-expression, to represent themselves to a larger public, and ultimately to participate in the public sphere so crucial to democracy (Hobbs, 1998; Tyner, 1998, 229). In this sense, media literacy education is a form of "empowerment," or a process that facilitates social action and democratic engagement.

Tools for Learning and Self-Expression

Others see media literacy education as serving broader educational and vocational aims. In this view, media literacy education can furnish students with transferable skills of use to them throughout their intellectual and work lives. Many educators advocate media literacy as a teaching tool that can reinforce the delivery of subject content and learning in all subject areas. They assert that teachers can use media literacy education as a cross-platform pedagogical strategy in order to: motivate and challenge students; engage multiple learning intelligences or ways of learning; link real-life skills and knowledge with classroom learning; foster an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge acquisition and subject mastery; stimulate transfer of skills and knowledge to new areas of experience and inquiry; and improve basic skills in reading and writing (Goodson & Norton-Meier, 2003; Hobbs, 2004; Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Lundstrom, 2004; Trask, 2002; Scheibe, 2004; Summers, 2005). The claim that media literacy education can facilitate learning across the curriculum also has a pragmatic dimension for media literacy education advocates, since it offers a way to bring media literacy education into the schools without adding an entirely new subject to what many consider an already overly crowded curriculum (Kubey, 2003; Schiebe, 2004). Although Hobbs (1998b) identifies the question of whether media literacy should be taught as a separate subject or integrated into existing subjects as a "great debate" among U.S. media educators, most states have adopted media literacy standards that follow an integrated approach, embedding them in other subject areas, including the language arts, health sciences, and the social studies.

Counted among the most valuable skills media literacy education can teach are the abilities to engage in critical thinking and effective communication or self-expression. Indeed, these skills are cited as fundamental 21st Century learning skills in the Partnership for 21st Century Skills report (2003) produced with support from the U.S. Department of Education. The report identifies media literacy, higher-level thinking, and effective communication as core competencies of academic achievement in the 21st Century. The view that media literacy education fosters critical thinking—a meta-level cognitive process that involves rigorously analyzing and

evaluating information—is widespread in communication and education literature, and researchers have begun to evaluate measures of critical thinking as an outcome of media literacy education practices across subject areas (Feuerstein, 1999; Hobbs, 2004; Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Project Smart Art, 2004; Schiebe, 2004). While the goal of self-expression may be most explicit in media arts education, Kubey (2003, 2005) argues that this skill can enrich the academic, cultural, civic, and intellectual lives of students, since democratic processes require that people be able to contribute diverse opinions, insights and ideas to public spheres of communication. Hobbs (2004, p. 43) also notes that many teachers encourage media production and use as a way to promote self-expression, though she does not identify their broader motivations for doing so.

Enjoyment and Appreciation of Media as an Art Form

An early approach to media literacy education in Europe, but one that has also made headway in the United States, views media literacy education as the study of the popular arts. Fueled by developments in auteur theory in the 1950s and 1960s, which recognized the creative talents of media makers, particularly film directors, this approach argues that some contemporary media, like other art forms, are worthy of appreciation and study. As Masterman and Mariet (1994) state, a primary aim of this brand of media literacy education is to help students distinguish between good and bad media, and presumably to enhance their appreciation of what is good. A major flaw of this approach is that it is often used to value the art that appeals to teachers and vilify what appeals to students, ignoring the pleasure or enjoyment that students receive from favored media texts (Tyner, 1998, p. 115). Contemporary media educators posit a more positive role for enjoyment and appreciation in media literacy education. Brunner and Talley (1999) recognize that students get pleasure from interacting with media and suggest that the ability to enjoy the arts and see their lives through them is an important aspect of media literacy education. Buckingham (1990), Masterman (1997), and Tyner (1998, p. 171) also suggests that teachers can recognize the pleasures students receive from media texts and use this recognition as a foundation to question and challenge the meaning of these texts.

The Survey and Its Results

Our exploratory survey aimed to discover to what degree the above goals motivate the teaching of media literacy education in the social studies, whether teachers value media literacy education as a tool to teach about media or to enhance understanding of discrete social studies topics, and how comfortable teachers are with media literacy education in their classrooms. We administered our survey prior to a free, voluntary workshop on media literacy education in the social studies funded by the Texas Council for the Humanities and held at the University of Texas. The goal of the workshop was to provide teachers with the knowledge, skills and

resources necessary to confidently undertake media literacy education in the social studies classroom. Held in November of 2004, the workshop offered two-days of intensive professional development around media literacy education. During the workshop, media literacy education experts and scholars talked to teachers about different models of media literacy education, key concepts and questions, media representations and analysis, media audiences and industries, broader historical, social and cultural contexts, the integration of media literacy education in social studies classes, the alignment of media literacy education lessons with state standards, and existing resources and curricular materials for social studies teachers. In addition, media makers talked about using documentary and designing media production projects in the social studies classroom.

We surveyed teachers prior to the workshop so that the workshop experience would not color their views, and we sent out follow up surveys several months later. Our aim was to gauge teachers' responses to a number of statements related to their attitudes about, and experiences with, media literacy education in the classroom, so that we could better tailor future training sessions to their needs. While all workshop participants completed the on-site survey, only fourteen completed the subsequent mail survey. This article focuses primarily on the initial survey, drawing on the follow up survey occasionally to augment our analysis. Although Texas has among the most comprehensive and significant media literacy education requirements of all states (Considine, 2002a, p. 13), it has yet to develop curriculum or teacher training for media literacy education in the social studies or to incorporate the subject into state standardized tests. Thus, we viewed teachers who volunteered for the workshop as potential early adopters of media literacy education in the social studies.

Respondents to the initial survey consisted of thirty-nine high school teachers from across the state of Texas. Twenty-three were female and sixteen were male. Thirty-one teachers identified themselves as Caucasians, five as Hispanics, two as Asians, one as a Native American, and one as other. In terms of age, three were under twenty-five, seventeen were between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five, fourteen were between thirty-six and fifty-five, and five were fifty-six or over. Among the participating teachers, twenty-one taught history; five, economics; six, government; six, social studies; and nine, geography. Many teachers taught across multiple subject areas.

Classroom Media Teaching

Our survey included several items designed to determine teachers' familiarity with media literacy education in the classroom. These items focused on their prior experience teaching about media, the importance of media literacy education in their curriculum, the integration of media literacy education into their curriculum, their confidence analyzing media, and their propensity to link lessons to Texas academic standards for media literacy education.

Many of the teachers had prior experience teaching about the media (See Table 1). More than two-thirds reported that they had some or a good deal of experience. Nearly a third of our participants, however, had little or no experience teaching about the media.

Teachers also rated how important, and how integrated, media literacy education is within their curriculum. More than seventy percent of all respondents strongly agreed, or agreed, that media literacy education was an important aspect of their overall curriculum. Only fifteen percent disagreed (See Table 2). All of the teachers had integrated media literacy education into the classroom to some degree. While few felt they had achieved a good deal of integration, more than half had integrated at least some media literacy education into their classrooms. Moreover, there were no teachers for whom media literacy education was entirely absent from the curriculum (See Table 3).

Table 1

Prior Experience of Teaching about Media	Percentage
Good deal of experience	3%
Some experience	61%
Not Sure of their experience	8%
Not much experience	13%
No experience	15%
Not applicable	5%

n=39

Table 2

Importance of Media Literacy Education in the Curriculum	Percentage
Strongly agree	26%
Agree	46%
Not sure	13%
Disagree	15%
Strongly disagree	0%

n=39

Table 3

Integration of Media Literacy Education into the Curriculum	Percentage
Good deal of integration	8%
Some integration	51%
Not sure of integration levels	13%
Not much integration	28%
No integration	0%

n=39

Although most teachers agreed that media literacy education was important to their curriculum, many lacked confidence about their ability to analyze media in the classroom (See Table 4). Fewer than half the teachers surveyed agreed that they had confidence teaching media literacy education. This result seems to conflict with Tuggle, Sneed, and Wulfemeyer's (2000) findings on the preparedness of social studies teachers for media literacy education. These authors report that three-fourths of the teachers they surveyed felt qualified to teach media studies. However, since the same teachers agreed that more textbook material and teacher training were needed, it may be that the concepts of feeling qualified and feeling confident reflect different degrees of preparedness.

Texas has written detailed media literacy education goals into their state educational standards for specific subject areas, including history, government and geography. Since 1998, media literacy education standards for the social studies include: evaluating the evidentiary value of sources; identifying bias in written and visual media; relating points of view to the historical context of surrounding events and frames of reference; understanding the relationship between media texts and the societies that produce them; recognizing how the characteristics and issues of different eras in U.S. and world history are reflected in media representations; analyzing the relationship between popular culture, politics and the economy; assessing the impact of American culture in other parts of the world; applying processes of historical inquiry to the interpretation of primary and secondary sources of news and information; recognizing stereotypes of U.S. subcultures and foreign cultures; and creating presentations of historical and political information in mediated forms, such as documentary films or web sites (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies Subchapter C. High School §113.35 and §113.32). However, these standards were not an important factor in how teachers taught media literacy education (See Table 5). Only about twenty percent of teachers thought that their lesson plans were linked to these standards. Nearly half were unsure how their lessons related to state standards for media literacy education, and more than a quarter disagreed that their lesson plans corresponded to these standards.

Table 4

Confidence Analyzing Media	Percentage
Strongly agree	13%
Agree	31%
Not sure	33%
Disagree	20%
Strongly disagree	3%

n=39

Primary Reasons for Media Literacy Education

Another set of questions sought to discover what teachers saw as the primary goals of media literacy education in the social studies classroom. The social studies teachers surveyed recognized two primary goals (See Table 6). Nearly all of the teachers agreed that the primary purpose of media literacy education is to prepare students for citizenship. The second strongest goal, according to the vast majority, was offering students new tools for learning and self-expression. Results were more divided on the remaining reasons for media literacy education, fostering student health and development, protection from harmful media and enjoyment or appreciation of media as an art form. While more than half the teachers agreed that these were primary goals of media literacy education, others rejected them outright, particularly the goals of protectionism and enjoyment or appreciation.

Table 5

Links to Texas Academic Standards	Percentage
Strongly agree	8%
Agree	13%
Not sure	49%
Disagree	23%
Strongly disagree	6%
Not Applicable	3%

n=39

Table 6

Primary Reasons for Media Literacy Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Protection from Harmful Media	8%	46%	18%	23%	3%	2%
Foster Students' Health and Development	10%	46%	33%	8%	0%	3%
Preparation for Citizenship	51%	46%	3%	0%	0%	0%
New Tools for Learning and Self-expression	33%	59%	5%	3%	0%	0%
Enjoy/Appreciate Media as Art	5%	49%	10%	31%	5%	0%

n=39

Integrating Media Literacy Education into the Social Studies Classroom

Our final set of questions aimed to ascertain whether teachers used media literacy education to enhance student understanding of the media itself or of core social studies topics. These questions reflect debates among media educators about whether teachers should present media literacy education as its own subject area or whether it should be subjugated and integrated into teaching about other subject areas (Hobbs, 1998b). While Texas has incorporated media literacy education standards into the social studies curriculum, teachers could still choose to emphasize learning about the media or learning about social studies through media literacy education. For example, a government teacher could offer a separate, comprehensive unit on media's influence on politics or could raise this topic as part of a discussion of factors influencing American electoral campaigns. A more media centered approach would do the former, while a more integrated approach would do the latter. While teachers saw both approaches as valid within the social studies classroom, more teachers viewed the place of media literacy education in the classroom as enhancing core social studies topics, rather than a topic in and of itself (See Table 7). The majority of teachers surveyed rejected the idea that media literacy education serves to enhance student understanding of the media itself.

Analyses and Implications for Media Literacy Education in the Social Studies Curriculum

The survey data raises several issues of relevance to media literacy education proponents and curriculum designers. First, while the teachers surveyed see media literacy education as an important aspect of the social studies curriculum and are already incorporating it into their primary subject areas, many are uncertain about how to integrate it into their teaching and lack confidence analyzing media. As we stated earlier, we consider these teachers to be early adopters of media literacy education in the social studies classroom. Their motivation to teach media literacy education is high, and yet they feel inadequately prepared to do so. The follow

Table 7

Integrating of Media Literacy Education in the Curriculum	Enhance Understanding of Media	Enhance Understanding of Social Studies
Strongly agree	3%	13%
Agree	26%	31%
Not sure	21%	28%
Disagree	44%	25%
Strongly disagree	3%	0%
Not applicable	3%	3%
n=38	n=39	

up survey administered to the same group after the workshop suggested that more teacher training, as well as peer group sessions focused on how to incorporate media literacy education into specific subject areas, would better prepare teachers for media literacy education. The follow up survey responses also suggested that the identification of available primary and secondary media literacy education resources and better access to technology, including photography equipment, Internet access, TV monitors, and computer hardware and software, would enhance teachers' preparedness for media literacy education.

In the case of Texas, another cause of teacher uncertainty about how to integrate media literacy education into their curriculum may stem from a lack of knowledge about the state's media literacy education standards. More than three-quarters of our teachers did not know or think that their teaching about media literacy education corresponded with state academic standards. It may be that the teachers were unaware that such standards exist. Alternately, it may be that without state endorsed training or curriculum, they are unsure of how to interpret these standards. Finally, at the time we gave the survey in November of 2004, the state had yet to incorporate any questions related to media literacy education on the annual Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests used to assess student learning in the social studies. Several scholars have cited the impact of high-stakes testing and pressures to teach to these tests as impediments to the diffusion of media literacy education, the presumption being that media literacy education items do not appear on these tests (Hobbs, 2004; Kubey, 2003; Lundstrom, 2004). It may be that until media literacy education items appear on the TAKS test, teachers will have little incentive to teach in accordance with the media literacy education standards. Conversely, the more quickly media literacy education is incorporated into the TAKS, the more progress we would expect in terms of the integration of media literacy education into the social studies curriculum.

Second, most of the social studies teachers surveyed viewed media literacy education as a secondary goal designed to enhance the teaching of core social studies topics. This viewpoint presents some challenges in regards to training and resource development for social studies teachers. Media literacy education materials that lay out abstract concepts, principles and ideas that pertain to media but are not readily transferable to specific social studies subjects would need significant adaptation to be of use to these teachers. Media literacy education materials built around core social studies subjects would serve as a more effective resource for these teachers. Indeed, many media literacy education resources for the social studies have been designed with this core subject area focus in mind, offering discrete lesson plans around such topics as racism, news bias or the presidency. However, there are many gaps in the topics covered at present, and more lesson plans appear to address contemporary civics topics than historical ones. Moreover, from a curriculum development standpoint, this approach is likely to require a significant investment of time and money in order to produce social studies topic specific sets

of materials, rather than simply adapting materials used in media studies in higher education. The production of these materials may also require greater collaboration among media educators and social studies teachers or experts. The design of media literacy education curricula for specific topic areas in the social studies may require specialists from both subject areas. In the follow up survey, several teachers expressed their interest in working with peers and experts to create media literacy education lesson plans around specific social studies topics.

Third, the teachers surveyed emphasized different reasons for media literacy education than those frequently stressed in theory and policy. The social studies teachers were less interested in using media literacy education to protect children from harmful media, to promote health and development, or to enhance students' appreciation of the media arts. They were more interested in using media literacy education to prepare students for citizenship and as a tool for learning and self-expression. Although media literacy education performs a myriad of functions across different subject areas, the goals of protectionism and appreciation may cleave more closely to health education and the language arts respectively. The teachers in our survey evinced an interest in media literacy education more closely tied to the normative goals for citizenship in a democratic society. As such, materials and training developed for this sector may require more deference to this goal. For example, resource developers may want to place more emphases on critical analysis that encourages the examination of a diversity of viewpoints, the ability to become informed on civic matters, and the acquisition of tools for engaging in public deliberation, representation and debate.

Of course, readers should treat these findings with caution since they are based on a small, self-selected group of Texas teachers. Nevertheless, our findings are largely consistent with contemporary knowledge in the field and constitute a preliminary exploration of how social studies teachers view the value and place of media literacy education in their curriculum, as well as the implications of these views for future training and curriculum development.

Conclusion

In this article, we examined how a small group of social studies teachers view media literacy education in their classrooms. We also considered the implications of their views for teacher training and curriculum development. That media literacy education will be brought into the social studies classroom is a certainty. Most states have mandated it, and teachers are in fact already teaching it. What is less certain is what form such training and materials will take, and how readily teachers can incorporate them into the different subject areas comprising the social studies.

Our research suggests that teachers would benefit from better access to primary media that could serve as teaching tools, more secondary materials that facilitate the integration of media literacy education across the curriculum, and more teacher

training in this field. Some progress is being made in these directions. Online archiving of media materials, such as films, photographs and audio files, is making more primary materials available. Teachers with classroom Internet access can direct students to reliable web cites such as "History Matters" by the American Social History Project (2005), the American Memory Project on "America From the Great Depression to World War II" (Library of Congress, 2006) or the American Museum of the Moving Image's (2005) collection of presidential campaign commercials for a rich array of primary documents that can help illuminate and enhance the study of history, government and civics. Although these primary documents do not constitute lesson plans that teachers can readily apply to social studies topics, they do provide easy access to important media sources.

While some organizations, such as the Media Education Foundation (MEF), Media Literacy Clearinghouse, and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), have developed web sites that assemble and link social studies related media literacy education materials, only the state of Maryland has undertaken a more comprehensive approach to media literacy education in the social studies. The MEF site links to lesson plans that speak to numerous states' standards on media literacy education (MEF, 2004). However, the majority of these plans focus on contemporary political issues rather than historical ones, and many of the historical links point to web sites that are no longer active. PBS's TeacherSource website builds media literacy education lesson plans around existing documentary materials that act as primary and secondary sources for various topics in the social studies. This site offers lesson plans pegged to such historical events as the Civil War, World War II, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Vietnam and Gulf Wars. TeacherSource provides teachers with suggestions on how to use PBS programming to enhance media literacy skills, though not all the lesson plans are linked to clearly defined media literacy education principles or state standards. Media Literacy Clearinghouse produces web-based materials and books on a select number of social studies related topics, including war reporting, political advertising, propaganda, and media and elections. A more comprehensive approach to media literacy education across the curriculum, including social studies, health education, language arts, and the fine and performing arts, comes from the Maryland State Department of Education (2003). Social studies-oriented media literacy education lesson plans for K-12 students cover such topics as journalistic processes of news selection, portrayals of historical figures as heroes and villains, and media representations of 19th and 20th century colonialism in Africa. Although they vary in levels of comprehensiveness, all of these initiatives constitute steps in the right direction.

Finally, academic departments of communication and education have much to offer in terms of teacher training. Since the mid-20th century, many universities have housed academic departments that focus on media studies. These departments have faculty who are experts on media issues, including the social, cultural and political ramifications of media production, texts and use. Media scholars could

work in concert with teachers and schools of education to develop sophisticated curricular materials, to identify primary media for classroom use and to educate and train degree seeking teachers, as well as those who are already in the classroom. To date, courses in media literacy are lacking in most colleges of education, and professional development opportunities are limited (Kubey, 2003; Schwart, 2005a). And, as Tuggle, Sneed and Wulfemeyer (2000, 73) found, many teachers support the inclusion of media literacy education in undergraduate academic training for social studies teachers. Communication departments could offer cross-listed courses aimed at introducing their students to this relatively nascent, though expanding, field of study. Such initiatives would allow media and communication programs to help define how media studies will be taught in the primary and secondary schools. Moreover, failure to take initiative is a lost opportunity that will allow others to define how media literacy education is conceptualized and taught throughout the broader educational system and to bypass the critical theoretical orientation and accumulated knowledge provided by the field of media studies in higher education.

Notes

[1] Over 30 states added media education to their state educational standards in the 1990s (Kubey and Baker, 1999). At present, standards related to media are most common in the areas of language and communication arts, with all 50 states having elements of media education in these curriculum areas (Kubey 2004, 75).

[2] State standards for media literacy can be accessed via the Media Literacy Clearinghouse website, http://frankbaker.com/state_lit.htm

[3] They found that the vast majority believed media studies should be included in the schools and in the social studies curriculum in particular (Tuggle, Sneed and Wulfemeyer, p. 71). Nearly three-fourths of their teachers felt prepared to teach this subject area, though they did not have textbooks that addressed media education issues (Tuggle, Sneed, &Wulfemeyer, p. 72).

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