Making the Case:

A Landscape Scan of Contemporary Media Literacy Education Research

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SUMMARY

As the leading voice and convener for media literacy education (MLE) in the United States (U.S.), NAMLE is often asked questions like, “Does MLE work? How can we tell?” Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers alike agree there is a growing need for MLE in K-12 and higher education due to increasing volumes of misinformation, disinformation, hate speech, and divisive social messaging. While MLE is defined and approached in various ways around the world, this scoping review draws on NAMLE’s (2024) view of media literacy (ML) as an “umbrella concept” and distills emerging contemporary MLE research between 2016-2024 (n=100) into salient themes. This report, commissioned by NAMLE and researched and written by Andrea Gambino, highlights four key areas in a sweeping assessment of contemporary MLE research:

1. **Baseline studies**
   Baseline studies offer insights into the need for media literacies (MLs) that assess source credibility/bias, advance equity-centered practices, and connect youth media use with more nuanced perspectives of how they engage/respond to messages.

2. **Media Analysis**
   Media analysis is a primary driver for effective MLs and often includes evaluating information and source credibility, decoding representations, and emphasizing equity.

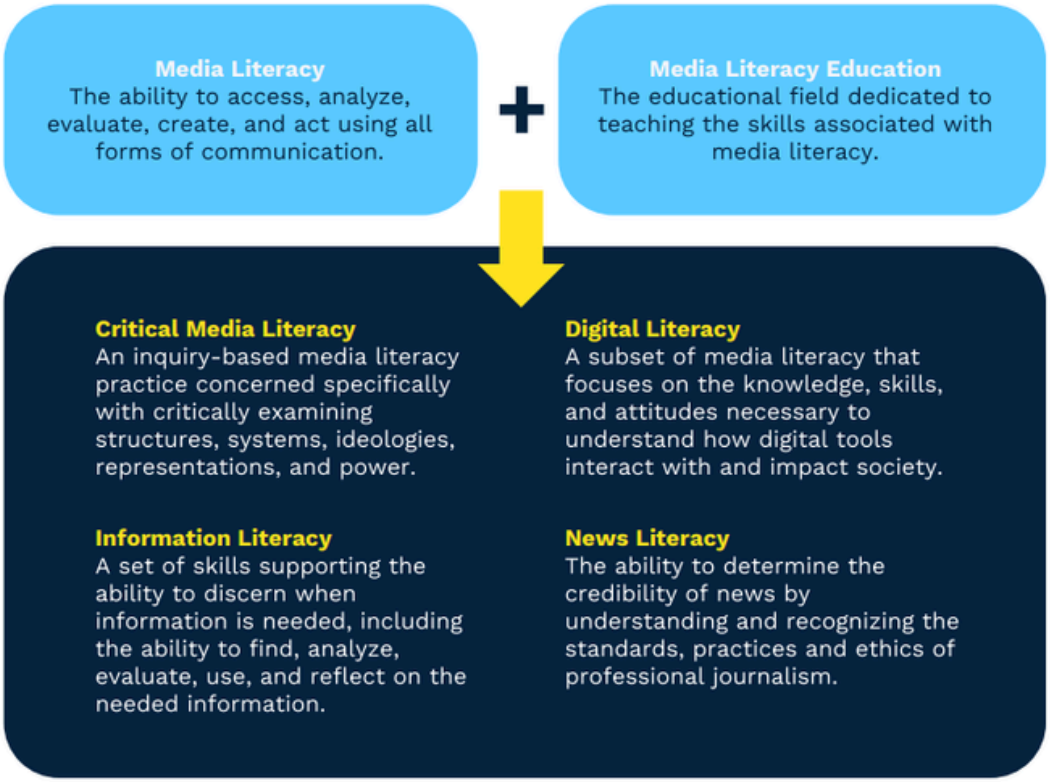
3. **Media Creation**
   Media creation works in tandem with media analysis, with most students who receive exposure to MLE producing digital and multimodal responses as well as alternative media or countermedia.

4. **Challenges and Opportunities**
   MLE challenges and opportunities emerging in contemporary literature reflect key outcomes in NAMLE’s (2024) “Snapshot 2024: The State of Media Literacy Education in the U.S,” which identifies the need for clarity and consensus-building as well as scaling and investing in ML.

OVERVIEW

NAMLE (2024) frames Media Literacy Education (MLE) as the broader field committed to teaching the skills associated with media literacy (ML). While ML has been expanding around the world (Mateus, 2022), it is also defined differently among researchers and educators globally (Potter, 2022). Several stakeholders adopt NAMLE's definition which emphasizes building learners' "abilit[ies] to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication" (NAMLE, n.d., as cited in Redmond et al., 2021, p. 37). NAMLE (2024) also provides a visual representation (see Figure 1) to situate how they define ML, using it as an "umbrella concept" that includes interlocking "contemporary literacies" (p. 5).

Figure 1: Situating Media Literacy and Media Literacy Education



NAMLE's (2024) perspective aligns with the trends in MLE discourse, which showcase multiple ML frames and techniques. The need for a multifaceted approach for MLs is integral because "accessing and analyzing media messages is deeply entwined with culture, technological experiences, the information ecosystem, and economic structures" (NAMLE, 2024, p. 5). The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) endorses an interrelated view. Like NAMLE, NCTE validates the need for a comprehensive approach to "media education" (Hobbs et al., 2022). Focusing specifically on disciplinary English Language Arts methods,

scholars have spearheaded innovative pathways in researching, teaching, and learning of critical media literacy (Lyiscott et al., 2021; NCTE Task Force for Critical Media Literacy, 2021), digital literacy (ELATE Commission on Digital Literacy in Teacher Education, 2018), and algorithmic literacy (Nash et al., 2023) among other areas.

To contribute to a more nuanced understanding of approaches to MLE and ML efficacy, this scoping review (i.e. research about a topic within the literature) draws upon NAMLE's perspective, which acknowledges the existence of multiple MLs. This examines a variety of sources, including articles, books, and reports (n=100), from both U.S. and international contexts to analyze multiple perspectives. Primarily focusing on insights and findings published between 2016 and 2024, the reviews aims to account for contemporary practices and barriers to MLE. Various search engines such as EBSCO Academic Search Premier, Google Scholar, and WorldCat were utilized, employing search parameters like "media literacy," "media literacies," "media literacy education," "efficacy," "media analysis," "media production," and "media creation." The research questions guiding this scoping review are:

- What trends are emerging in MLE?
- What ML practices are common in MLE?
- What barriers for MLE implementation must be urgently addressed?

To answer these questions, I begin by examining the literature to establish a baseline of contemporary MLE studies (RQ1). Next, I delve into emerging themes within the breadth of literature, focusing on media analysis and media creation (RQ2). Following this, I explore the challenges and opportunities for future MLE research and practice (RQ3). Lastly, I offer final thoughts.

COLLECTING A BASELINE

Several studies demonstrated attention to collecting a baseline of data to determine how students engage with various forms of MLE. Trends across some studies highlight a strong focus on identifying students' thinking routines when assessing source credibility and bias whereas others advance understandings regarding the need for equity-centered MLs, specifically those that help learners understand the impact of media on identity and the environment. While many large reports and other literature provide clear indicators about youth's media use habits, studies that mention students' and teachers' perspectives and whether they are included in MLE decision-making are scarce.

Assessing Source Credibility and Bias

The exponential rise of misinformation online has increased the demand for MLE to help counteract the spread of inaccurate information (McGinty & Gyenes, 2020; Pasquetto et al., 2020). This involves assessing source credibility and bias (Bulger & Davison, 2018; Chang et al., 2020; Roozenbeek & Van Der Linden, 2020; Tully et al., 2020; Tynes et al., 2021). Despite recognizing how misinformation can quickly spread like "digital wildfires" (O'Byrne et al., 2022), undermining informed decision-making, there has been limited systematic research on how young people assess information (Guess et al., 2020; Jacobsen et al., 2018). However, the Stanford History Education Group (recently renamed, Digital Inquiry Group) has been researching how teens evaluate online information for nearly a decade (Breakstone et al., 2021; McGrew et al., 2018; McGrew & Breakstone, 2023; Wineburg et al., 2016, 2022; Wineburg & McGrew, 2019). In their seminal 2-year project, they iteratively prototyped, field-tested, validated, and refined assessments that explored middle/high school and college students' "Civic Online Reasoning," which they define as learners' abilities to judge information credibility (Wineburg et al., 2016; McGrew et al., 2018). Based on 7,804 student responses to 56 learning tasks in 12 states, students grappled with identifying the differences between news stories and advertising, evaluating evidence credibility, and assessing claims on social media.

More recently, they conducted a study with over 3,000 high school students who evaluated a set of online resources and responded to 6 constructed responses related to political and climate information

messaging (Breakstone et al., 2021). 96.8% of students evaluating a website that presented itself as accurate climate science reporting could not identify that the organization publishing the material was receiving funding from the fossil fuel industry. In another task, 52% of students concluded that a Facebook video filmed abroad provided "strong evidence" of voter fraud in the U.S. primary elections. 8.7% of students received a mastery-level score on this task because they identified disinformation and provided relevant information to justify their claim. Only 3 of 3,446 students identified the source of the video, conducted external research, and applied lateral reading practices to develop evidence-based claims supporting their answers.

While civic online reasoning offers robust longitudinal data that interlocks with the goals of MLE, several other studies offer important insights into ML efficacy when guiding students to evaluate all types of information. Redmond et al. (2021) examines the effectiveness of media information literacy (MIL) instruction to facilitate students' critical and relational thinking. This method encourages students to move from media content analysis towards a relational examination that also evaluates media forms (e.g., the relationship between camera angles in a photo and possible media affects on audiences). Findings suggest the potential for deepening students' MIL competencies by scaffolding students' inquiries to focus on their critical and relational thinking when evaluating information.

Interrelated with Redmond et al.'s (2021) focus on building learners' relational MILs, Matthews (2022) compares the relationship between undergraduates' (n=23; ages=18-22; Midwestern, U.S.) news consumption habits, definitions of bias, and how their awareness of their own biases shapes how they evaluate news media. Most students (n=16) defined bias as "external" or as an issue requiring accountability for media distributors. Some students (n=5) defined bias as "internal," whereas others (n=2) operationalized bias as "internal and external." Results indicated that students who perceived bias as "internal" or "internal and external" were more likely to conduct additional research to examine multiple perspectives, discern source credibility, and challenge their own biases.

Equity-centered MLs

Contemporary MLE research has seen an increase in attention for equity-centered MLs that address identity-based and environmental media

representations, while also interpreting and acting on these representations to advance social and climate justice (Brayton & Casey, 2022; De Abreu, 2022; Melki, 2022; Ramasubramanian et al., 2021; Thevenin, 2022a, 2022b). This attention parallels NAMLE's (2023) Core Principle 9, which promotes "critical inquiry about media industries' role in society, including how these industries influence, and are influenced by, systems of power, with implications for equity, inclusion, social justice, and sustainability." Other scholars confirm the need to cultivate students' understanding of how media and power operate (Kelly & Currie, 2021), including questioning the systems and people who make choices that impact platform and algorithmic design (Joyce et al., 2021; Noble & Roberts, 2020) and interrogating possible implications on users' data privacy (LeBlanc et al., 2023). Part of this process suggests the need to prompt learners' inquiries about their own biases in tandem with exploring media distributors' biases (Currie & Kelley, 2022b).

NAMLE was a lead partner for "Mapping Impactful Media Literacy Practices" which provides a research brief and interactive "Field Guide for Equitable Media Literacy Practice" (Mihailidis et al., 2021). Part of this three-part study highlights educators' (n=27) perspectives around equity-minded ML practices. Findings suggest a strong attention to building individuals' ML competencies, relating ML with community well-being, civic participation, and social well-being. One of their interrelated studies surveys ML teachers (n=741) across fields and organizations about equity-focused MLs. Results suggest that equitable ML pedagogies should be: 1) process-based, 2) look beyond the individual, 3) embrace equity and inclusion (at the outset of their design), and 4) supportive of educators who may be working in unsupportive contexts. Other studies reinforce the urgency of critical, digital, social, and trauma-informed MLs that focus on challenging unjust representations and emphasizing culturally relevant and sustaining practices (Baker et al., 2017; Currie & Kelley, 2022a, 2022b; Stamps, 2023).

Exploring Youth Media Use Habits

Ample studies reflect an acute focus on exploring youth media use habits. Findings overwhelmingly indicate early learners and adolescents as being the most frequent media users globally (Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Bozzola et al., 2022; LaGarde & Hudgins, 2018). For example, two large national surveys provide insights into youth media use habits. Rideout et al. (2022)

surveyed 1,306 tweens (ages 8-12) in the U.S. and found their daily screen time average was more than 5 hours. Similarly, teens (ages 13-18) spent over 8 hours online, with 60% viewing online videos daily. Pew Research Center (2023) polled 1,453 teens (ages 13-17) in the U.S. and found that 1 in 5 visit or use YouTube and TikTok on an "almost constant basis."

Several studies explore challenges occurring in the media landscape. Ireton and Posetti (2018) note concerns about the probability of youth coming into contact with misinformation, disinformation, hate speech, and divisive social messaging. Other studies investigate concerns about the possible implications of teens' social media use. One study found that using social media more than 3 hours daily corresponded with teens' mental health challenges like anxiety or depression (Riehm et al., 2019).

Although many reports establish a baseline for comparing youth media use habits, minimal studies incorporate youth's perspectives about MLE in terms of their exposure, needs, or ideas for implementation. De Leyn et al. (2022) interviewed teenagers (n=31; ages 16-18) from 8 high schools (Belgium) to understand their perspectives about the need for ML for themselves and others. They were also asked to reflect on their own MLE experiences. The majority of teens shared concern-based or cynical statements pertaining to why others need ML (e.g., to reduce harm). In contrast, their self-perceptions indicated more empowerment-based stances. Findings correspond with the need for ML teachers to model "skeptical--not cynical" (NAMLE, 2023, Target Indicator 7.4) approaches to evaluating media and the "critical thinking about the messages they experience" (NAMLE, 2023, Core Principle 4). In addition, it also demonstrates the importance of cultivating MLs beneficial for youth empowerment.

To help bring youth into the design of MLE, a case study from the Netherlands provides an example of how educators and youth migrants in a Dutch participatory action project (critical media literacy intervention program) co-developed curriculum and instruction. Results demonstrated the benefits of teachers and students co-designing ML instruction that was more culturally relevant than their prior curriculum (before intervention), and how this intertwined with positive impacts on youth engagement (Bruinenberg et al., 2021).

Relatedly, Ulu-Asian and Baş (2023) investigated how 7th-graders (n=43; ages 12-13; Turkey) in a ML intervention program responded to different

forms of instruction to compare efficacy outcomes. Interviews, observations, and pre/post-tests (Critical Thinking Skills Test; ML for Entertainment Purposes Scale Test) collected over an 8-week period showcased how students' engagement preferences and ML skills differed when using popular multimodal texts and producing their own media (group 1: n=21) or analyzing traditional textbooks and questions (group 2: n=22). Group 1 demonstrated significant changes in their critical thinking skills, ML skills (analysis, digital literacy), and engagement (dialogue, active participation) whereas Group 2 showed marginal rates of improvement and a decrease in engagement. This study underscores the benefits of designing ML content and instruction that includes analysis and creation relevant to students' lives. It also values field-testing ML instruction that includes soliciting students' feedback and measuring efficacy (critical thinking; engagement) to further advance student-centered MLE research and practice.

Comparatively, in a scoping review of scientific literature related to MIL interventions for children and young adults, Andersson and Danielsson (2021) found only 23 articles that recorded whether youth received a role in decision-making about MLE interventions and which types of foci each program emphasized. They report that while most MIL interventions focused on cognitive or behavioral outcomes (e.g., preventative practices for online safety), minimal studies included media or learning exercises incorporating media analysis and creation. Like NAMLE's (2024) recommendation for scaling MLEs for young learners (preschool-6th grades), Andersson and Danielsson (2021) reinforce this need, observing that children (K-5) barely receive opportunities for having voice and choice in such interventions. While there is clear attention to the need for understanding youth media use habits and a demand for preparing them to maneuver complex digitally-networked media (Media Literacy Now, 2020, 2022, 2023, 2024), there must be greater efforts to center youth in the design and decision-making around MLE (NAMLE, 2024).

MEDIA ANALYSIS

Outside of baseline studies, contemporary research about MLE often focused on exploring the benefits of students' media analysis exercises. Media analysis often supported students' critical thinking skills by fostering strategic reading and research processes that guided learners to decode how information is constructed and never neutral. Media analysis also extended a foundational understanding about how all types of information require critical inquiry to uncover how messages use codes, conventions, and points of view for specific purposes that can be interpreted and responded to differently based on peoples' experiences and worldviews. From this, 2 sub-themes emerged, suggesting that effective media analysis practices often involve: 1) evaluating information and source credibility and 2) decoding representations and emphasizing equity.

Evaluating Information and Source Credibility

While the evidence indicates the need for comprehensive ML strategies when evaluating information and source credibility, current research demonstrates several approaches and skills to consider. Some approaches focus on questioning "author credibility" (Er-raid & Chouari, 2023) or "source credibility" and posing critiques or making media-to-self connections (Squires et al., 2023). Others outline strategies for conducting additional searches, collecting evidence, and verifying credibility.

For example, Wineburg et al. (2022) tested a classroom-based intervention related to Civic Online Reasoning (COR) with high school government students across 6 institutions to determine the impact of lateral reading on students' capabilities to evaluate online information. Lateral reading diverges from traditional "vertical" reading strategies that examine one source from top to bottom. Instead, it draws from a field-tested journalistic "fact-checker" strategy (Wineburg & McGrew, 2019). When interrogating a source for credibility, lateral reading strategies encourage individuals to open up multiple tabs on a web browser to locate and analyze information about the person, group, or organization that created the original media text. Teachers (n=12) who participated in this study received professional development and embedded 6 classroom-ready 50-minute lessons (provided by the Digital Inquiry Group) that were previously

piloted with 400 students to validate intervention efficacy. The lesson sequence included: 1) an overview of lateral reading, 2) lateral reading resources/exercises, 3) comparing vertical and lateral reading, 4) analyzing online evidence, and 5) verifying information on social media. Each of these lessons support the 3 key questions that drive COR curriculum: 1) Who is behind this information, 2) What is the evidence?, and 3) What do other sources say? (McGrew & Breakstone, 2023). One group of students (n=271) received exposure to experimental lessons, whereas the control group (n=228) did not receive an educational intervention before evaluating sources (Wineburg et al., 2022). Findings demonstrate that 6 hours of COR instruction yielded significant positive results for students' learning outcomes about evaluating online information when compared to their peers who did not receive the same intervention.

Alternatively, Mesquita-Romero et al. (2022) tracked the efficacy of a MLE intervention (critical media literacy) with high school students (n=29; Colombia) using the "Alfamed Media Competence" scale. Pre/post-tests demonstrated that exposure to the intervention across 12 sessions of instruction increased students' ML competencies in 4 of 6 overall categories (technology, language, ideology and values, production and dissemination). However, implications suggest the need for subsequent studies that gather teachers' and learners' perspectives to provide a more detailed understanding behind ML instructional design practices and students' learning processes.

Additional examples extend a focus on prompting youth's evaluation of information in order to make more informed decisions for their health. Scull et al. (2022) implemented a study with high school students (n=590; grades 9-10; 17 U.S. schools) to evaluate the efficacy of Media Aware, a digital MLE intervention focused on supporting critical thinking about evaluating information related to sexual health. Pre/post-tests and a follow-up study with participants recorded notable differences; students who completed Media Aware demonstrated strong ML competency-levels (evaluating and critiquing information), increased their informed awareness about sexual health practices, and were more prone to raise a healthy skepticism to popular messaging about teens' sexual behaviors. Similarly, Kim et al. (2024) tracked the efficacy of a MLE intervention with high school students (n=42 females; South Korea) to evaluate popular health media (i.e., smoking/vaping) and possible behavioral implications on participants over a 4-week period. Students' pre/post-tests and weekly

reflections demonstrated shifts in their ML competencies (critical thinking) and behavioral decision-making with many participants pledging to not smoke or vape. Each of these studies reveals the necessity of incorporating real world issues faced by students' into ML learning and application to enhance learners' digital and physical well-being.

Decoding Representations and Emphasizing Equity

Several studies highlighted media analysis exercises that focused on either single (e.g., race) or multi-factor evaluations (e.g., race, gender, etc.) of media when decoding representations and emphasizing equity. For instance, some studies focused on a singular topic of analysis (e.g., gender, body image, and healthy lifestyles) using various MLE interventions. Kim et al. (2022) explored how a critical media literacy intervention impacted preschoolers' (n=6) and kindergarteners' (n=6) emergent bilingual language development by allowing them to critically consider gender portrayals in media. Students analyzed gender representations in music videos over a 4-month period; they practiced applying their critical thinking and language skills in written responses. All students exhibited growth in their understanding about issues of gender (awareness, valuing multiple perspectives), critical thinking skills, and language development.

In an interrelated study with 6th-graders (n=54; ages 11-12; New England, U.S.) participating in a critical media literacy intervention, researchers assessed the efficacy of instruction which used YouTube videos and written responses to strengthen youth's abilities for decoding gender representations (Scharrer et al., 2023). Students displayed positive results relating to identifying positive representations of diversity as well as gender and gender expression. Learners also showed more awareness about the importance of challenging harmful speech online. However, findings suggest it is important to scaffold exercises to help students make evidence-based critiques across multiple forms of problematic identity-based representations (e.g., race and gender) rather than only focusing on one dimension (i.e., gender).

Another case study with undergraduate students (n=61; pre-service teachers; Turkey) compared the efficacy of MLE interventions by dividing learners into 3 groups; one intervention included an analysis of gender, another only fostered traditional ML competencies, and the control group received no exposure to ML instruction (Aydemir & Demirkan, 2021). Similar

to the findings of Ulu-Asian's and Baş's (2023) study, which suggests the advantages of designing media analyses to content and topics pertinent to students' experiences, Aydemir and Demirkan (2021) observed that students engaged in a gender-focused ML intervention demonstrated enhanced ML competencies across all 4 assessed domains: awareness, analysis, attitudes, and critical consciousness. Learners who participated in those who received no exposure demonstrated no change in ML competencies.

Alternatively, other studies investigated how decoding representations of body image through ML can impact behavioral outcomes. Bennett et al. (2023) conducted a pilot study analyzing a ML intervention using a smartphone app measuring participants' (n=37 females; undergraduates) media use and comparing it with their self-perceptions of body dissatisfaction over a 15-day period. Results significantly indicated participants' body dissatisfaction declined following exposure to the ML intervention. A more comprehensive meta-analysis of research on 17 ML intervention programs guiding learners to analyze how body image is portrayed in media revealed positive outcomes (Kurz et al., 2022). Across all cases, students demonstrated shifts from deficit-based to asset-based body image self-perceptions. While these studies each illustrate that examining "identity" is a valuable part of effective ML, other research highlights the need for multi-factor media analyses that addresses how systems of power shape identity-based representations in media and society (Aydemir & Demirkan, 2021; Baker-Bell et al., 2017; Currie & Kelly, 2021; Kellner & Share, 2019; Ligocki & Sturgis, 2021; NAMLE, 2024; Scharrer et al., 2023; Van Leent & Mills, 2018). Developing research in the area of ecomedia literacy (López et al., 2020; López et al., 2021) asserts the importance of including the natural world and climate information representations (Share, 2024) as part of this multi-factor or "systems-thinking approach" (Share & Beach, 2022).

MEDIA CREATION

While research evaluating the efficacy of media analysis was more heavily featured in the literature, several studies reinforced the importance of media analysis and media creation working hand-in-hand to build effective MLE. Media creation taps students' creative and critical responses to information by using their informed awareness and agency to produce, share, and act on knowledge using media and various forms of communication. Students can recursively use their ML knowledge to make informed choices, challenge their own biases, and select codes and conventions to help tell a story for distinct purposes and audiences with multiple points of view. They can also iteratively edit and refine their media, focusing on the learning process of creating a powerful story. ML knowledge helps students be mindful of potential audience interpretations and affects across different identities and standpoints. Various approaches to media creation demonstrated 2 salient sub-themes: 1) Digital and Multimodal Responses and 2) Alternative media or Countermedia. Although media analysis and media creation are disaggregated in this literature review to better identify practices teachers used to support ML efficacy, it is important to note that the combination of the two function together iteratively to foster students' ML awareness and applications.

Digital and Multimodal Responses

While numerous studies emphasize the importance of scaffolding students' evaluations of online information, particularly focusing on news media, others demonstrate the potential for integrating media analysis with media creation. This integration takes the form of digital and multimodal responses, demonstrating MLs alongside other disciplinary and civic skills. Jiang and Gu (2022) underscore the potential of youth remixing media through digital and multimodal composing (DMC) to engage civically by disseminating accurate information about COVID-19 safety precautions to the public. Meyrer and Kersch (2021) present a study conducted in Brazil, which concentrates on developing the media creation skills of emergent bilingual high school students. The aim is to bolster their language proficiency, critical thinking abilities, and digital/multimodal composition techniques. The authors documented improvements in students' ML competencies, including critical thinking and

digital/multimodal creation skills, as well as increased engagement, and language development. This reaffirms young people's belief in the importance of studying media relevant to their lives and the need for voice and choice in curriculum development (Bruinenberg, et al., 2021; De Leyn et al., 2022; Ulu-Asian & Baş, 2023).

Other studies emphasize media arts pedagogies, which not only foster students' appreciation for the aesthetic characteristics of art and media but also nurture their expressive and creative capacities as knowledge producers (Kellner & Share, 2019). These interdisciplinary approaches often incorporate various modes of media production and performance, leveraging creative uses of digitally-networked technologies (Thevenin, 2022a). Typically employing co-learning and constructivist strategies, these approaches facilitate students' creation of various art-forms, such as digital animations, music, aesthetic art for live or filmed theatrics, multimedia, video games, virtual or augmented reality. Such modes of composition aim to enhance student engagement and encourage their creative modes of communication and expression.

To explore the effectiveness of an arts-based inquiry approach, Redmond (2022) conducted action research with undergraduate students in 2 ML courses (each spanning 15-weeks) using visual journaling, both digital and multimodal. The findings delineated how visual journaling benefitted learners' skills in media analysis and media creation, particularly in comprehending their learning process and in fostering their agentive knowledge creation. Visual and remix journaling (digital) also enhanced student-centered and democratic arts-based learning. Like Mihailidis et al. (2021), Redmond et al. (2022) and Thevenin (2022a, 2022b) assert the importance of equity-minded MLs. They advocate for integrating media analysis and media creation exercises through media arts inquiries, which promote students' critical thinking and creativity to develop more equitable representations.

Alternative media or Countermedia

Alternative media or countermedia is frequently created by individuals or groups to contest dominant messages in mainstream media and to address instances of underrepresentation or misrepresentation of information (Kellner & Share, 2019). Cho et al. (2020) go beyond focusing solely on media analysis concerning public health information (such as the

effects of indoor-tanning) to compare the effectiveness of an ML intervention, which includes creating countermedia. The results showed that students' ML competencies increased after being exposed to the online intervention and engaging in countermedia creation across 3 ML domains: questioning authenticity, awareness, and behavior. Similar to the findings of Kim et al. (2024), whose study demonstrated positive behavioral outcomes among youth in terms of their commitment to avoid smoking and vaping, participant check-ins conducted at the 3 and 6-month marks in Cho et al. (2020)'s study revealed comparable behavioral outcomes. Several participants expressed their decisions to better protect their physical health by avoiding indoor tanning.

Furthermore, other studies align with the focus of Mihailidis et al. (2021) and others on promoting equitable ML practices that address issues of power and representation. Share and Gambino (2022) emphasize the benefits of utilizing the Critical Media Literacy Framework (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 8) for both media analysis and media creation activities. They offer examples illustrating how students demonstrated their CML knowledge, skills, and dispositions through alternative media projects. One such example involved the creation of a digital children's book, which aimed to raise awareness of the importance of diverse perspectives and representation (Share & Gambino, 2022). Another example provided was student-generated 'blackout poetry,' which involved remixing content from news sources and addressing real world issues.

Murrey-Everrett and Harrison (2021) piloted a MLE intervention (Critical Race ML "news groups") with a focus on guiding pre-service teachers (n=80) to analyze race, racism, and bias in news media. The intervention involved using critical inquiry strategies to select a topic, researching developing news stories online weekly, participating in small group discussions, and creating multimodal and written reflections. Results demonstrated that guiding students to create their own media analyzing racial representations in news media enhanced their equity-minded ML competencies, such as generating awareness and reducing bias. Similarly, Wright (2021) evaluated a MLE intervention (critical media literacy) with pre-service English teachers (n=14) to examine representations of teachers by creating remix videos. Participants had autonomy in selecting media and deciding how to mash-up their videos using multimodal composition techniques. Results indicated that participants' media selections and remix methods were influenced by their identities and lived experiences. These

findings suggest the importance of utilizing media analysis and creation methods to raise learners' equity-minded ML competencies, including awareness and civic participation.

Stanton et al. (2020) conducted a participatory action research case study involving Pikani and Apsáalooke high school and university students from rural Indigenous communities and participating in a MLE-related afterschool program. Students engaged in critical inquiry processes to select topics focusing on Indigenous wisdom and local issues, consulted community experts, and created countermedia (digital stories). The results highlighted the benefits of facilitating culturally relevant approaches, known as "Indigenous storywork," to media creation, which benefited students' ML competencies. Specifically, students improved their skills in analyzing and centering multiple perspectives, thereby honoring just forms of representation and celebrating diversity. Additionally, scholars like Cubbage (2022) and Yosso (2020) further emphasize the transformative potential of critical race MLs as essential lenses for analyzing and promoting racial equity in media and society.

MLE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

While the importance of MLE is evident as an urgent 21st-century imperative, the wide array of ML approaches being implemented present both challenges and opportunities. According to NAMLE's (2024) "Snapshot 2024: The State of Media Literacy in the U.S." report, which drew on survey responses from MLE stakeholders (n=130), several recommendations emerged. These include the need for clarity and consensus-building, the scaling of ML across all grade-levels, and increased investment to meet the demands for MLE.

Clarity and Consensus-building

While the MLE research landscape showcases various approaches to the teaching and learning of MLs, there remains a need for clarity and consensus-building (NAMLE 2024, "Recommendation 1") on how to define, theorize, and practice MLs (Allen et al., 2022; NAMLE, 2024; Thevenin, 2022a, 2022b). NAMLE's (2024) "umbrella concept" and NCTE's corresponding approach to "media education" (Hobbs et al., 2022) provide a useful starting point to unify the broader MLE landscape and form partnerships to advance several interlocking MLs (ELATE Commission on Digital Literacy in Teacher Education, 2018; Lyiscott et al., 2021; Nash et al., 2022; NCTE, 2018; NCTE Task Force for Critical Media Literacy, 2021). It is also essential to consider how the evolving nature of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and society demands a robust and multifaceted approach to MLE that evolves with these challenges. For example, the changing landscape of generative AI (Moss, 2022; Nash et al., 2022) and social media (Currie & Kelley, 2022a, 2022b) calls for continuous iteration and innovation in MLE by researchers and practitioners. Similarly, attention to developing MLEs that are responsive to challenges in the media underscores the importance of advancing equity with consideration for identity-based and environmental injustice (Baker-Bell et al., 2017; Mihailidis et al., 2021; Melki, 2022; López, 2020; López et al., 2023; Ramasubramanian et al., 2021). While this scoping review provides a snapshot of examples from contemporary MLE research, it is clear that subsequent research should delve into MLs with equal depth and detail.

Scaling and Investing in ML

Many scholars have emphasized the necessity for increased funding to scale ML (NAMLE 2024; “Recommendation 2”), focusing on both pre-service and in-service teacher training and support (Butler, 2020; Diano et al., 2023; Higdon et al., 2021; Kellner & Share, 2019; Kist, 2022; Trope et al., 2021). For instance, Harvey et al. (2022) surveyed 69 secondary English and history teachers and media specialists in Western Pennsylvania about their beliefs and challenges in integrating MLE. Results mirrored concerns highlighted in NAMLE’s (2024) report, underscoring the need for access to MLE training in media analysis and creation, curriculum development (including articulating standards and performance outcomes), particularly in learning environments with minimal support for MLE (Mihailidis et al., 2021). Researchers suggest that subsequent studies should assess the relationship between teachers’ beliefs, barriers to practice, and the efficacy of MLE training (Harvey et al. 2022).

Correspondingly, Korona and Hutchison (2023) assessed the impact of ML professional development courses on the instructional design practices of secondary English, science, and social science teachers (n=6). The findings indicated that teachers made slight adjustments to their prior instructional practices, including: 1) utilizing media to enhance learners’ background knowledge, 2) expanding explicit ML instructional scaffolds, 3) integrating independent exercises to increase learners’ ML skills, and 4) incorporating media creation as an assessment method. These findings demonstrate the importance of ML training to support teachers, emphasizing the necessity for professional development that offers ML approaches addressing real world issues.

In comparison, a study involving pre-service teachers (n=29) highlights a potential gap between teachers’ valuing MIL integration and their confidence levels in implementing MIL practices with their future students (Gretter & Yadav, 2018). Similar to teachers’ perspectives on barriers to practice (Harvey et al., 2022), Gretter and Yadav (2018) demonstrate a lack of explicit MIL modeling or scaffolding in their teacher training program resulted in low confidence levels for implementing MIL in their subsequent curricular designs. Likewise, pre-service teachers (n=78; Turkey) participating in a ML elective course for 14 weeks assessed the impact of ML curriculum on their skill development and confidence in integrating MLE in their future teaching (Erdem & Erişti (2022). The analysis, including

the “Media Literacy Skills Scale” assessments, and student reflections, revealed that taking a ML course increased pre-service teachers’ ML skills (such as media use and evaluation) and increased their confidence-levels in developing and assessing MLE.

Share and Mamikonyan (2020) conducted an in-depth exploratory study to evaluate the long-term effects of MLE courses, particularly critical media literacy, in teacher education programs. They surveyed 185 in-service teachers (elementary, n=53; secondary, n=132) across various content areas to investigate whether former students applied critical media literacy instruction after graduation. The findings illustrated the impact of explicit MLE coursework on critical media literacy integration habits in 3 key areas: 1) media usage, 2) media analysis, and 3) examinations of representations of identity and power. While the majority of surveyed teachers reported using media regularly, engaging in media analysis was more prevalent among high school teachers (63%) compared to elementary practitioners (31%). Similarly, the analysis of representations of identity and power was more frequently observed among high school teachers (33%) than elementary educators (22%). These findings suggest the need for a multifaceted analysis of pre-service teacher preparation and in-service training to evaluate critical media literacy efficacy across different disciplines and grade levels.

Overall, the literature clearly indicates the benefits of professional development for both pre-service and in-service teachers to enhance their understanding and integration of MLEs. However, emerging research suggests that access to such training remains limited. Many studies highlight the challenge of minimal availability of MLE training in teacher education programs and ongoing professional development. Addressing this issue requires investment to meet the growing demand for MLE, as recommended by NAMLE (2024; “Recommendation 3”). This necessitates a coordinated response at governmental, organizational, and institutional-levels, including funding and support for MLE professional development, along with national and state mandates.

While 19 states in the U.S. have taken policy-level action to integrate K-12 ML, digital literacy, and digital citizenship education (Media Literacy Now, 2024), legislative momentum must be accompanied by systematic approaches to provide the necessary funding and training for scaling MLE integration (Higdon et al., 2021). Furthermore, there is an opportunity for

collaboration with the global MLE community, which has advocated for policy integration in countries like Brazil requiring media analysis in compulsory schools (Lim & Tan, 2020) or the United Kingdom's MIL curriculum adoption developed by UNESCO (Grizzle et al., 2021). Leveraging the expertise, practical pedagogies, and diverse perspectives from stakeholders worldwide can enrich research, teaching, and assessment practices in MLE. International collaborations in professional development and in-service teacher training programs can facilitate the exchange of best practices, efficacy evaluations, and perspectives from educators and students across different contexts, thereby enhancing MLE efficacy and fidelity.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This study conducted a landscape review of contemporary MLE research (n=100) between 2016-2024 to determine current and emerging practices of MLs. MLE benefits some of the most crucial skills necessary for learners of all ages, including critical thinking, information vetting, and knowledge creation. Ongoing ML research is published regularly in NAMLE's Journal of Media Literacy Education. Baseline studies provide a foundation for contemporary MLE research that demonstrate a strong attention to: 1) assessing source credibility and bias, 2) equity-centered MLs, and 3) exploring youth media use habits.

While NAMLE's ML umbrella acknowledges multiple MLs in varying scopes and scales, a common area of effective ML instruction involves frequent practice for learners to engage in media analysis and media creation. While some studies offer examples of how ML practitioners approach media analysis, across cases practitioners have made visible the necessity for scaffolding ML instruction that includes: 1) evaluating information and source credibility and 2) decoding representations and emphasizing equity. While the literature more prominently featured examples of media analysis across MLs, other studies demonstrate how a combination of media analysis and media creation moves towards more comprehensive ML efficacy. Studies trace important modes of students' media creation for various purposes ranging from developing 1) digital and multimodal responses and 2) alternative media or countermedia.

Although there are both challenges and opportunities visible in contemporary MLE research, policy, and practice, there are also identifiable action steps that can innovate solutions (e.g., clarity and consensus-building, scaling, and investing to meet the demand for MLE). This strategic response requires collaboration amongst the subfields of MLE alongside governmental and private organizations alike. The advancement of ML as a global education standard depends on a community of teachers, students, parents, caregivers, researchers, librarians, and every person invested in advancing MLs as an essential cornerstone of public education and thriving civic futures.

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