

# ***Is Ignorance Bliss? Assessing Singaporean Media Literacy Awareness in the Era of Globalization***

ANNA PHANG AND DAVID J. SCHAEFER

*Singaporean college students (N=262) were surveyed about their awareness of visual media literacy. One hypothesis and two research questions are posed comparing awareness of media literacy components for two educational conditions—students enrolled in mass media production programs vs. those enrolled in other programs. Potential effects of cultivation and censorship on media literacy awareness also are explored. Findings include that media education corresponds to an increased awareness of media literacy; the effect was more pronounced for production-oriented rather than consumption-oriented components. Media students reported lower awareness of the ability to distinguish fact from fiction than non-media students, suggesting a cultivation effect. Conclusions address media literacy theory.*

In the new millennium, many people around the world have found themselves living in a media-dominated environment where globalized television, advertising, radio, Internet, and newspapers envelope them on a daily basis. Current levels of mass media exposure have been described as a raging torrent that has overwhelmed daily life for citizens in all developed nations.<sup>1</sup> In Asia, media consumption has greatly expanded with the rapid diffusion of new technologies, such as satellites, mobile phones, computers, the Internet, and cable services.<sup>2</sup> As a result, many Asian commentators have joined the global chorus of voices extolling the need for media literacy to

teach citizens how to reduce media's potentially negative influences, such as stereotyping, hate speech, promiscuity, and consumerism.<sup>3</sup>

In Singapore, a tropical island city-state of 4 million people off the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, the highest governmental media agency—the Media Development Authority (MDA)—recently began to advocate media literacy as a means to counteract the negative impact of media and prepare the country to become a global media production hub.<sup>4</sup> In accordance with its *Media 21* plan—which included plans to convert Singapore into a global media city by attracting \$20 billion in revenue

---

*Anna Phang (ANNAPHANG@SP.EDU.SG) is lecturer, Singapore Polytechnic; and David J. Schaefer (DSCHAEFER@GWIA.FRANCISCAN.EDU) is professor, Franciscan University of Steubenville.*