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Theme: Faith, Values and Media Literacy

Catholic Media Educators Begin a Movement

Check the roster of participants at any gathering of media literacy educators, and you may see several names followed by acronyms which differ from the familiar "MA," "PhD" or "EdD." In many cases those acronyms indicate holy orders within the Catholic Church. Catholic educators have been active in the field of media literacy since its inception. In this country, Elizabeth Thoman, CHM, founded *Media and Values* magazine in 1977 to explore the influence of media on family life, education and citizenship in a democratic society. In 1989, when the audience for *Media and Values* had grown substantially, Thoman founded the Center for Media Literacy to publish curriculum and develop models for teacher training.

The first Catholic media literacy educators were essentially issuing a "cry in the wilderness." In a 1997 article, Thoman writes, "Until recently, few of us questioned the increasing dominance of media in our lives. Those who did were inclined to focus on 'content issues' like the amount of sex and violence in programs. Others simply urged families to turn the TV off. . . What's needed is a major rethinking of media's role in all of our lives. . ." ("The Gospel Challenge of Media Literacy," http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article12.html)

While parishes and schools may have been slow in responding to the call for media literacy, individual educators received encouragement from statements issued by the Vatican on the importance of media education to faith formation (teaching about the Catholic faith). As early as 1989, Pope John Paul II asserted that formation studies should not only include a media component, but should both inspire communications professionals and the laity with "a critical sense animated by a passion for the truth, and a work of defense of liberty, respect for the dignity of individuals, and a . . . firm and courageous rejection of every form of monopoly and manipulation" (*Christifideles Laici*, section 44).

Today the *National Directory for Catechesis*, a guide to formation studies for both catechetical and Catholic school teachers in the United States, contains several specific recommendations regarding media, such as using media in catechesis and advocating for media that promote human dignity and the common good. Among them is a recommendation to develop the critical thinking skills of students through media literacy education (Pacatte and Hailer, *Our Media World*, p. 6). With the directive for media literacy instruction so explicit, the potential for a media literacy movement in the United States initiated by Catholic institutions is high.

The Catholic Church runs the largest network of private schools in the United States, with 2.5 million students enrolled in 6,386 elementary schools and 1,203 high schools as of 2006. In 2003, 3,612,510 elementary school students and 771,730 high school students received religious instruction outside Catholic

schools (US Conference of Catholic Bishops, <http://www.usccb.org/comm/cip.shtml#toc7>).

In the meanwhile, the call for the “defense of liberty” issued by John Paul II seems to have inspired an international Catholic movement for media justice, with activists commonly involved in projects intended to support independent media production. Signis, the World Catholic Association for Communication, provides technical support, advice and seed funding for independent media producers around the globe. The movement is also beginning to include children in its purview. Signis news reports feature educators from India to Uganda who have trained children in media production. The fifth World Summit on Media and Children, heavily attended by Catholic educators, was held in Johannesburg in 2007, and this year the Signis World Congress, currently in session in Chiang Mai, Thailand, emphasizes “the rights and creativity of youth in a digital age.” For more information, visit <http://www.signis.org>

See the article below for a profile of one Catholic educator who has devoted her career to integrating media literacy instruction with values education.

Research Highlights

Developing the Moral Imagination: Faith Formation and Media Literacy

Sister Rose Pacatte, FSP, is an educator who has been active in the area of faith formation and media literacy studies in the United States for the last fifteen years. Pacatte, who earned an MA in Education in Media Studies at the University of London in 1995, currently directs the Pauline Center for Media Studies in Culver City, California. The Pauline Center offers monthly classes and week-long intensives which lead to an advanced media literacy certificate. Recently the University of Dayton went live with the first course for an online certificate in media literacy education to be taught and coordinated by Pauline Center staff.

CML recently had a chance to interview Pacatte, and when she was asked about the purpose of the certificate programs, she responded that they were intended to “create a context for media literacy education by training the trainers.” When asked about her larger objectives, Pacatte responded, “I would like to see media literacy institutionalized in the structures of Catholic education. Institutionalization has to happen in order for there to be any continuity. I don’t want to do ‘hit and run’ training anymore. I don’t work with individual parishes anymore unless they’re in my own locality, and when I go to a diocese, I ask for a promise that they will call back in a year for follow up.”

As Pacatte reflected on the progress of her students, she remarked, “When they enter the program, many students say that they want to learn how to use media in their teaching so that their teaching can be more relevant for the kids in their classrooms. But it can’t stop there. They need to be able to use clips as an entry point for discussing the subject matter. This was a big deal for students in the intensive course held this past summer. They came to realize that they not only needed to integrate media literacy methodology-- that is, critical thinking and inquiry--with their use of media, but also needed to effectively model those methods to students as well.”

In 2007, Pacatte partnered with Gretchen Hailer, RSHM, to write *Media Mindfulness: Educating Teens About Faith and Media* (St. Mary’s Press). In the view of the authors, “media mindfulness” adds a component to media literacy education which is essential to faith formation. Students not only use media literacy concepts to become wise consumers and responsible producers of media, but also encounter media in a way which helps them develop a sense of responsibility and respect for others.

The authors assert that students learn to exercise their “moral imagination” through the media mindfulness approach. Pacatte was effusive when asked for a definition: “Using moral imagination means entering a story, trying on the choices, asking oneself questions about consequences, and learning from that. . .When you read a book--all of a sudden you’re crying or horrified and skip a few pages because you can imagine it so well. Exercising moral imagination means asking,

“What would I have done if I were there? Is that the person that I would be?”
Elsewhere in the interview, Pacatte mused on what people lack without this practice: “People have emotional responses to movies, but they don’t know how to say they were moved, and they’re embarrassed to talk about it afterwards . . . The media mindfulness approach helps people become more mature--humanly, morally, spiritually. It helps them become authentic citizens and disciples and to live meaningful lives.”

In January 2010, Pauline Books & Media (www.pauline.org) will release Pacatte and Hailer’s second book, *Our Media World: Teaching Kids K-8 about Faith and Media*, a companion piece written to help teachers apply the media mindfulness method with elementary and middle school students. *Media Mindfulness: Educating Teens about Faith and Media*, may be ordered online at <http://www.smp.org>

Information about online courses offered by the Pauline Center for Media Studies is available at the Virtual Learning Community at the University of Dayton: <http://vlc.udayton.edu/> To learn more about the Pauline Center, or to register for courses offered in the Los Angeles area, contact the Center by phone at 310-636-8385.

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Seeks Comments on Media Literacy Education

In October, the Federal Communications Commission published “Empowering Parents and Protecting Children in an Evolving Media Landscape,” a document issued to solicit comments on a wide variety of issues involving children and media, including the role of media literacy education in helping children “enjoy the benefits of electronic media while minimizing potential harms” (p. 3). Though the document is formally designated as a Notice of Inquiry, it also presents preliminary findings in a series of short, numbered sections.

The discussion in each section is followed by a set of questions, many of which follow a standardized format. In a section on psychological effects of advertising on children (Number 35), the Notice asks, do these effects vary based on age, socio-economic class or other factors? Which are the most reliable studies available? Do these studies consider advertisements carried on newer media technologies? Are there any significant gaps in the available research? What role should the Commission play in facilitating further learning about these risks?

The Notice itself is a response to the Commission’s August report on the Child Safe Viewing Act, which presented findings on the effectiveness of current blocking technologies and parental empowerment initiatives. The Commission urges respondents to read this report before submitting comments. The Notice highlights the CSVA report’s finding that no single parental control technology is available which can function across all media platforms, which may explain the Commission’s decision to include media literacy as a topic of significant concern.

In the four sections devoted to media literacy, the Commission asks, What must parents, teachers and children know in order to be sufficiently media literate? What are current best practices for teaching media literacy? What actions could effectively promote media literacy to the public? And, what sources of information exist, and should the Commission establish an online information portal of its own? In its discussion, the Notice lists several existing sources, including the CML MediaLit Kit, as well as sources from Common Sense Media, the National Institute on Media and the Family, NetSmartz, CyberSmart!, and iKeepSafe.org.

The Notice, along with instructions for submission of comments, may be found online at: http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-09-94A1.pdf

CML Attends Professional Development Training with Partnership for 21st Century Skills



PARTNERSHIP FOR
21ST CENTURY SKILLS

<http://www.21stcenturyskills.org>

In August, three representatives of the Consortium for Media Literacy traveled to Chicago to participate in a professional affiliate seminar with the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. The term "21st century skills" refers to a suite of dispositions, literacies and skills essential to success in the contemporary workplace, from collaborative skills to financial literacy to multicultural awareness. The objective of the Partnership's professional affiliate program is to establish a network of professional development experts who will work directly with states, schools and school districts in the design, development and implementation of professional development programs that incorporate the Partnership's Framework for 21st Century Learning.

The three-day seminar, led by Partnership founder Ken Kay, gave participants a chance to take an in-depth look at the "P21" Framework, as well as an opportunity to consult with Kay about aligning their own work more fully with the Framework. CML members in attendance were Tessa Jolls, Director, Amy Shimshon-Santo, PhD, and Clifford Cohen, both educators who previously collaborated with Jolls to implement Project SmartArt (2001-04). With the completion of this seminar, the Consortium can look forward to additional research and funding opportunities in the fields of media, new technologies and critical thinking skills.

While P21 operates the program to expand its network of professional development experts, affiliation with the organization also offers participants opportunities to extend their own knowledge and skills, including access to online tools and resources, webinars and networking opportunities.

CONSORTIUM
for **MEDIA LITERACY**

Uniting for Development

About Us...

The Consortium for Media Literacy addresses the role of global media through the advocacy, research and design of media literacy education for youth, educators and parents.

The Consortium focuses on K-12 grade youth and their parents and communities. The research efforts include nutrition and health education, body image/sexuality, safety and responsibility in media by consumers and creators of products. The Consortium is building a body of research, interventions and communication that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth.
<http://www.ConsortiumforMediaLiteracy.org>

Media Literacy Resources

Teaching Tip: The sharing and celebrating of student work with outside audiences (such as parents), and using student work for further deconstruction and construction is an outgrowth of strong media literacy programs.

REVIEW: International Journal of Learning and Media

After working in partnership to publish a book version of the MacArthur Foundation report *Hanging Out, Messing Around and Geeking Out: Kids Living and Learning with New Media*, MIT Press collaborated again with the MacArthur Foundation to publish the *International Journal of Learning and Media*, a quarterly electronic journal devoted to exploring the social and cultural dimensions of digital media as they are applied to learning in a variety of contexts. The primary editor of the journal is David Buckingham, Professor of Education and Director of the Center for the Study of Children, Youth and Media at the Institute of Education, University of London.

Launched in April of this year, the journal is a hybrid publication which includes scholarly and theoretical articles, discussions of field research, short essays and op-ed pieces, and articles which feature new media. Because the topics covered are interdisciplinary, and the focus of inquiry wide open for new scholarship, the journal also publishes definitional essays on keywords in current use within the field. For example, in one keyword essay, sociologist Barrie Thorne illustrates how connotations attached to the word "childhood" influence discussions of children and new media.

MIT Press has offered the first issue as a free sample, and judging from this issue, the journal is enjoying an auspicious beginning. One of the theoretical articles, "Games and Learning: What's the Connection?" deals with a question that is not debated enough among educators in this field: What are students really learning from new technologies? Though author Caroline Pelletier employs the sometimes difficult theoretical terms of semiotics, she successfully uses them to clearly demonstrate how students and teachers operated from different conceptions of "game" at different stages of a week-long curricular unit on video game design.

Remember the legal controversy over *The Wind Done Gone* (2001), the book in which events from *Gone With the Wind* are narrated from a slave's point of view? Was it a derivative piece that infringed the copyright of the original, or was it substantially a new work? Lauren Lewis and her colleagues discuss this and other cases to argue that authors of fan fiction, many of whom are adolescents "messing around" with fantasy and science fiction works by established authors, are engaging in an educational activity covered under the fair use provisions of copyright law.

Also in this issue is an article about a video game designed to encourage adolescent cancer patients to maintain their prescribed medication regimens. A team of experts, including epidemiologists, psychologists, biologists, physicians and nurses evaluate the impact of the game and collaborate with the game producers to suggest possible design changes. The new media section of the issue features the work of Alexandra Juhasz, a professor at the Claremont Colleges who taught a course on You Tube which was conducted almost entirely through that medium. Juhasz and many of her students finish the course feeling “underwhelmed.”

YouTube still awaits its own theorist of the banal, but the *International Journal of Learning and Media* is stimulating, provocative and topical, and shows significant promise as a source of ideas for new directions in research and practice. Subscriptions to the journal are available at <http://ijlm.net>. Current subscription prices are \$25 per year for individuals and \$125 for institutions.

MediaLit Moments

A Crash Course in Marketing

In this MediaLit Moment, your students will have the chance to explore the differences between social and commercial marketing campaigns for the same product, and also to investigate the motivations driving the organizers of each campaign.

Have students compare and contrast a public safety message about bicycle helmets and an advertisement for a popular helmet brand.

AHA! The people who made these videos want me to buy a bicycle helmet for very different reasons!

Key Question #5: Why is this message being sent?

Core Concept #5: Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Grade Level: 6-8

Materials: Computer with high speed internet access, data projector, projection screen

Public service announcement from the Brain Injury Association, accessed at: <http://www.biarni.org/bully.mpeg>

Giro bicycle helmet advertisement accessed at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTT9tr68V8E>

Activity: View the two videos with students. Start with the public service announcement. Since this video is only 30 seconds long, you may want to show it two to three times.

What is the message of this video? Ask students how they feel about the risks of riding a bicycle without a helmet after seeing the announcement. How high do they believe these risks are now that they've seen this PSA? Next, show the Giro advertisement to students. Since this video is only 30 seconds long, you may want to show this video two to three times as well.

Ask students questions about the message of this video. Does the commercial tell

viewers that they will be safer if they wear this helmet? Why--according to the commercial--should they buy a Giro helmet? How do they feel about buying a Giro helmet after seeing this commercial?

Ask students questions about technique:

Key Question #2: What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

Core Concept #2: Messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

How did each video attempt to get and keep their attention? How did each video attempt to persuade them to buy a helmet?

Next, ask students why each message was sent. Why do they think the Brain Injury Association decided to produce this PSA? Why did Giro decide to produce this commercial? In discussing the public service announcement, you may want to explain that non-profit organizations need to convince people that their organization addresses a serious social problem so that they have a better chance of attracting people and funding to their cause.

Ask students to write down a list of purposes for each video, and ask them to compare and contrast the answers they wrote down for each. Do Giro and BIA have any motivations in common?

Extended Activity:

This activity is adapted from one of the sample 8th grade activities from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills "Science Map," reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

Ask the students to apply what they've learned about the marketing of bicycle helmets to the task of product evaluation.

Now that students have seen videos which encourage them to perceive the benefits of bicycle helmets in different ways, ask them to objectively evaluate the product.

Begin with this question: Why should you buy a helmet?

Here are some questions for research:

What are the risks of injury for children and adults who ride a bicycle without a helmet?

How effective are bicycle helmets in reducing these risks?

If your state requires cyclists to wear helmets, have these laws reduced the number of head injuries among cyclists?

Are some helmets more effective than others in reducing the risk of injury?

If yes, what makes these helmets more effective? Design? Materials?

What brand or model of helmet do they recommend? Why?

The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy's MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, © 2002-2009, Center for Media Literacy, <http://www.medialit.com>