HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING AND MEDIA LITERACY: A DISPOSITIONAL

ALIGNMENT

Abstract

Media literacy has been posited as a cross-curricular necessity for twenty-first century students, but one of the challenges of infusing media literacy into any discipline is the lack of a consistent definition. This article argues that media literacy is best conceptualized as a thinking disposition that evaluates the construction of media form, content, and impact over time as both an art form and an industry, as well as a cultural, social, and political force. Utilizing film as an exemplary case study of a medium that fosters historical thinking, this article illustrates a mutually beneficial alignment between the construct of historical understanding and an articulation of media literacy as a dispositional inclination to think critically about media messages and representations. This alignment has the potential to foster critical consumerism and active citizenship, both inside and outside formal educational settings.

Introduction

It is commonplace to assert that time, popular media representations not only reflect but also impact what societies remember, when they remember, and —most importantly— how they remember. But the compound social and political role that media plays in disseminating, as well as perpetuating or subverting dominant ideologies and historical narratives, is often overlooked in formal education. Media's power to shape historical thinking in particular provides a pedagogical opportunity for alignment between history education and popular visual media such as film.

A twenty-first century learning environment requires engagement with everyday exposure to visual, textual, and digital persuasion, facilitating critical consumption and inquiry of all media forms, both inside and outside the classroom. Media literacy skills have been posited as essential cross-curricular tools necessary in order to equip young learners with the ability to evaluate media representations and thereby become participatory citizens. Though active civic engagement has been linked to both media literacy and historical awareness, the potential interaction between history education and media literacy has been left relatively unexplored.[1]

This study investigates the meaningful dispositional alignment that occurs when these two approaches to classroom practice are joined in purposeful pedagogical interaction.

After a review of the existing scholarly literature, it is possible to posit a definition of media literacy as a lifelong "thinking disposition" that evaluates the construction of media form, content, and impact over time as both an art form and an industry — as well as a cultural, social, and political force.[2] Utilizing film as an exemplary case study of a medium that fosters disciplinary and meta-disciplinary learning, this article demonstrates theoretical entry points for critiquing popular representations as both media and historical documents. The following discussion explains why visual media representations such as film are particularly relevant to popular constructions of historical consciousness, exploring the potential for film to deepen, rather than weaken, historical understanding as a disciplinary form of thinking. Media literacy is also a disposition that promotes meta-disciplinary thinking, a historiographic understanding of historical narratives constituted by, and constitutive of, particular social and political contexts. Reconceptualizing media literacy as a disposition that reinforces historical thinking, demonstrates similarities in these critical processes across media forms and contexts of consumption.[3] The implications of this theoretical alignment for classroom practice and professional development is potentially far-reaching, illustrating the need for clear disciplinary frameworks for teaching media literacy.

<div align="center">Articulating a Definition of Media Literacy as a Thinking Disposition</div>

Despite the power that the term "media literacy" harnesses in educational discourses, one of the challenges of infusing media literacy into any discipline is the lack of a consistent definition.[4] The pedagogies, goals, and qualities of media literacy can vary both in theory and in practice internationally, as well as from state to state, and even from classroom to classroom

within one district.[5] This inconsistency makes unclear whether film warrants media literacy, visual literacy, both at once, or neither, depending on the disciplinary goals at stake.

Though media literacy theoretically encompasses all media, in practice it is often applied narrowly to news media messages, overlooking the vast forms of popular media messages that infiltrate everyday interactions. When popular media is addressed in media literacy discussions, it is most often targeted at digital media, sidelining the prevalent role that film plays in cultural consumption and socialization. Meanwhile, visual literacy has its roots in photography as a mode of visual communication that may be expressed, interpreted, or embodied.[6] Visual literacy in educational literature is most often ascribed to print advertisements and the plastic arts, predominantly still photographs, again neglecting the pedagogical importance of film and television. One aim of this theoretical alignment is to overcome the divide between media and visual literacy dialogues, recognizing that political intent often defines entertainment media, and visually manipulative techniques traditionally reserved for entertainment purposes are currently utilized to increase audience appeal to journalistic media.

Further complicating our understanding of media literacy, the way it is taught — often *through* media rather than teaching simultaneously *through* and *about* media—reconstitutes the meaning of the term, as well as the apparent lack of consensus about strategies and goals for its implementation. [7] This distinction highlights broader educational tensions about including arts and technology into disciplinary curriculum. The arts are often employed as thematic or multidisciplinary curricular add-ons, used exclusively for "instrumental" purposes to promote disciplinary content, rather than explore the "intrinsic" value of the arts.[8] Meaningful disciplinary alignment between history and film posits historical understanding as the instrumental goal, while media literacy engages with the intrinsic quality of the medium and its social function.

Across scholarly definitions of media literacy, emphasis is placed upon questioning both the form and content of media messages as dynamic social forces that effect, and are affected by, meaning ascribed through public consumption. But few educational practices make apparent the reflexive dialogue between media-maker and consumer audience. The meaning incurred through this interaction is key to the purpose of media literacy, in that it both positions students as critical consumers and empowers them as active citizens. This negotiation of meaning makes apparent the connections between the process of engaging in media literacy and the disciplinary skepticism entailed in historical thinking.[9]

Media literacy is a layered and reflexive practice that requires critical thinking skills, understanding of the particular narrative or visual symbol systems in use, as well as awareness of broader social and political contextual forces. The capacities that comprise media literacy extend beyond exercising distinct skills in particular contexts; indeed, media literacy is more effectively conceptualized as a lifelong "thinking disposition" that facilitates critical consumption and inquiry of all media forms in all consumption contexts. While thinking dispositions incorporate skills, they also encompass the "ability, sensitivity, and inclination" to exercise those skills, i.e., "what ...[one is] disposed to do."[10] This reframing recognizes that media literacy is not solely about the ability to critique media messages and representations, but also about knowing when and how to apply these abilities, i.e., the disposition toward engaging in "habits of mind" entailed by media literacy.

Although some theorists suggest that habits of mind and dispositions are transposable, the habits of mind should instead be viewed as the behaviors promoted by dispositions, which simultaneously reinforce dispositional thinking, designating these tools "dispositional 'habits of mind.'"[12] A dispositional outlook entails habits of mind as skills and processes that endure across

contexts. Rather than "turning on" media literacy in school settings, and "turning off" this critical orientation outside formal learning contexts, the goal of media literacy is to empower a critical generation of engaged citizens. A disposition toward media literacy overcomes this perceived bifurcation of skills; instead, media literacy entails enduring processes of reflection, evaluation, and critique of all media representations as texts constructed with an intended audience and a purpose. Reconceptualizing media literacy as a disposition that aligns with historical thinking's dispositional habits of mind, film becomes an interdispositonal space that fosters critical consumerism and engaged citizenry. History is more than factual knowledge about the past; rather, it constitutes a disciplinary "way of knowing."[11] The reflexive relationship between dispositions and habits of mind is further strengthened in the context of significant overlap between dispositions of historical thinking and those of media literacy. Accordingly, historical thinking, a disciplinary-oriented disposition, involves habits of mind that support both disciplinary ways of knowing and a disposition toward media literacy, with its own overlapping dispositional habits of mind.

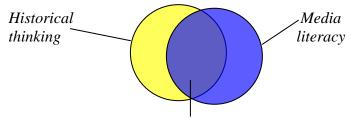| *Disposition* toward historical thinking ↓ *Dispositional habits of mind*: - Historical skepticism - Weighing of evidence - Consideration of significance in historical context - Historical empathy - Reflection on perspectives of historical actors within particular context - Contemplation of agency of historical actors within particular context	*Disposition* toward media literacy ↓ *Dispositional habits of mind*: - Skepticism of message - Weighing of evidence displayed - Consideration of source accountability - Reflection on perspectives at play - Consideration of the media form (aesthetics, manipulation, context) - Contemplation of how media functions in society (art form, industry)

Dispositional Alignment between Historical Thinking and Media Literacy

Historical thinking

Media literacy

Shared Dispositional habits of mind

- Skepticism
- Weighing of evidence
- Consideration of perspectives
- Reflection of narrative in particular context
- Meta-contemplation of how representation functions in larger context
- Consciousness of individual agency in response to narrative consumption
- *Thinking about media in historical contexts*
- *Thinking about historical narratives as embedded in media contexts*

In order to articulate a concise definition that draws on the input of film, media, visual art, and education theorists, media literacy should be regarded as a thinking disposition that evaluates the construction of media form, content, and impact over time as an art form, an industry, as well as a cultural, social, and political force.[13] This definition hinges on the idea that media permeates popular beliefs in overt and subtle ways, influencing collective memory and consequently affecting individual and group identity processes. Accordingly, the relationship between media and historical consciousness requires critique and self-reflection, as well as an understanding of dialogic processes at play in both historical and media narratives. This definition demands the empowerment of the audience to critically consider media messages and the power they harness in creating, disseminating, and subverting dominant ideologies, guided by a disposition of media literacy. Though this description of media literacy is meant to apply broadly to all media forms, this approach specifically employs film as a theoretical case study of media literacy and disciplinary thinking, mutually reinforcing one another's dispositional habits of mind.

Why is a Media Literacy Approach to Popular Film Important for History Education?

Media literacy in the twenty-first century necessitates explicit attention to visual messages conveyed through images and symbols, as well as explicit or hidden narratives that shape them.[14] With increasing public reliance on visual media for knowledge, growing interest in history, and powerful global market forces that shape representations for mass audiences, popular film that depicts real historical agents, events, and contexts has changed the way young learners construct historical meaning.[15] Film is a powerful and pervasive medium that can have repercussions for the individuals, events, and institutions represented onscreen, as well as the audiences that engage with these representations. The recent historicizing trend in the Hollywood

film industry reflects an interest in real lives, events, and social and political movements, but these visual representations are principally motivated by industry standards and market demands rather than a devotion to public history.[16] As a consequence, there is no clear distinction between films or film sequences that offer viewers fictional escapes from the real world, or vivid entryways into otherwise inaccessible real experiences.

More than other cinematic genres, historical films complicate the line between reality and representation, "leav[ing] their viewers with the sense not only that they learned something about history, but that the images and situations they watched were the historical 'truth.'"[17] Films disseminate well-researched historical knowledge as well as fictional evocations of the past, without any obligation to communicate the footnotes and citations required of traditional historical texts so that the viewer may distinguish fact from fabrication. Audiences of all ages and educational backgrounds rely on popular film to enter past and present worlds that they cannot know firsthand, whether or not they consciously submit to that trust in visual media.[18] Throughout the process of social edu-tainment, films become public memories and common cultural experiences that impact historical narratives, whether they are hailed for their accuracy or villainized for their biases.[19]

Historical genres within popular film span the well-researched —though not necessarily unbiased— documentary and biopic to the sensationalized myth. Because there are no professionally bound standards of representation and accountability, the discernment between films that are more history than fiction or more fiction than history falls on the audience. Not even genre conventions effectively restrict inaccurate or unethical representations, demand disclosures of fictional material, limit misleading marketing messages, or require sources for content that a film asserts to be true. Films may even create a fictional world in which they

purport to be telling a true story. In fact, verisimilitude and blurred genres such as "docu-dramas" drive some of the most successful Hollywood films.[20]

Despite public awareness of mass-marketed film as a for-profit entertainment industry, all films convey cultural and historical information that is consumed and not necessarily critiqued. Films that portray the past always contend with the risk of the omission of certain historical facts and the occasional exclusion of an entire group experience. But popular film's biggest threat to historical consciousness is that viewers are prone to leave films satisfied with knowledge gained and without feeling the need to inquire further. The attributes of film that facilitate this viewer confidence go beyond everyday media manipulation; the seduction of visual representations accompanied by narratives that invite powerful empathic experiences convert film into a captivating source of popular knowledge.[21] Without critique, visual media may perpetuate commodification of the historical and cultural "other," even when this is the very discourse a film aims to undermine. As a result, audiences may knowingly or inadvertently formulate an understanding of themselves and others guided by problematic, biased, or uncritical beliefs about the past, as portrayed onscreen.

The Potential for Film and Media Literacy to Deepen,

Rather than Weaken, Historical Understanding

Popular film is a site of much informal learning, yet relatively little formal education is devoted to making use of movies for historical, social, and cultural knowledge. Scholars express concern that entertainment-driven representations constitute uncritical popular conceptions of the past. Similarly, there is concern that visual knowledge is replacing textual knowledge, undercutting accurate historical texts with enticing images and fictional storylines; popular visual "historiophoty" is marginalizing traditional forms of written historiography.[22] Further,

disingenuous marketing packages films as entertaining shortcuts to knowledge, so that film is fast becoming the *CliffsNotes* for primary historical resources. This seems an inevitable trend as "living in a visual culture means our source of knowledge is shifting from the written word to the visual image."[23]

Rather than further distance formal history education from popular representations of the past, disciplinary thinking can be enriched by embracing the two in purposeful interaction. If one of the aims of education is to bridge formal educational experiences with informal learning, then popular film requires a place in formal curriculum. Making use of popular film in formal education promotes the medium as "an integral part of youth culture" while capitalizing on historical knowledge gained "from and in an environment saturated by mass media." History educators can thus use popular film to break the divide between formal and informal learning in which educators are expected to "compete" with the power and pervasiveness of popular media and better connect to the way individuals construct historical consciousness in their everyday lives.[24]

Everyday media inundation, visual representations in particular, drives media as both a content area for learning and a context within which learning takes place. Considering the role of popular film in constructing popular historical consciousness, history educators have an opportunity— and even a responsibility— to build on these existing sources of knowledge by praising and problematizing them. Equipping young learners with the disposition to critique, inquire, and evaluate media emerges as an educational imperative so that they can apply these skills broadly as critical learners, consumers, and engaged global citizens. While cinema has been cited for its democratic and accessible pedagogical potential, calls for "media literacy" have been advanced as the new literacy required of an active citizenry.[25]

The National Center for History in the Schools emphasizes historical understanding and historical thinking as the main goals of history education. Both disciplinary capacities demand: (1) critically weighing sources and qualities of historical *evidence*, (2) placing *significance* on historical figures and events, (3) recognizing *agency* of historical actors, (4) distinguishing *perspectives* in historical accounts, and (5) engaging in *empathic processes* with historical actors and broader contexts in which they are situated.[26] Applying media literacy to film can effectively promote these transversal habits of mind that "dispose" students to think historically about visual representations, both in and out of school. History's dispositional habits of mind entail "a healthy skepticism toward monocausal explanations, oversimplified accounts, single points of view, insufficient evidence, and anachronism."[27] These disciplinary modes of evaluation and critique resonate well with a disposition toward media literacy.

Like historical narratives, popular media representations are embedded in a social and political context. Situating media provides an often-overlooked opportunity for education to capitalize on the interdisciplinary connections between historical understanding and media literacy. The same interactions between power and representation that are at play in historical narratives also shape media, a relationship exposed through the contextualization of media messages as historical documents. Media requires attention to the historical moment in which it was made, as well as the contemporary moment in which it is received, critiqued, and interpreted by an audience. Historicizing media from multiple perspectives and points in time allows one to interrogate the continuity and change of dominant and subversive narratives over time. History education is thus well suited to bolster media literacy, while media literacy is poised to deepen historical understanding. Hand in hand, both dispositions encourage active citizenship, as the

dialogue between historical narratives and media messages implies accountability in representation and interpretation.

Employing film as historical and media representations in formal educational contexts popularizes history as a discipline, humanizes the past, and makes explicit connections between representations of the past and present consumption of history, all aspirations for history education. Taught well, films convey causality, agency, and significance, while emphasizing a sense of the past as a holistic narrative rather than a series of isolated events, a challenge cited for historical understanding.[28] The accessibility and intensity of films as vivid entry points for the past is additionally highlighted with affective implications for teaching historical empathy, aligning empathy as both a means and a goal for history education.[29] Regardless of the potential for teaching and learning at the intersection of history and film, film is rarely incorporated into secondary and post-secondary education in critical, contextualized ways that make use of film as a medium to engage in historical thinking and media literacy.

Implications for Practice

Despite the emphasis on media literacy as a twenty-first century necessity and the disciplinary evolution of historical understanding as a critical process, teachers opting to include film in their classes often default to accuracy as the most important qualification for inclusion, thus privileging historical content over pedagogical opportunities to exercise historical thinking and media literacy.[30] Relying on historical accuracy as the prominent qualification for film's pedagogical potential reverts the discipline of history into the transmission of facts rather than a disposition that entails critical habits of mind.[31] Film, like all material in the ideal history classroom, is not solely used to convey historical facts but also utilized to engage students in the processes of historical thinking and historical understanding.

Media education is similarly disadvantaged when pedagogical focus is devoted to interpreting content rather than to situating content in a broader critique of the message and the medium, taking advantage of the way films behave as cultural and historical documents.[32] Employing historical thinking through media literacy empowers students to challenge historical content as well as media constructions of historical accounts, critique representational techniques, and contextualize films as primary documents with their own sociopolitical causes and consequences. Films serve a simultaneous function as primary historical narratives documenting the context in which they were produced, and as secondary artistic representations of the events they recreate.[33] In order to effectively position films for student audiences, educators need to balance them as both subjective interpretations of the past, as well as texts that convey historical content and illuminate the history-making process.

Though well intentioned, limiting media learning opportunities to representations that are historically accurate, balanced, and ethical is essentially a disadvantage for students as historical learners and critical media consumers, both in and outside of formal educational settings. Films that spark debate over questions of representation, or social, political, and historical function in particular, offer opportunities for students to become critical social thinkers and engaged citizens cognizant of their popular media consumption. Students are likely to be drawing on film for historical information throughout their lives, even when these messages are inaccurate, biased, racist, classist, or sexist.[34] Collectively critiquing popular films for their flaws and inaccuracies invites students to build on socially acquired knowledge, challenge unexplored assumptions, resist the seduction of daily visual media exposure, and engage in the act of historical thinking. In effect, historical habits of mind promote a disposition toward media literacy, while media literacy entails a disposition toward historical thinking. This mutually constructive process

provides a springboard for young citizens to exercise their critical thinking and social conscience in everyday contexts.

Uncritical viewing processes in formal education contexts implicitly teach students to trust film as an unproblematic medium that does not require critical interpretation. Conversely, empowering students to critique all media and to think historically about the form and content of representations nurtures students to be critically informed and engaged citizens. Teaching historical thinking and understanding through visual media literacy moves beyond disciplinary content in order to equip students to view all media critically and historically. Further, media literacy aligned with historical thinking disposes students to recognize themselves as historical agents engaged in history making through the acts of consumption, critique, and narration.

Conclusion: Historical Thinking and Media Literacy: Partners in 21st Century Critique

Recognizing how historical thinking is constructed through popular media, and how historical understanding is uncritically thwarted or actively realized through media consumption, young learners are at an advantage when they are able to think historically and critically about and through media representations. Grounding popular films in historiographic processes reminds students that interpretations of the past are ongoing and dependent on the present contexts and perspectives from which they are remembered.[35] Historical thinking invoked through media representations infiltrates the audience's historical consciousness, so that they too are taking part in shaping their world through historical consumption.

More work is needed to research the connections between effective media literacy education and civic engagement among students so that we may better understand how to develop media literacy as a stable disposition across educational and everyday contexts. The ambiguity and inconsistency of terms in the literature underscore the need for clear disciplinary

frameworks oriented toward practice. An implicit prerequisite for invoking media literacy in the classroom is that teachers themselves must be fluent in visual and media narrative devices, and how they apply across different media. Professional development that encompasses practice with media literacy techniques across diverse forms of art, technology, and industry will be poised to make connections between the often invisible cultural, social, and political forces that impact our everyday ways of thinking about all disciplinary knowledge.

Likewise, it is important to explore how history teachers effectively incorporate film into the classroom and how they motivate visual narratives to connect students' existing historical knowledge, as well as equip students with the ability to think historically and critique media outside of formal educational contexts. Throughout the search for best practices that facilitate media literacy, it is essential to continue to explore the facets of media literacy as they apply across disciplines. This mindfulness will foster meaningful integration of disciplinary forms, contents, epistemologies, and methods in a way that deepens an understanding in and across disciplinary contexts. But more important, a disposition toward media literacy encourages critique of everyday expressions and negotiations of meaning as educators and students navigate their way through a twenty-first century world.

NOTES

[1] For theoretical and practice-based arguments that link civic engagement with media literacy, see David Considine, Julie Horton, and Gary Moorman, "Teaching and Reaching the Millennial Generation through Media Literacy," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 52 (2009): 471-81, and "Welcome to Route 21," *Partnership for Twenty-first Century Skills* <http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/route21/> Accessed March 5, 2009. For connections between civic engagement and history education, see Margot Stern Strom, *Facing History and Ourselves Resource Book: Holocaust and Human Behavior* (Brookline, MA: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Inc., 1994).

[2] Dispositional thinking as cited in David Perkins et al., "Intelligence in the Wild: A Dispositional View of Intellectual Traits," *Educational Psychology Review* 12 (2000): 269.

[3] For further discussion of history's disciplinary habits of mind, see Veronica Boix-Mansilla, "Historical Understanding: Beyond the Past and into the Present," in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives*, ed. Peter N. Stearns, Peter Seixas, and Sam Wineburg (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 390-418; Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

[4] Sun Chyng Feng, "Always on Top of the Food Chain—'Circle of Life,' *The Lion King*, and Hegemony," in *Film, Politics, and Education: Cinematic Pedagogy Across the Disciplines*, ed. Kevin Shawn Sealey (New York: Peter Lang, 2008): 125-45; Patricia H. Hinchey, "A Crash Course in Media Literacy," *Clearing House* 76 (2003): 295-97.

[5] Carole Gerster and Laura W. Zlogar, "Introduction: Why Teach Visual and Multicultural Literacy?" in *Teaching Ethnic Diversity with Film: Essays and Resources for Educators in History, Social Studies, Literature, and Film Studies*, eds. Carole Gerster with Laura W. Zlogar (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2006): 7-20; Hinchey, "A Crash Course in Media Literacy," 295-97.

[6] Peter Felten, "Visual Literacy," *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* (2008), 60-64.

[7] The distinction between learning "through" and "about" media is elaborated in Considine, Horton, and Moorman, "Teaching and Reaching the Millennial Generation through Media Literacy," 474.

[8] For a discussion of the arts fostering interdisciplinary learning, see Liz Dawes Duraisingh and Veronica Boix-Mansilla, "Interdisciplinary Forays within the History Classroom: How the Visual Arts Can Enhance (or Hinder) Historical Understanding," *Teaching History* 129 (2007): 22-30. The distinction between teaching arts for intrinsic and instrumental purposes is cited from Kevin F. McCarthy et al., *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2004).

[9] For a discussion of historical skepticism as a disciplinary habit of mind, see Boix-Mansilla, "Historical Understanding: Beyond the Past and into the Present," 390-418; Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts.*

[10] Thinking dispositions are cited from Perkins et al., "Intelligence in the Wild: A Dispositional View of Intellectual Traits," 269; Shari Tishman, "Added Value: A Dispositional Perspective on Thinking," *Developing Minds: A Resource Book for Teaching Thinking*, ed. Arthur L. Costa (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001): 72-75.

[11] Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*, 153.

[12] For a discussion of habits of mind and dispositions as interchangeable, see Shari Tishman, "Why Teach Habits of Mind?" in *Discovering and Exploring Habits of Mind*, ed. Arthur L. Costa and Bena Kallick. (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000), 41-52; For a more intricate discussion of "dispositional habits of mind," see Costa, as cited in Perkins et al., "Intelligence in the Wild: A Dispositional View of Intellectual Traits," 272.

[13] The author's definition of media literacy draws on a number of media and visual literacy theorists, as well as definitions articulated by media and visual literacy associations. For scholarly articulations of media literacy, see Considine, Horton, and Moorman, "Teaching and Reaching the Millennial Generation through Media Literacy," 474; Hinchey, "A Crash Course in Media Literacy," 295-97; and "Welcome to Route 21," *Partnership for Twenty-first Century Skills,* <http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/route21/> Accessed March 5, 2009. For definitions of visual literacy, see: Felten, "Visual Literacy," 60-64, and Gerster and Zlogar, "Introduction: Why Teach Visual and Multicultural Literacy?" in *Teaching Ethnic Diversity with Film*, 7-20.

[14] Gerster and Zlogar, "Introduction: Why Teach Visual and Multicultural Literacy?," in *Teaching Ethnic Diversity with Film*, 7-20; Alan S. Marcus and Thomas H. Levine, "Exploring the Past with Feature Film," in *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*, ed. Alan S. Marcus, (2007), 1-16.

[15] For a discussion of visual media influencing young people's understanding of the past, see Peter Seixas, "Popular Film and Young People's Understanding of the History of Native-White Relations," in *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*, 99-120, and Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*.

[16] Hollywood's historicizing trends are cited in Robert Rosenstone, "In Praise of the Biopic," in *Lights, Camera, History: Portraying the Past in Film*, ed. Richard Francaviglia and Jerry Rodnitzky (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2007), 11-30.

[17] R. Sprau, "I Saw It in the Movies: Suggestions for Incorporating Film and Experiential Learning in the College History Survey Course," *College Student Journal* 35 (2001), 2.

[18] Robert B. Toplin distinguishes films as finished products that do not include citations from professional historical representations that require references in Robert B. Toplin, *History by Hollywood: The Use and Abuse of the American Past* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996). For a discussion of viewer trust in film, see Sprau, "I Saw It in the Movies," 2.

[19] The function of films as public memories is cited from Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies: Studying History on Film* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007). For examples of popular film employed as common cultural experiences, see Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*. For a discussion of popular reactions to films as part of a historical narrative, see Robert Burgoyne, *The Hollywood Historical Film* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

[20] For an example of a film that creates a fictional "real" world, see *The Strangers*, dir. Bryan Bertino (Rogue Pictures, 2008). Robert McKee, often recognized as a "screenwriting guru," discusses film genre conventions and the evolution of blurred genres in Robert McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting* (New York: ReganBooks, 1997).

[21] For more on the seduction of visual representations, see Sarah Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography* (London: Sage, 2001). The role of empathy in historical film viewer experience is

elaborated in Alan S. Marcus, "Students Making Sense of the Past: 'It's Almost like Living the Event,'" in *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*, 121-66.

[22] For scholarly discussions of popular film constituting uncritical, simplified versions of the past that replace textual narratives, see Gerster and Zlogar, "Introduction: Why Teach Visual and Multicultural Literacy?" See also Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies: Studying History on Film*; Alan S. Marcus and Thomas H. Levine, "Exploring the Past with Feature Film," in *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*, 1-16; Marcus, "Students Making Sense of the Past: 'It's Almost like Living the Event,'" in *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*, 121-66; Seixas, "Popular Film and Young People's Understanding of the History of Native-White Relations," in *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*, 99-120; and Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*. "Historiophoty" is coined by Hayden White, as cited in Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies: Studying History on Film.*

[23] For further discussion of visual representations replacing textual knowledge, see Gerster and Zlogar, "Introduction: Why Teach Visual and Multicultural Literacy?," in *Teaching Ethnic Diversity with Film,* 8.

[24] Arguments for bridging formal and informal education are discussed in John Broughton, "Inconvenient Feet: How Youth and Popular Culture Meet Resistance in Education," and Kevin S. Sealey, "Introduction: Film, Politics, and Education: Cinematic Pedagogy across the Disciplines," in *Film, Politics, and Education: Cinematic Pedagogy across the Disciplines*, 1-16, 17-42. Film as "an integral part of youth culture" is quoted from Scott A. Metzger, "Evaluating the Educational Potential of Hollywood History Movies," in *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*, 63. For background on historical learning that takes place "from and in an environment saturated by mass media," see Alan S. Marcus and Thomas H. Levine, "Exploring the Past with Feature Film," in *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*, 4. For more explicit connections between popular film and historical understanding, see Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*.

[25] Films are designated sites for democratic pedagogy in bell hooks and Kevin Shawn Sealey, "Afterword: On the Topic of Film and Education: A Conversation with bell hooks," in *Film, Politics, and Education: Cinematic Pedagogy across the Disciplines,* 147-57. Links between media literacy and active citizenry have been discussed in Considine, Horton, and Moorman, "Teaching and Reaching the Millennial Generation through Media Literacy," 471-81; Mary Megee, "Media Literacy: The New Basic; Will the Real Curriculum Please Stand Up?" *Emergency Librarian* (1997), 23-26; and "Welcome to Route 21," *Partnership for Twenty-first Century Skills.*

[26] Historical understanding and historical thinking as cited in: Marcus, "Students Making Sense of the Past: 'It's Almost like Living the Event,'" in *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*, 121-66; "Standards (online)," document, *National Center for History in the Schools*, <http://nchs.ucla.edu/> Accessed March 5, 2009; and Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*.

[27] Dispositions facilitate habits of mind, as cited in David Perkins et al., "Intelligence in the Wild: A Dispositional View of Intellectual Traits," *Educational Psychology Review* 12 (2000), 269-93. For discussion on historical habits of mind, see Boix-Mansilla, "Historical Understanding: Beyond the Past and into the Present," in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History,* 406.

[28] A wide range of authors discuss film's potential to teach history. For emphasis on popularization of history as a discipline, see Sprau, "I Saw It in the Movies," 2. For connections between film and humanization of the past, see Peter C. Rollins, "Introduction: Film and History: Our Media Environment as a New Frontier," in *Lights, Camera, History: Portraying the Past in Film*, 1-10. For scholarly discussions of goals and implications of historical education, see Marcus, "Students Making Sense of the Past: 'It's Almost like Living the Event,'" in *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*, 121-66; Robert Rosenstone, "In Praise of the Biopic," in *Lights, Camera, History: Portraying the Past in Film*, 11-30; Peter N. Stearns, Peter Seixas, and Sam Wineburg, "Introduction," in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History,* 1-14; Strom, *Facing History and Ourselves Resource Book*. To read more about the particular challenges of teaching historical narratives as holistic, see Linda Levstik, "Articulating the Silences: Teachers' and Adolescents' Conceptions of Historical Significance," in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History,* 284-305, and Roy Rosenzweig, "How Americans Use and Think about the Past: Implications from a National Survey for the Teaching of History," in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History,* 262-83.

[29] Films are cited as empathic experiences in Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies: Studying History on Film*; Marcus, "Students Making Sense of the Past: 'It's Almost like Living the Event,'" in *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*, 121-66; Geoff Pingree, "History is What Remains: Cinema's Challenge to Ideas about the Past," in *Lights, Camera, History*, 31-52; Peter C. Rollins, "Introduction: Film and History: Our Media Environment as a New Frontier," in *Lights, Camera, History*, 1-10; Sprau, "I Saw It in the Movies," 2. For scholarly perspectives on historical empathy as both a means and a goal for history education, see O. L. Davis, Jr., "In Pursuit of Historical Empathy," in *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies*, eds. O.L. Davis, Jr., Elizabeth Anne Yeager, and Stuart J. Foster (2001), 1-12; Peter N. Stearns, Peter Seixas, and Sam Wineburg, "Introduction," in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History*, 1-14; Strom, *Facing History and Ourselves Resource Book;* and Elizabeth Anne Yeager and Stuart J. Foster, "The Role of Empathy in the Development of Historical Understanding," in *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies*, ed. O.L. Davis, Jr., Elizabeth Anne Yeager, and Stuart J. Foster (Lanham, MD: Roawman & Littlefield, 2001), 13-20.

[30] This paper articulates implications for educational practice based on scholarly literature for film, history, media literacy, and education, as well as empirical research conducted by the author from January to May 2009. Empirical findings draw from a pilot study based on classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with fourteen students and eight teachers from high school (11th and 12th grade) and college-level (freshman) history courses taught in the U.S., Canada, Japan, and Iceland. Findings reveal that most educators rely solely on historically accurate films when they utilize visual media and rarely show films with narratives that diverge from other classroom texts in use. All of the students interviewed had experience with film in the history classroom, but only six identified film inclusions as valuable educational moments. In fact, students were surprisingly critical of how often teachers let films "speak for themselves" or serve as a "way to pass time between units" without offering pedagogical support for the rich learning opportunities presented in historical films. Those students who claimed they learned the most from the use of film in their classroom remarked on viewing and critiquing controversial representations that were biased, inaccurate, propaganda, or otherwise problematic.

[31] For critiques of history education as the transmission of facts, see Alan S. Marcus and Thomas H. Levine, "Exploring the Past with Feature Film," in *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*, 4; and Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*.

[32] Films behave as cultural and historical documents, as cited in Gerster and Zlogar, "Introduction: Why Teach Visual and Multicultural Literacy?," in *Teaching Ethnic Diversity with Film,* 7-20.

[33] For exploration of films as both primary and secondary historical sources, see Alan S. Marcus and Thomas H. Levine, "Exploring the Past with Feature Film," in *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*, 4.

[34] Sam Wineburg contrasts the small amount of time students spend in formal history education with the many informal experiences that contribute to historical understanding in Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*.

[35] For a discussion of historiographic processes encompassing films, see Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies: Studying History on Film.*