CONNECT!ONS Med!aLit moments

Leadership Letter for Global MIL

Empowerment: From Theory to Practice to Activism

In an inspiring essay entitled "The Enlightenment is Working," Steven Pinker wrote in the Feb. 18, 2018 *Wall Street Journal*:

> *"Our ancestors replaced dogma, tradition and authority with reason, debate and institutions of truth-seeking. They replaced superstition and magic with science. And they shifted their values from the glory of the tribe, nation, race, class or faith toward universal human flourishing…*
> *"As people are getting healthier, richer, safer and freer, they are also becoming more knowledgeable and smarter. Two centuries ago, 12% of the world could read and write; today 85% can. Literacy and education will soon be universal, for girls as well as for boys. The schooling, together with health and wealth, is literally making us smarter—by 30 IQ points, or two standard deviations above our ancestors."*

Media literacy is literacy for the 21st century, yet it is rooted in the principles of the Enlightenment. In the media literacy field, people of all backgrounds, from all geographic regions, have joined together to create a global movement dedicated to the proposition that all people are entitled to acquire the media literacy knowledge and skills necessary to be able to effectively represent themselves – and to "see" how the world is represented to them, as well, online and off. Media literacy touches the head and the heart through critical thinking and communication, collaboration and creativity. How these processes combine leads to empowerment through education for everyone.

But the importance of media literacy being grounded in theories that are supported through science – through evaluation of the effectiveness of media literacy implementation programs – cannot be overstated. Fortunately, the media literacy field features a respectable research base that has accumulated through the years, with outstanding researchers and practitioners contributing to an understanding of how the theories behind media literacy translate into pedagogical practices, which then inform the decision-making of those who use their media literacy knowledge to take action (or not).

Len Masterman, a UK professor who helped introduce the field of media education to the world in the 1980s, wrote "18 Basic Principles" in 1989 that delineate how the ideas behind media literacy can be put into practice through a sound pedagogy. These 18 principles stand today, and provide guidelines that emphasize how media literacy is NOT about having "the answers," but instead provides a process of inquiry for interrogating any media in any form: http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/media-awareness-education-eighteen-basic-principles

Today, the media literacy field is fortunate to have its own research-oriented journals: the Journal of Media Literacy, long published by the National Telemedia Council; the Journal of Media Literacy Education, published through the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE); and the MILID Yearbook, a collaboration between UNESCO, UNITWIN Cooperation Programme on MIL and Intercultural Dialogue, UNAOC and GAPMIL. Other academic journals have published numerous media literacy studies and articles addressing issues in health, civics, the arts, education, journalism and communications.

The need for developing new ideas about media literacy, and then turning those ideas into

practical pedagogies and applications, is an essential role for media literacy organizations and practitioners. Teachers, parents and activists need accessible tools for igniting media literacy in their homes, classrooms and communities. The quest for improved understanding about how the media work as a system, for improved pedagogical strategies and for putting this understanding into action in everyday life is ongoing and indeed, exciting.

In this issue of *Connections*, we are pleased to illustrate how theory, practice and activism work together through current research and implementation programs being conducted at the University of Southern California (USC). We feature a dialogue between Henry Jenkins and Tessa Jolls, CML's Director. Henry Jenkins is a leading new media scholar and Provost Professor of Communication, Journalism, and Cinematic Arts, a joint professorship at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism and the USC School of Cinematic Arts. He also has a joint faculty appointment with the USC Rossier School of Education. Previously, Jenkins was the Peter de Florez Professor of Humanities as well as co-founder and co-director (with William Uricchio) of the Comparative Media Studies program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

And we provide some insights into how theory and research can lead to activism through an interview with Sangita Shreshtova, who leads the Civic Imagination Project, an outgrowth of Henry Jenkins' work around civic participation and participatory politics. Our MediaLit Moments activity uses the CML Empowerment Spiral to guide students through the process of evaluating and reflecting upon their social media use.

Interview Highlights

Why Explore the Work of David Bordwell?
Thinking about a deep thinker…

David Bordwell *(born July 23, 1947) is an American film theorist and film historian. Since receiving his PhD from the University of Iowa in 1974, he has written more than fifteen volumes on the subject of cinema including Narration in the Fiction Film (1985), Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema (1988), Making Meaning (1989), and On the History of Film Style (1997). His most recent books are: Reinventing Hollywood: How 1940s Filmmakers Changed Movie Storytelling (2017) and The Rhapsodies: How 1940s Critics Changed American Culture (2016). Bordwell spent nearly the entirety of his career as a professor of film at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he is currently the Jacques Ledoux Professor of Film Studies, Emeritus in the Department of Communication Arts.*

This series of exchanges is inspired by [Henry Jenkins'](#) wish to acknowledge David Bordwell as a leading influence on his own career and thinking. Tessa Jolls joined Henry in a dialogue to understand Bordwell's impact and to make connections about his work to media literacy education.

Henry Jenkins: Renee Hobbs had asked me to contribute an essay for her recent anthology, *Exploring the Roots of Digital and Media Literacy through Personal Narrative*, where I wrote about my relationship with my mentor, John Fiske, and explained how his work had touched indirectly our project for the Digital Media and Learning initiative. Along the way, I ended up writing about Fiske's mentor, Raymond Williams, as well as my own grandfather.

But the account felt incomplete to me because I did not write about my other key mentor in graduate school, David Bordwell. As I do media literacy work, or indeed, any scholarship, I find myself trying to reconcile the voice of these two intellectuals, who rarely got asked to serve on the same dissertation committees because their focuses were so different from each other. Fiske came from Cultural Studies, Bordwell from Cinema Studies. Even so, there are really two Bordwells, both of which have something to contribute to this field.

The first is a formalist, someone who is interested in mapping how cinema works as a medium and the ways that films reflect the different aesthetic traditions from which they emerged. This Bordwell co-authored Film Art, one of the most widely used textbooks for introductory film, with his wife and writing partner, Kristen Thompson, and they have continued to update the book, generating rich reflections on contemporary and historical film topics through their blog. The other David Bordwell is a cognitivist -- that is, he has drawn insights from cognitive psychology to help us to better understand the mental processes by which we perceive and interpret cinematic images. The cognitive movement in cinema studies was a response to strands of media theory which saw spectators as in the thrawl of media texts, as susceptible to their ideological messages; this work was often informed by psychoanalysis, seeing cinema as reflecting the scopophilic desire (the desire to look and possess others with your eyes.) In some ways, a more grassroots version of these ideas helped to shape the more protectionist side of Media Literacy, and so, for those of us looking for a more empowered view of the spectator, Bordwell's "A Case for Cognitivism" may be a good place to start.

Here's a quote from *A Case for Cognitivism*: "My concern is to show that the cognitivist approach, apart from its propensity for naturalistic explanation, shares with contemporary film

theory a commitment to *constructivist* explanations, in terms of *mental representations* functioning in the context of *social action.*" This statement certainly puts an explanation behind much of the work that we're doing now, individually and collectively.

So, let's break this down. In educational terms, constructivism is a pedagogical approach which stresses the ways people form mental models of the world through their experiences acting on the physical world. Bordwell is interested in how something similar occurs as we watch movies. We start with some basic mental template -- some model of the world, some understanding of genres as particular kinds of films, some grasp of the mode of production from which the film emerged, some sense of the social world around us and thus how the film fits into current political and social debates.

A cognitivist would call such templates schemata or above, "mental representations." The more experienced we are at watching films of a certain kind, the more nuanced our schemata becomes, since it gets refined through use. But the schemata becomes the starting point for making sense of what takes place on screen. We form speculations about what is going to take place, who the characters are, what motivates their actions, what their goals are, and what might constitute a satisfying resolution of this narrative. We are moving from the limited information presented on the screen towards fuller understandings of the action as the film progresses. This requires a process of going beyond the information given, to use a term from Jerome Bruner, and thus, our suppositions can be frustrated or corrected by whatever passes on the screen next. Our schemata tell us what to pay attention to, but in turn, the film's information gets added to our ongoing mental models.

The key point here is that the process is active -- one of hypothesis formation, testing, and refinement which does not stop when the film is over. We draw on these same schemata when we talk with our friends over sodas after the screening. Part of what media educators do is to help students develop more nuanced schemata to better understand and critically engage with the media they consume. In that sense, we might see Bordwell's work as a formalist as mapping the norms and practices surrounding particular kinds of cinema and his work as a cognitivist as refining our understanding of the spectator's processing of the cinematic experience.

Tessa Jolls: Thanks, Henry, for bringing David Bordwell's insightful film theory to informing our media literacy work. I can see where the links to media literacy are strong: Bordwell's ideas about constructivism, about mental representations, and social action — which you explain in more detail — all inform an empowered approach to media literacy education. As I was delving more into Bordwell's writings, I came across one of his essays called "Studying Cinema" from 2009, and he said,

"…I think that film studies is best defined as a process of posing and trying to answer *questions. (Bordwell's emphasis)* Most ordinary conversation about films serves other purposes — to share information, to have social exchanges with people, to learn more about others' tasks. Film studies certainly has these aims, too, but like other academic disciplines, it seeks to answer questions in a systematic way, one that is open to discussion and criticism. So film studies centers on certain sorts of questions: those that require explanations as answer."

Certainly, this quote also relates to one of the central tenets of media literacy education: that

media literacy offers a systematic way of critically analyzing global media systems through a process of inquiry that is rooted in basic principles of how media operate as a system. Using an open process of inquiry — asking questions — is the opposite of a protectionist approach that is directive and that is closed.

You mentioned earlier that some interpretations of cognitive theory spawned some protectionist approaches to media literacy. Do you see protectionism as a continuing presence today, and how do you see that Bordwell has helped us move beyond the limiting nature of protectionism towards empowerment?

Henry Jenkins: In this passage, Bordwell is arguing for a middle ground perspective against two other common approaches to film analysis. The first would take a totalizing approach -- for example, seeing all Hollywood films as the product of a capitalist mode of production where the demands of the marketplace over-ride any space for artistic expression or predetermine ideological message. The second would be a more interpretive approach that is interested in what the film means but not how the film works. Bordwell has criticized the limited range of meanings ascribed to films (in *Making Meaning*) and the tendency to read works as reflecting their zeitgeist rather than being shaped by larger genre traditions (see http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2014/08/24/zip-zero-zeitgeist/).

Instead, he wants us to take a historical approach which asks questions that require us to move beyond the individual film to look at the system of norms, institutional practices, technological infrastructures, and cultural influences that shaped how movies get made at a particular moment in time. I agree that this approach is a particularly valuable one for media literacy educators. It helps young people acquire a vocabulary they can use to ask analytic questions about a much broader range of media texts without moving too quickly to dismiss them as the work of the culture industries or as attempts to manipulate our minds. So, for sure, I prefer Bordwell's middle-level approach to the more totalizing view.

I am less certain that I -- and perhaps even Bordwell -- would argue against the importance of interpretation within media literacy classrooms. We certainly do not want interpretation to be imposed on students by the teacher -- although I think teachers can legitimately participate in the process -- but we do want students to explore what media texts mean to them. We want them to be able to explain why certain texts are meaningful without being required to justify and defend their tastes in an adversarial context. And we want them to be attentive to the fact that the same work might generate different meanings for different viewers under different circumstances (a move which is very much prefigured by Bordwell's turn towards a cognitive model of the film experience).

The debates Bordwell faced were between psychoanalytic approaches (which tend to see films as working upon our unconscious) and cognitive approaches (which focus on the conscious and preconscious levels of our engagement with media texts). Cognitive approaches proved particularly compatible with arguments for a more active audience where-as the psychoanalytic model, at least the one that Bordwell was pushing back against, tended to see media spectators as dupes. In both film studies and media literacy, the tide has turned decisively towards a more empowered perspective, but protectionist impulses linger not far beneath the surface.

If we do not keep consciously fighting for a more empowered conception, protectionism

becomes the default. In the academic world, protectionism comes hand in hand with the elitism that is the negative undercurrent of intellectualism: a sense that our formal education allows us to see through things to which others are susceptible. In the world of secondary school education, paternalism is often built into the power differential between adults and youth. For that reason, it remains vital that we keep sharpening our conceptual models to respect and value the cognitive work that goes into the processing of media texts.

Tessa Jolls: Henry, your point about how "if we do not keep consciously fighting for a more empowered conception, protectionism becomes the default" is a caution that we as educators need to constantly heed. Citizens need the skills, the vocabulary and the dispositions to explore and articulate their thinking as well as their feelings — and from my observations in the classrooms, students are often much more adept and practiced at expressing their feelings than their thinking. To be empowered means to be intellectually curious and expressive as well as emotionally available, to be knowledgable yet humble, to be capable of challenging while being respectful, to be able to distinguish between fact and opinion, description and inference, and thinking and feelings.

As we've been delving into Bordwell's approach to film analysis, I've been seeing that he offers a deeply informed, empowered approach to understanding film. His essay "Common Sense + Film Theory = Common Sense Film Theory?" is a case in point (see http://www.davidbordwell.net/essays/commonsense.php). He addresses an overview of film integrating many schools of thought: semiology, perceptive research, logical fallacies, heuristics and social intelligence. Yet at the same time, he elucidates ways of teaching practical skills — "thinking skills" — in an accessible way. For example, there is a difference between saying that someone "looks angry" and "his eyebrows were furrowed," "his gaze was intent," or "he narrowed his eyes." In the first case, saying that someone "looks angry," assumptions and inferences are being made. But what is the evidence? What description can support such a conclusion? Bordwell addresses these distinctions in a direct way that enables a cognitive analysis. Bordwell says:

"Mind-reading requires us to detect, sometimes on very faint cues, what people are expressing or signaling through their behavior. Elsewhere I've talked about this in cases involving eye behavior—blinking and eyebrows, in particular. But there's much more to be done with the ways in which cinema mobilizes our social intelligence in order to track a narrative. Sometimes the narrative eases our task by making things redundant and clear; sometimes the film throws up problems, making it hard to understand characters' intentions or reactions, as in the enigmatic veteran played by Henry Fonda in *Daisy Kenyon*."
One of the qualities I'm appreciating about David Bordwell is that he is both a highly respected theorist and a caring teacher who is committed to help people make meaning from their own lives, using film analysis as a pathway. How do you see Bordwell's empowering approach to education contributing to positive action by individuals and in communities?

Henry Jenkins: This particular essay (above) reflects Bordwell's ongoing interest in understanding the processes of perception and comprehension. What kinds of skill and knowledge do we need to comprehend a film narrative? Here, his core question may be: "We speak of "reading" an image, but do certain kinds of images—those that common sense declares "realistic"—demand anything like the deciphering that printed language does? How much does grasping an image depend on learned conventions of representation?" For us, this might boil down to the question of whether "media literacy" is a "literacy" in the sense that it

involves "deciphering" a coded text or whether it constitutes a social skill?

Thinking of media literacy as a social skill might allow us to move from our understanding of everyday communication situations -- such as distinguishing between a blink and a wink (an issue the anthropologist Clifford Geertz wrote about in *The Interpetation of Cultures*) -- to the more formalized communication that occurs through various kinds of mass media. Bordwell clearly recognizes complex formal norms that shape the processes of representation (as in his example here of *Daisy Kenyon*, a Hollywood film which has notably inscrutable characters due to its performance style and visual strategies) but he also recognizes that we often read film characters through the same lens as we read people in our everyday life (i.e. bodily signs, gestures, etc. that suggest, but do not tell, what they are thinking). Some acting styles are more naturalistic than others, but all of them depend on certain kinds of social knowledge as a basis for our comprehension.

Bordwell is, for sure, asking "what is the evidence?" and as a teacher, let me tell you, he demands that his students anchor every claim with reference to specific moments in the text: he is a master of close reading. But, he also is pushing back against theories that would isolate cinematic experience from other kinds of real world experiences, which is why he is describing his approach in terms of "common sense." I was very lucky to have him as my graduate school mentor. While my own work has generally pulled more in a cultural studies rather than a cinema studies direction, I still use the skills in critical analysis he taught me on a regular basis.

My own current book project, *Comics and Stuff*, takes seriously the idea that we draw on social knowledge to process media representations, looking at the relationships in contemporary graphic novels between characters and their possessions (the ways they make meaning of their lives by way of their stuff). I am interested in representational strategies but I am also interested in reading the background of panels the way many of us read the objects on someone's desk or the books on their shelves or the decorations of their living room. This project represents an attempt to meld cultural studies of material culture with a visual studies approach to formal practices, one very much shaped by what I learned from Bordwell.

As for Bordwell's approach being empowering, I think that is right. I have certainly found it so. By the way, I love your definition of "empowering" above! In Cinema Studies, which has a strong tradition of work critiquing ideology, Bordwell has often been viewed as "apolitical" or even "conservative" because he does not bring his personal political commitments into his work very much.

Yet, the focus here on the active process of comprehension stresses choices made by both filmmakers and filmgoers, paving the way for a more empowered conception of our relationship to media. He does not accept the premise that we simply absorb uncritically what passes across the screen, that we are susceptible to ideological manipulations, but rather, he sees the spectator as always actively making sense of films and thus, potentially at least, critically engaging with the representations being constructed. What we do with those skills is up to us. He has no explicit social change agenda, but his models can be used by media literacy educators in ways that help us to take greater responsibility of the choices we make, what insights we take from media, what accountability we have over our own representational and curatorial choices, etc. And to me, those issues are at the heart of the contemporary media literacy movement.

Interview with Sangita Shresthova of the Civic Imagination Project
https://www.civicimaginationproject.org/

Based at the University of Southern California, Civic Imagination Project explores continuities between online participatory culture and civic engagement through outreach, creative work, research, and academic inquiry. The Project builds on eight years of research through Henry Jenkins's Civic Paths' participation in MacArthur's Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics, which culminated with the publication of *By Any Media Necessary: The New Activism of American Youth*. Premised on a dynamic understanding of citizenship, the Civic Imagination Project analyzes how participatory culture interactions encourage young people to create, discuss and organize to engage with specific civic issues and events.

Sangita Shresthova
Sangita Shresthova focuses on digital media, civics, participation, the civic imagination and cross-cultural dialogue. Her recent work has focused on storytelling and surveillance among American Muslim youth, the Kony2012 campaign, and global Bollywood. She is one of the authors of By Any Media Necessary: The New Activism of American Youth*, published in May 2016, and is currently leading Henry Jenkins' Civic Imagination Project at the University of Southern California.*

Tessa Jolls (TJ): Sangita, please tell us about some of the recent work that you're focused on with the Civic Imagination Project.

Sangita Shresthova (SS): Right now, most of our attention is on issues and questions related to the civic imagination, which is framed around how people think about the future, and how that thinking then informs and motivates civic life. Our approach is premised on our observation that you cannot mobilize for a better world if you do not have a sense of what that future world is going to look like. This focus on civic imagination was a key insight that emerged out of our past work on Youth and Participatory Politics, which was a multiyear project funded by the McArthur Foundation.

As you've asked me to reflect on how we combine theory and practice, I see our thinking has evolved. In retrospect, we took a more traditional approach with our Youth and Participatory Politics work, in the sense that we went into the project with a theoretical research question, and did very in-depth research. Our methods are mostly qualitative, so we looked at young people, and civic engagement, and case studies, and from that, we moved into a more practice-oriented phase of our work.

The Civic Imagination project cycle is different, for multiple reasons, the first being that we were able to harness and build on much of the work that we did through the Youth and Participatory Politics project. We did not enter this project with fresh research questions, but rather questions that elaborate and expand on what we did previously.

The second difference was that we were coming into this current project with strong research/practice partners in place. We already had some experience in building materials with them and were eager to expand this area of work.

The third was that we felt a sense of urgency around the current historical "moment" and

believe we have a real contribution to make to current approaches to civics and media literacy.

TJ: Given that your Civic Imagination work grew out of your work on Participatory Politics, it would be helpful if you told us more about the earlier work in Participatory Politics.

SS: We were part of a Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics, which was funded through the MacArthur Foundation. This network brought together a group of scholars and practitioners who examined the changing nature of civic engagement among young people, broadly defined as those between 15 to 25 years of age. The key questions the network asked were, "How are young people civically engaged, How are they using digital media to engage civically, and How is this engagement through civic media changing their political and civic lives?"

We brought a popular and participatory culture perspective as we asked questions like, "How does cultural engagement scaffold political engagement and vice versa, and how do we need to rethink the language of politics based on what we we're observing?"

We researched these questions through five exemplary case studies of civically engaged youth participating in organizations or networks supported through social media and digital media connections. Specifically, our case studies focused on: Invisible Children, American Muslims youth networks, the Harry Potter Alliance, young people who mobilized around the DREAM Act and young libertarians. Coming out of that work, we collected our key insights in *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism*, a book that was published by NYU in 2016.

As the title suggests, a key insight coming out of that work was that young people were engaging with civics through, what we called, "By any media necessary." Rather than thinking about a top down approach, young people were very tactical about how they were approaching media. They were thinking consciously about media as they asked: "What can I access? How can I use it?" They clearly faced limitations around resources and they were always trying to find ways to work around these constraints.

Another key insight centered on the civic imagination, which now animates our work. In particular, we noticed that young people across all the case studies were actively able to tap the popular culture content worlds they know and were able to connect to issues they care about in very imaginative ways. An example of this would be the Harry Potter Alliance (HPA), an organization based in Harry Potter fandom. The HPA helps fans see how the struggles they see in the Harry Potter stories can be seen as metaphors for struggles that we face in our everyday life. For example, the enslavement of the house elves in the Harry Potter story can help us think about contemporary child slavery and unequal wages in the real world. We found that even though the organizations and networks included in our research were very different on many levels, they were all doing this work through content worlds to motivate young people, keep them interested in an issue, and to help them feel like they can make a difference.

Towards the end of that project, we translated our work into materials for educators. We also created a practitioner-oriented companion reader that supported our book and was published online. So, in effect, we were already engaged in a process of research-to-practice translation.

TJ: How are you conceptualizing ideas now around the civic imagination?

SS: We continue to theorize how imagination, popular culture, nostalgia and political ideology inform how we think about the civic imagination. We are also constantly testing those ideas through community oriented workshops that we've developed. We are in dialogue with diverse communities and continue to discuss our ideas with them. Those practical experiences feed back into our theoretical work. Through all this we continue to interrogate our own practice as an integral part of the research project. We ask ourselves research questions about the workshops and want to conduct more formal research. For example, we are moving towards doing interviews with workshop participants and field brief post-workshop surveys. The research and practice are happening at the same time as opposed to distinct phases.

TJ: So you are informing theory as you are practicing, and also informing practice with theory as you're going along. This makes for a much tighter development cycle around particular issues or research questions.

SS: Yes.

TJ: That's what makes this work a powerful example for the notion of bringing research to practice and to activism, because you are using the results of your research insights.

SS: Media is very much part of our approach to the civic imagination. Clearly, a lot of that civic engagement in contemporary contexts happens through media platforms. The examples of civic imagination that we explore are often connected to popular culture, so they're, in effect, connected to mediated content. We want to understand how people engage with that mediated content, how they pick elements from it, how they remember it, how they recall it, how it affects them and how it connects to their civic imagination. As with our previous work, we look at the intersections of engagement with popular culture and fandom, which has been Henry's (Jenkins) work for many decades.

Sometimes digital media is involved, sometimes not. We come into a workshop and we often say, "All you need is markers and paper." This is the first workshop ever that I have run, where you don't need your cell phone, camera or computer. That said, our workshops often lead to extensions that do involve digital media. For example, people sometimes create media based on a world-building exercise. They may create campaigns. They may create short films. They may create physical artifacts. We invite them to use any media they have available to them. In some workshops, the final screening of the media created by participants leads to charged discussions around remix (as content participants create is often remixed). We then end up discussing questions like: "What is appropriate to remix? What does it mean when you remix someone else's work? How do you understand images when they are placed out of context? Do you have the responsibility to not be re-appropriating material?" Those kinds of questions come up in those discussions.

TJ: How are you seeing this prior work play out today?

SS: We now have a (still evolving) modular workshop series that we can take into communities. This helps us approach communities that we want to work with, and as we can say, "We are developing this work and want to work with you, but we also have a workshop that we can bring to you." This approach allows us to ask the research questions we need to

ask, and at the same time engage in a dialogue that may help the community engage in a process that, we feel, is potentially helpful to them.

The workshops we conduct help people imagine. We invite them to think about their past and who they are, and then to envision a collective aspirational future. We push that future far enough out that it doesn't feel immediate, but not so far that it's completely beyond reach -- not a hundred years out, and not five years out, but somewhere in between. We invite the participants to brainstorm a future world. We then ask them to populate it with fictional narratives that tap their collective imagination. Through this process, we all start to see what the members of the community think is desirable and how this change may happen. We then work to connect the future to the present through a debrief that urges participants to think about how the future they have envisioned could inform what they do today.

As researchers, we walk away from such a workshop with rich brainstorm and narrative material. In the context of the futures brainstorm, we often find surprising consensus around things, like the future of health or even the future of education, across communities that would be standing on very different sides of a political discussion on those issues. And this holds true regardless of where we've conducted the workshops – we've conducted workshops throughout the U.S. and also internationally, in Lebanon, Salzburg and Sweden.

For a lot of people, the imagination and the ability to imagine alternatives have been banished from their civic lives. Many people don't think of civic engagement as a creative and imaginative act. They think of it as an act of duty and responsibility. Workshop participants tell us that using their imagination is like exercising a muscle that they're not using as much in the civic space, because they don't think of imagination as being central to their civic life and work. This is an evolving ongoing project. As time goes on, we're working to deepen partnerships with specific communities. We also plan to more deeply analyze the materials we have collected so far.

TJ: Yes, the process is more bottoms up. It's more empowering. You're giving back to the community more than just a report on insights that the researchers have gained. It's more of a change management process in that you're looking and visioning, and brainstorming, and problem solving, and then you're giving them something to work with … to go forward with on actually affecting change.

SS: That is the hope, yes.

CONSORTIUM for MEDIA LITERACY

Uniting for Development

ESSENTIAL DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS FOR OUR WORLD: IS SEEING BELIEVING?

A partnership of the Museum of Tolerance and The Center for Media Literacy, March 21 & 28, Los Angeles, CA.

Free to California Educators!
Students need the foundational skills to navigate crowded mediascapes of propaganda, fake news, and sponsored content. In this special Institute, set in the experiential setting of the Museum of Tolerance, educators will have the opportunity to work with the renowned Center for Media Literacy (CML) to discover ways to teach students to understand and question how stories are designed, targeted, framed, and purposefully delivered. Not only must students learn the critical thinking to 'deconstruct' media but they must also be empowered to 'construct' responsible messages as the content producers that they inevitably are. For more information email: educators@museumoftolerance.com.

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

Resources for Media Literacy

Empowerment: Theory, Practice and Activism Resources

Readings from David Bordwell's work:

http://www.davidbordwell.net
http://www.davidbordwell.net/essays/commonsense.php
http://www.davidbordwell.net/essays/classical.php
http://www.davidbordwell.net/essays/studying.php

Henry Jenkins, Podcast
http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2018/2/16/launching-new-podcast-how-do-you-like-it-so-far-race-and-star-wars

Civic Imagination Project
https://www.civicimaginationproject.org

Grandparents of Media Literacy
http://www.grandparentsofmedialiteracy.com

Voices of Media Literacy
http://www.medialit.org/voices-media-literacy-international-pioneers-speak

CML Empowerment Spiral
http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/empowerment-spiral

Med!aLit Moments

The Spiral

Are you aware of how many times you post or share on social media each day? Do you feel secure sharing posts and photos within your friend group? How about outside your friend group? A recent study by MediaSmarts in Canada, found that young people shared personal posts with unintended recipients at an alarming rate. Posts were captured and shared without the consent or knowledge of the original sender. As the MediaSmarts report makes clear on several levels, media literacy education in needed! CML teaches students to use the Empowerment Spiral of *Awareness, Analysis, Reflection* and *Action*. The Empowerment Spiral* is an effective tool for exploring one's relationship to media.

Take your students through the Empowerment Spiral using their own data.

AHA! I use social media more/less than I realized!

AWARENESS REFLECTION
ACTION ANALYSIS

Grade: 9-12

Materials: Personal devices (phone, ipad, …), computer and projection screen, paper and colored pencils or infographics program (for example, canva.com or other free program).

Key Question #1: Who created this message? (consumer). What am I authoring? (producer).
Core Concept #1: All media messages are constructed.
Key Question #5: Why is this message being sent? (consumer). Why am I sending this message? (producer).
Core Concept #5: Most media messages are sent to gain profit and/or power (power can mean influence, popularity, intimidation…).

Activity: Ask students *How many tweets, posts, messages… do you send each day*? Have students make a list of their favorite social media platforms and how often they post to each platform per day – include Shared posts. The idea is to have real data so they will need to count, no guessing. Have each student create a simple bar graph illustrating their findings (Awareness). Pair with another student to discuss the results. Is it more or less than they expected? Any surprises? (Analysis). Is the convenience of digital communication worth the vulnerability and privacy issues that come with social media? Do they ever share posts not meant for sharing? Why? (Reflection). What can they do differently? (Action).

Extended activity: If appropriate for your students, discuss the report from MediaSmarts about sexting (http://mediasmarts.ca/research-policy, Feb. 2018). What do the students think? Have they shared inappropriate posts? If so, why? What should they do differently? Hint: Always ask, *Why am I sending this message?* Key word: Purpose.

*The *Empowerment Spiral* is based on the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire.

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