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Media Literacy in Practice:

Applying Invitational Rhetoric to the Inquiry Approach

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Abstract

Media literacy, a movement in K-12 education, has been practiced by educators using either an inoculation or inquiry approach. Of these two, the inquiry approach seems the most effective way to teach media literacy. However, teachers using this approach lack a standpoint in approaching the classroom. Invitational rhetoric is offered as such a standpoint in teaching media literacy. Invitational rhetoric provides a way for teachers to create an environment grounded in safety, equality, freedom, and value, where students and teachers are encouraged to share diverse perspectives, and where inquiry rather than persuasion are encouraged.

Key words: media literacy, invitational rhetoric, inoculation, inquiry

Media literacy is a movement in education to include teaching standards for media criticism and production that has increased in strength over the years. As with any emerging field, media literacy struggles with being defined, implemented, and taught in different ways. The two main approaches of inoculation (protectionist) and inquiry (empowerment) direct how educators will teach media literacy, what curriculum they will develop or choose and how they will interact with students in the classroom. Although the inquiry approach seems the more promising means to teach media literacy, this approach lacks a standpoint for educators to use in the classroom. Invitational rhetoric is offered as such a standpoint for applied communication theory that will enhance the inquiry approach in teaching media literacy. The author argues that invitational rhetoric provides a valuable standpoint for teaching for media literacy. In this essay, media literacy is first described. Then, the author explains the inoculation and inquiry approaches that educators have been using; siding with the inquiry approach. It is argued that invitational rhetoric as standpoint for teaching through the inquiry approach is an effective way of teaching media literacy. Invitational rhetoric is defined and connected to the practice of media literacy education. Finally, limitations and recommendations for future research are shared.

Media Literacy

Media literacy is an "umbrella concept" that encompasses different educational principles, philosophies, theories, methods, and goals, and advocates define it in a multitude of ways (Hobbs, 1998; Kubey, 1998; Zettl, 1998). The diversity of perspectives can be seen as both a strength and weakness for the movement (Hobbs, 1998). A strength is that the field is open to new possibilities and innovation while

establishing its roots. A weakness is that people have various and in some cases dissimilar notions about what media literacy is and how it should be practiced. The most widely used definition of media literacy, however, emerged from the participants of the 1992 National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy, who defined the concept as the ability "to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of forms" (Aufderheide, 1993, p. xx) and affirmed that "a media literate person . . . can decode, analyze, and produce both print and electronic media" (Aufderheide, 1997, p. 79). Based on models from British, Australian, and Canadian educators, they agreed that media literacy should include the following concepts:

1. media messages are constructed;

2. media messages are produced within economic, social, political, historical and aesthetic contexts;

3. the interpretative meaning-making processes involved in message reception consist of an interaction between the reader, the text and the culture;

4. media have unique "languages," characteristics which typify various forms, genres and symbol systems of communication;

5. media representations play a role in people's understanding of social reality.

(Aufderheide, 1993, p. 2)

Variations of these concepts have been adopted by organizations such as the Center for Media Literacy, the Alliance for a Media Literate America, and the National Telemedia Council (Considine, 2002). In very basic terms, then, media literacy is "asking questions about what you watch, see, and read (Hobbs, 2001, p. 5).

The movement of media literacy education has been growing for over 30 years

(Kubey, 1998, 2004) and substantial progress and implementation has been made in the past 15 years abroad in English speaking countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia (see Alvardo & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, for review).   Media literacy education has been established for all or part of K-12 education in these countries (Buckingham, 1998; Considine, 2002; Galician, 2004a; Kubey, 1998, 2004).   Unfortunately, the United States lacks a standardized nationwide implementation of media literacy education. Kubey & Baker (1999), who examined the educational frameworks for all 50 states, found that all state curricular frameworks include some requirement for media education in various subjects (health, language arts, social studies, history, and civics), however; they do not uniformly use the term *media literacy*.   State standards are vague and inconsistent, and they do not necessitate implementation, quality, or systematic assessment (Considine; Kubey, 2004; Thoman & Jolls, 2004).   The National Communication Association (NCA) (1996) is the only organization to attempt a national certified standardization of media literacy education.   Of the NCA's 23 standards presented for K-12 education, two (standard 22 and 23) apply to media literacy (Christ & Potter, 1998).   Thus, the implementation of media literacy has lacked coherence because media literacy standards may have to begin from the micro level to the macro level, as Hobbs (1998) found that most educators are not part of a systematic, district-wide implementation, but a grass roots effort.

Media literacy in the future of K-12 schools may be based more on state than national standards, especially because the United States lacks national-level governmental agencies or organizations that may advocate media literacy (Goulden, 1998; Hobbs, 1998).   For instance, media literacy in the United Kingdom has been

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widely influenced by the British Film Institute, which has developed standards, curricula, and trained teachers (Buckingham, 2003; Considine, 2002). Although there has been some progress in media literacy education for certain states such as New Mexico, North Carolina, Florida, Texas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Utah, California, and Wisconsin (Considine; Hobbs, 2004; Kubey, 1998), and through outreach organizations such as the New Mexico Media Literacy Project, implementation has been varied. However, of this implementation, two main approaches to media literacy have developed: the inoculation approach and the inquiry approach.

<div align="center">Inoculation and Critical Approaches</div>

Typically media literacy educators originate from either the inoculation or critical approach, for both emerge from different worldviews about the role of media in students' lives. Currently, scholars are developing models and theories for media literacy (see Brown et al. 2004; Galician, 2004b; Meyrowitz, 1998; Pailliotet et al., 2000; Potter, 2004; Zettl, 1998), but there lacks a single, agreed upon theoretical foundation. Theoretical frameworks to media are influenced by the "direct stimulus-response (hypodermic needle effect); uses and gratifications (what people do with the media); cultivation theory, cultural studies, and semiotics (symbols, images, myths); and Marxist theory (hegemony and ideology as driving forces in the media)," each of which fall under either an inoculation or inquiry approach (Brown, 1998, p. 46). Stimulus-response, uses and gratifications, and some parts of cultivation theory have influenced the inoculation approach, while cultural studies/semiotics, Marxist theory, and aspects of cultivation theory have influenced the inquiry approach. Whereas the inoculation approach is seen as protecting students from the harmful impact of the media, the inquiry approach sees

students as active agents in constructing the meaning of media in their lives. The following explanations are condensed to provide an overview, however, each approach involves a wide variety of means and methods that will not be covered.

Inoculation Approach

The inoculation approach, which seeks to protect youth against the negative impact of media, sees media literacy as the "solution" to the "problem" of media, as Brown et al. (2004) notes, "Inoculation perspective advocates seek to protect young people from 'unhealthy' media messages by teaching them how to regulate their own media consumption and 'deconstruct' media texts by identifying intended and unintended meanings" (p. 250). This approach is unique to the United States, where "many critics, public health officials, and scholars have identified media exposure as a risk factor and media literacy as a protective factor" (Hobbs, 1998, p. 19), whereas media literacy models in Europe do not take this approach (Buckingham, 2003). The inoculation approach, then, is intertwined with concerns for the health of young people.

Governmental and health agencies have been the strongest advocates of the inoculation approach. For instance, in 1995 the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1995) advocated that media literacy "may help protect young adolescents against strong advertising pressures to smoke, drink, have sex or eat unhealthy foods" (p. 118). The federal government got on the bandwagon, and in 1998 a conference of 400 media practitioners, educators, and public health officials met at the first National Media Education Conference under the theme, "Media Education: A Paradigm for Public Health." Out of this conference grew the Partnership for Media Education (PME), which later evolved into the Alliance for a Media Literate America (ALMA), the leading

organizations advocating media literacy today. In 2001 the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy brought together leading health educators and media literacy experts to identify guidelines for media literacy and drug abuse prevention initiatives (Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2001). The goals that came from this conference were to support media literacy and health practitioners, educate key decision-makers, and to make research in the effectiveness of media literacy and health interventions a priority (Center for Media Studies, 2001). A year later in 2002, the White House released a policy statement in support of media literacy education in teaching youth about drugs and alcohol.

In addition, in 1997 the American Academy of Pediatrics (an organization of pediatricians) created a "Media Matters" campaign that provided educational resources for doctors and parents to become aware of the influence that media have on child development. They focused on the potential negative impact of media representations of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, aggression and violence, sex and sexual exploitation, obesity, and poor nutrition, advocating radical measures such as children under two should not watch television (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2005). Thus, primarily the federal government, health organizations, and health advocates approached media literacy with a protectionist stance—to inoculate adolescents against unhealthy media messages.

Although this approach is popular, it has been criticized. For instance, it assumes that media effects are strong and unidirectional, which devalues the agency of the student, puts the teacher in a "savior" position, and ignores other sociohistorical and cultural contexts (Buckingham, 2003, 2005). The classroom, then, becomes instructor-

focused, "where the teacher tells the student the 'facts' about media's negative influence about the manipulation of messages" and the instructor becomes the all-knowing expert (Hobbs, 1998, p. 19). The result is "essentially a Puritan approach in which children are viewed as inherently weak and prone to sin, and the goal of education is to save kids from themselves" (Rogow, 2005, p. 284). The inoculation approach is often used as a rhetorical device to convince parents, community members, and educators of the importance of media literacy in schools, and is more likely to secure funding in the United States (Kubey, 1998). However, its teaching methods are often ineffective (Hobbs, 1998) and it highlights the teacher's authority and "positive justification of their own power" (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994, p. 126). Therefore, the inoculation approach is not advocated in this paper and does not connect well to the use of invitational rhetoric as teaching practice.

Inquiry Approach

The inquiry approach sees the media as a significant part of people's lives that needs to be examined and understood, but that is not necessarily negative or harmful. (This particular label of "inquiry approach" is not widely used, but for the purpose of this paper and seeks to encompass similar approaches that fall into this realm). The inquiry approach involves asking questions about and learning to "read" media to understand its "many layers of messages" (Thoman & Jolls, 2005a, p. 188). It is usually understood as combining analytical (deconstruction) skills of media texts with creative (production) skills, blending theory and application (Thoman & Jolls, 2005a). In the United States, critical inquiry for media literacy pedagogy is becoming more advocated than the inoculation approach (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Brown et al., 2004; Davies, 1996;

Hobbs, 1998; Kellner & Share, 2005; Pailliotet et al., 2000; Rogow, 2004; Semali & Hammett, 1999; Silverblatt, 2004; Thoman & Jolls, 2004; Tyner, 1998).   Listed under many headings, such as "critical autonomy" (Masterman, 1985); "liberation perspective" (Brown et al., 2004); "empowerment education" (Bergsma, 2004); and the "empowerment spiral" (Thoman & Jolls, 2005a), the inquiry approach was influenced by the educational philosophies of Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, and John Dewey.   Goals of the inquiry approach to media literacy include empowering students to become critical media consumers, make more thoughtful life choices, and even become more active citizens in democratic society (Alvermann, 2004; Brown, 1998; Lewis & Jhally, 1998; Semali & Hammett).   The focus on "inquiry" is for teachers and students to "learn to raise the right questions about what you are watching, reading, or listening to" (Thoman & Jolls, 2005a, p. 190).

The inquiry approach requires teachers to adopt a model of inquiry themselves. Thoman and Jolls (2004; 2005a, 2005b) have provided models and processes for the inquiry approach, such as the empowerment spiral.   The empowerment spiral is four steps that can be used to design lesson plans for teachers and to outline teaching progression of media literacy.   The steps consist of 1) creating awareness in students; 2) analyzing media messages, texts, institutions, or contexts; 3) reflecting on the information and judging on its implications; and 4) coming up with a plan to take action regarding the issue, which often includes media production activities (Thoman & Jolls, 2005a).   They claim that "teachers or leaders who use these four steps to design lesson plans or organize group activities will find the Empowerment Spiral a powerful matrix that transforms both learning and teaching (Thoman & Jolls, 2005a, p. 198).   They also recommend teachers

use the five key questions of media literacy as a guideline for teaching, particularly when examining media texts (Thoman & Jolls, 2005b).   These questions are 1) Who created this message; 2) What creative techniques are used to attract my attention; 3) How might different people understand this message differently than me; 4) What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message; and 5) Why is this message being sent?   Rogow (2005) has also offered questions for educators to keep themselves in check when evaluating their lessons.   These questions include:

1.   Am I trying to tell the students what the message is, or am I giving students the skills to determine what they think the message(s) might be?

2.   Have I let students know that I am open to accepting their interpretation, as long as it is well sustained, or have I conveyed the message that my interpretation is the only correct view?

3.   At the end of this lesson, are students likely to be more analytical or more cynical? (p. 285)

Although these guidelines provide check-point lists that teachers can use for lesson plans and to help them stay open minded, teachers lack a standpoint in practicing media literacy; a means of approaching the classroom to teach through the inquiry approach. Therefore, invitational rhetoric is offered as a standpoint teachers can use in media literacy education.   Teachers need one overarching standpoint to start from, particularly because "few teachers are initially trained in media education; and they therefore tend to approach it from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, and with diverse motivations" (Buckingham, 2003, p. 6).

Invitational rhetoric is a way of communicating that can create an environment

where multiple perspectives are shared and celebrated, diversity embraced, and a safe learning environment is created. Advocating a means for educators to approach media literacy will help curriculum designers, teachers, students, and advocates to work from the same standpoint in designing inquiry approach theory, methods, and curriculum. Using invitational rhetoric values students' voices and experiences and promotes open dialogue about media literacy.

<center>Applying Invitational Rhetoric</center>

Media literacy and rhetoric studies do not normally cross paths, but invitational rhetoric is a way to apply communication theory to enlighten media literacy practice. The term "rhetoric" can be equated with communication, and because invitational rhetoric is a way of communicating with an audience, and teaching is a type of communication, it can easily apply to the practice of teaching media literacy (S. Foss, personal communication, April 3, 2006). Invitational rhetoric is "an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self determination" (Foss & Griffin, 1995, p. 5). In invitational rhetoric, communication involves an invitation or "offering" of a perspective in a way that promotes greater understanding of that perspective rather than persuasion to change (Foss & Griffin). Because the goal is understanding rather than change, a "nonhierarchal, nonjudgemental, nonadversarial framework [is] established for the interaction, an understanding of the participants themselves occurs, an understanding that engenders appreciation, value, and a sense of equality" (Foss & Griffin, p. 5).

Before delving into the tenets of invitational rhetoric and connecting it to the inquiry approach, it is beneficial to compare five different modes of rhetoric (invitational

is one) that can be viewed as along a spectrum: conquest, conversion, benevolent, advisory, and invitational (Foss & Foss, 2003). First of all, conquest rhetoric is a type of interaction where making one's claim the best one and winning an argument is the goal. It is most common in U.S. political, legislative, and judicial culture (Foss & Foss). Next, conversion rhetoric is most closely aligned with persuasion, and it is designed to "convince others of the rightness or superiority of a perspective," as in advertising, marketing, and sales, for instance (Foss & Foss, p.5). Further down the spectrum is benevolent rhetoric, a way of communicating from a concern for the audience's well being where the goal is to make their lives better. Fourth, advisory rhetoric is a mode of communication that "provide[s] requested assistance" (Foss & Foss, p. 6) where the audience is interested in learning and growing, as in educational or counseling contexts. Finally, invitational rhetoric is a type of communication that is an invitation to understanding; an offering to "invite your audience members to see the world as you do and to consider your perspective seriously" (Foss & Foss, p. 7). Whereas conquest rhetoric is on one end of the spectrum, invitational rhetoric is on the opposite end. Although Foss & Foss claim that invitational rhetoric is not suitable for every communication context, and that persuasion is sometimes necessary, they see conquest and conversion modes as needlessly overused in our society, creating an adversarial, argumentative framing of the world and limiting a greater understanding of others' perspectives.

The foundation of invitational rhetoric derives from principles of feminist theory. Foss & Griffin (1995) challenge the traditional notion that rhetoric is equated with persuasion because "Embedded in efforts to change others is a desire for control and

domination," thus "rhetors [communicators] who convince others to adopt their viewpoints exert control over part of those other's lives" (Foss & Griffin, p. 3). Foss and Griffin claim that understanding rhetoric as persuasion suggests a patriarchal bias assuming power over others. The act of trying to change others not only exerts power over them, but "devalues the lives and perspectives of those others" (Foss & Griffin, p. 3). Accordingly, they propose communication rooted in feminist principles that seek to eliminate relationships of dominance and elitism.

The three main tenets of invitational rhetoric are 1) It is rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination; 2) it consists of offering perspectives through a willingness to yield; and 3) it seeks to create external conditions of safety, value, and freedom. Each of these three sections will be elaborated on and connected to the practice of teaching media literacy. Within each section, the author will address possible limitations and introduce ways in which to deal with those limitations.

Equality, Immanent Value, Self-Determination

The first main tenet of invitational rhetoric draws from principles of feminist theory that highlights equality, immanent value, and self-determination among the participants in communication interactions (Foss & Griffin, 1995). Equality means creating relationships of mutual respect, support, and camaraderie. Immanent value refers to every person as unique and a "necessary part of the pattern of the universe" (Foss & Griffin, p. 4). Self-determination is allowing autonomy in others' choice of beliefs and life choices. These three principles can be practiced by entering interactions with students on common ground by equalizing their perspectives, knowledge, and experience with media.

Studying mass media comes from a unique starting point of "the great equalizer" because of the nature of the media themselves:

> the media equalized teacher and pupils.   Both were equally and equal objects of the media's address.   Furthermore, the media tended to communicate laterally, rather than hierarchally.   They speak across, rather than down to their audiences addressing them, for the most part, in familiar and homely terms.   Contrary to popular belief, the media did not encourage passivity.   Teaching, because of its predominantly hierarchal model, did that far more effectively.   (Masterman, 2001, p. 44)

In this quote, Masterman notes that hierarchal and authoritative teaching models do not mesh with teaching media literacy.   Teaching media literacy, then, necessitates breaking down the hierarchal teaching model and originating from a student-centered perspective (Thoman & Jolls, 2005a).   Because most students are so familiar with the media, it establishes a "common ground" for them (Crockett, 2005, p. 272), and teachers must enter this common ground by letting go of their power and authority to a stance of equality, inquiry, investigation, and genuinely valuing student perspectives.

Thus, teaching media literacy requires a style that is nonhierarchal and democratic (Masterman, 1980, 2001) where the identities of students, their background experience, and their knowledge must be valued alongside the identity, background, and knowledge of the teacher (Brown, 1998).   Students are, in a sense, "media experts" and it is "crucial that teachers come to recognize, and to validate, the knowledge students already have" (Buckingham, 1990, p. 216).   Thus, teachers should start from a student-centered perspective, beginning from what knowledge students have, and they should

acknowledge that their experiences and interpretations of media will be different, yet no more valuable than their students' experience with the media. Oftentimes teachers approach young people's understanding of media and popular culture with contempt, or value certain students' experiences more than others. Moje and MuQaribu (2003) problematize this approach:

> What happens if we dismiss students' identities, interactions, and experiences without understanding them; label students as 'bad' or 'troubled': pretend that they do not exist; or hope that they will go away if we ignore them? If we do that, while at the same time accepting other identities and experiences as valid or appropriate, we send messages to youth about whose identities count and about how youth should present themselves to their teachers and other adults. (p. 207)

They recommend that teachers "discuss these identities in respectful and thoughtful ways with one another" and encourage the range of identities and experience to be valued and shared (Moje & MuQaribu). Acknowledging equality, immanent value, and self-determination, then, is a way for teachers to successfully encourage the inquiry approach.

One limitation of this tenet of invitational rhetoric is how this approach is possible in an educational setting where the teachers have certain power and authority over students. For instance, Buckingham (1990) notes, "such power relationships are inherent in classrooms, and cannot simply be abolished. We cannot hope to create 'natural' spaces in which students can 'say what they really think'" (p. 225). It is true that due to the nature of the student teacher relationship, a teacher's power cannot be completely eliminated. However, it can be subdued and negotiated through a teacher's strive to start on common ground, to enter the interaction as equally as possible by

recognizing the immanent value of students' perspectives, to recognize students' self-determination, and to understand that their perspective is as valuable as the students'. What is important is that students are aware that they are participating in an interaction where their knowledge, opinions, and experience of the media just as important as other students and the teacher. Using invitational rhetoric, teachers approach interactions in a "teacher as learner" mindset, where education is "an exploration for both students and teachers" and where "the best preparation is simply an inquiring mind and a willingness to answer a student's question with 'I don't know. How could we find out?" (Thoman & Jolls, 2005a, p. 200).

Offering Perspectives

The second tenet of invitational rhetoric, offering perspectives, means presenting viewpoints, opinions, and beliefs by explaining them for the purpose of fullest understanding, but not necessarily for the purpose of advocating support or acceptance (Foss & Griffin). By offering perspectives without seeking agreement, teachers model and encourage their students to explain how they know what they know rather than "marshalling evidence to establish their superiority" (Foss & Griffin, p. 8). Teachers must be willing, then, to let go of the idea that students will agree with their perspectives, and yet also be open to learn from student perspectives. Foss & Griffin call this process "willingness to yield" which is a "willingness to call into question the beliefs they consider most inviolate and relax their grip on those beliefs" (p. 7). Ideas and beliefs are exchanged in the classroom as "valuable yet also tentative" and as a "work in progress" (Foss & Griffin, p. 8).

Too often, because they work in realm of standardized tests and memorized

answers, teachers will ask for students to share their perspectives, interpretations, or to answer questions, all the while looking for predetermined "right" answers (Buckingham, 2003; Masterman, 2001; Rogow, 2005). Or teachers may offer their perspectives that make known to their students their preferences and ideology, which students become savvy to affirm, even if they disagree. This is not what offering perspectives entails— teachers should not seek to uphold their interpretations, beliefs, and perspectives or a hidden agenda in media literacy education. Rogow (2005) explains that this does not mean teachers should not offer their own perspectives, for

> Certainly educators need to be able to share their own perspectives. However, media literacy education that *begins* by or is limited to the presentation of our own (or anyone else's) analysis of media—especially if we imply, either subtly or overtly that our view is the 'correct' interpretation—undermines our ability to teach skills. (p. 285)

Teachers are free to offer their perspectives but without seeking agreement with those perspectives. A teacher's goal is to offer students tools of inquiry to think for themselves, and "how can you [teacher] teach students to think for themselves if you already have predetermined the message?" (Rogow, 2005, p. 285).

Media literacy educators, then, should offer their perspectives by encouraging the utmost understanding of those perspectives, but also to encourage students to share their viewpoints as well. Teachers (and other students) should ask questions in order to better understand others' perspectives, but not to prove wrong or take sides, for teachers

> need to be sensitive to the ways in which social differences (of class, ethnicity, gender and age) shape our experiences of the media; and we should beware of

assuming that we know what the emotional and ideological significance of any

media text might be for anyone else.   (Buckingham, 2003, p. 121)

Encouraging the offering of perspectives is a great opportunity for teachers to emphasize

the first tenet of invitational rhetoric (equality, immanent value, and self-determination)

in the classroom.   When given the chance to offer their perspectives, students are

excited to share information about media—a subject they know very well—and students

who normally do not participate often are inclined to do so (Hobbs, 2001).   Students can

become so interested and engaged because they see a real-life component of media

literacy and feel a higher level of involvement (Crockett, 2005).

There can be limitations, however, in offering perspectives in an invitational way.

For instance, offering viewpoints that may be rejected by students puts teachers in a

vulnerable position from the all-knowing one to the indeterminate one, and some students

who rely on teacher-as-authority may resist.   There is a balance, then, between offering

perspectives and offering necessary knowledge as tools for inquiry.   Using invitational

rhetoric does not mean that facts or erroneous beliefs are negotiable, but more so

interpretations and attitudes are.   Buckingham (1990) notes that students need to be

provided foundational knowledge about media messages, institutions, and contexts so

they have the proper groundwork in order to move toward inquiry:

We do not want simply to leave students where they are, or to enable them to

express what they already know, but to give them access to different discourses, to

new and hopefully productive ways of making sense of their own experience of

the media.   (p. 216)

The goal of offering perspectives in the inquiry approach is not to maintain current

perspectives, but to be able to explain them clearly, and a result may be to question them and perhaps move beyond them. If students' voices are heard and their perspectives are valued from the start, it is easier for them to grow and change (rather than tenaciously hold on to their beliefs), and "the key is being an active viewer; once children are active, they become more skeptical. . . .they begin asking questions. . .[and] become oriented toward constructing their own meaning" (Potter, 2004, p. 251). Offering perspectives through the means of invitational rhetoric, then, is a starting point in validating what students know and celebrating their perspectives, with a hope that they will eventually question and increasingly grow into new perspectives (Buckingham, 1990).

Another limitation of invitational rhetoric's offering perspectives is the inclusion of popular culture, which some teachers might see as including "low" culture in the classroom. Popular culture is something that teachers may ignore or deem unworthy of study. However, popular media texts are pervasive in students' lives and important to their identities. It is important to encourage students to share their experiences, which probably will involve popular culture (Hobbs, 2001; Pailliotet, 2003). Teachers must become flexible and open to media texts that their students find interesting, as Masterman (1980) suggests, "The students' own interests and preferences ought certainly to be given due weight, as should programmes [*sic*], articles, and issues which emerge as matters of topical concern amongst the group" (p. 102-103). One solution, in addition to allowing students' to discuss and analyze popular texts in the classroom, is for teachers to bring in popular culture texts from the time period when they were their students' ages as a way to connect with them, offer perspectives, and bridge dialogue across generations.

One final limitation is that while offering perspectives without criticism is

beneficial, how do teachers deal with viewpoints that can be seen as hateful, hurtful, or problematic?   Should these be given the same value as other perspectives?   Moje and MuQaribu (2003) address this topic as when must teachers deal with students' sexual identity.   They recommend that teachers must be better trained to talk with students about many different aspects of identity and to address views that could be problematic in non-judgmental or non-threatening ways.   Invitational rhetoric would not advocate that teachers express disapproval of any student perspective.   Of course, there is a tension teachers must face in enforcing boundaries if a student is truly hateful and hurtful in the classroom.   In this situation the teacher would have to shift out of invitational mode. But if possible, maintaining an invitational environment is encouraged, as the next section describes.

External Conditions (Safety, Value, Freedom)

The creation of external conditions of safety, value, and freedom is the third tenet of invitational rhetoric (Foss & Griffin, 1995).   Just as bringing fresh flowers into a dull room can brighten it up, creating these conditions in a classroom can change the nature of the interaction.   To begin with the concept of safety, "creating a feeling of security and freedom from danger for the audience," teachers aim to create an environment where students' voices are deemed important and where they are encouraged to share their perspectives (Foss & Griffin, p. 10).   Safety can be established by setting ground rules for classroom interactions, encouraging a variety of voices to be heard, and   "allowing space for the 'personal'—for students (and teachers) to share their subjective interpretations, feelings and responses, and to describe and reflect upon their everyday experiences of the media outside the classroom" (Buckingham, 2003, p. 120-121).   The

notion of safety is in opposition to the claim that getting students out of their comfort zones is necessary when teaching media literacy (Hobbs, in press). Quite the opposite, when students feel safe, they are more likely to be open to new perspectives and change (Foss & Foss, 2003).

A second element of external conditions is value, an "acknowledgement that audience members have intrinsic or immanent worth" and where "their identities are not forced upon or chosen for them by rhetors [teachers]" (Foss & Griffin, 1995, p. 11). In part, value was emphasized in the nonjudgmental, nonhierarchal, nonadversarial principles of the previous two tenets of invitational rhetoric. Nevertheless, it is important to stress the importance of value in acknowledging students' perspectives and teaching students to value the perspectives of others. For instance, Rogow (2005) offers the question, "How do we convey respect to students if our subtle message is, 'you are too naïve (or young or dumb) to know this for yourself so I am going to clue you in'?" (p. 284) to emphasize the unsafe kind of atmosphere created when a teacher does not value students' knowledge and perspectives. Genuinely valuing students' identity, knowledge, experience, and perspectives instills in them a sense of empowerment and agency rather than cynicism and restraint. If they interact in a safe, inclusive environment where their perspectives are valued, they are more likely to be open to change.

Lastly, a third element of external conditions is freedom, "the power to choose or decide" (Foss & Griffin, 1995, p. 12). Freedom involves a respect that the audience might not choose to agree with the communicator's perspectives and "the audience has the freedom to make choices without the possibility of losing respect of the rhetor [teacher]" (Foss & Griffin, p. 13). There is no claim of "right" or "wrong" to students—

they are free to choose the perspectives that make the most sense to them. Invitational rhetoric assumes that diverse perspectives are resources because "the more diverse voices that are added to the conversation, the more opportunities you have for understanding" (Foss & Foss, 2003, p. 12). There is no pressure, then, for teachers to try to convince students to change or persuade them to think differently. Through invitational rhetoric and the process of inquiry,

> Teachers might productively *use* students' subjective judgments about the media, and their accounts of their everyday media experiences, as a valuable resource for further discussion and analysis. In addition to sharing and comparing their own responses, students can also gather those of others, and reflect on the differences between them. In the process, they might come to understand the social basis of all such judgments, including their own; and to recognize the ways in which media use is inevitably embedded within everyday routines and practices. (Buckingham, 2003, p. 146-147)

Another means to encourage freedom is by incorporating media production skills into the classroom. Media production allows students to be creative and explore media issues in ways that can be more playful than classroom discussion. Freedom respects students in that it allows them to choose the perspective that makes the most sense to them, and in invitational rhetoric, this is perfectly acceptable because change is seen as self-chosen: "change happens when people choose to change themselves" (Foss & Foss, p. 13). Whereas the end result may not necessarily be change, the safety, value, and freedom established in the environment provides the conditions for change to happen.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

To conclude, using the three main tenets of invitational rhetoric partnered with the inquiry approach provides a unique standpoint for media literacy education. Media literacy teachers should approach their classroom in an invitational way in order to foster a safe environment where understanding is the purpose of communication, diverse perspectives are encouraged, and where the "nonjudgmental and nonadversarial framework established for the interaction, a greater understanding of the participants themselves can occur" (Foss & Foss, 2003, p. 7).

However, some limitations of invitational rhetoric were addressed. One pattern in the limitations is regarding power relationships. For invitational rhetoric to happen, people in the interaction—teachers and students—must be on equal ground. However, this may not be completely possible because the role of the teacher warrants an authority that students do not have. Is power something that can never be neutralized? Are power relationships lessened, for instance, with adult students compared to youth who may require power use by the teacher through discipline and authority? These questions suggest the need for future research on how power functions in the classroom, how power functions in invitational rhetoric, and furthermore, how status, gender, race, class, and age, for instance, change power in relationships between student and teacher. Another limitation is that invitational rhetoric may be too ideal. An interaction where equality is established, all perspectives are shared and valued, and where change is self-chosen seems great—but is it really possible? What if students do not want to engage in an invitational way? How can teachers teach students to use invitational rhetoric? It is important, then, that teachers and students start practicing invitational rhetoric to see what challenges (or eases) they may face.

These limitations offer signs for future research on how invitational rhetoric can be used in the media literacy classroom. Research could explore the advantages and disadvantages in using invitational rhetoric, the challenges teachers face incorporating invitational rhetoric into the inquiry approach, and the benefits or limitations of such an approach. Student reactions to invitational rhetoric, whether they felt engaged in learning media literacy, and if they improved their critical questioning skills, could be examined. It would also be helpful to know what types of lesson plans or curriculum are conducive to invitational rhetoric, and how teachers put it into practice.

In closing, invitational rhetoric encourages an inclusive, engaging environment for educating students in media literacy, but it also helps teachers to learn and grow. It is important that teachers are willing to stay open to learn, to question both students and themselves, and to grow alongside students (Buckingham, 2003; Goodman, 2003). Invitational rhetoric helps teachers do these things—and better teachers means better media literacy education.

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