

# **A New Definition of Reading: Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**

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## **Table of Contents**

Abstract .....	1
Introduction: Who is “Generation M”?.....	2
Literature Review.....	4
Changing What It Means To Read.....	4
Changing What It Means To Be “Literate”.....	5
What R U Reading If Not Books? .....	8
Present Media Literacy Standards.....	10
Shaping Media Literacy .....	12
Cynicism vs. Skepticism .....	14
Interactive Skepticism: An Effective Media Literacy Intervention .....	16
Proof Of The Effectiveness Of Interaction Skepticism .....	18
Why Media Literacy?.....	19
Method .....	20
Focus Groups .....	20
Grounded Theory .....	21
Description of the Questionnaire .....	21
Description of the Focus Group Method.....	22
Results .....	24
Focus Group Analysis .....	24
Questionnaire Analysis .....	28
Comparative Analysis .....	30
Discussion .....	31
Appendices.....	36
Appendix A: Consent Form .....	37
Appendix B: Questionnaire.....	38
Appendix C: Moderator Led Focus Group Discussion Questions.....	41
Appendix D: Focus Group Transcript- Media Literacy Students .....	42
Appendix E: Focus Group Transcript- Non-Media Literacy Students (1).....	46
Appendix F: Focus Group Transcript- Non-Media Literacy Students (2).....	48
Appendix G: Repeated Ideas & Themes- Media Literacy Students .....	50
Appendix H: Repeated Ideas & Themes- Non-Media Literacy Students .....	51
Appendix I: Common Words Used- Media Literacy Students .....	52
Appendix J: Common Words Used- Non-Media Literacy Students.....	53
Appendix K: Comparative Analyses- Focus Groups .....	54
Appendix L: Descriptive Statistics for Participants .....	55
Appendix M: Questionnaire Comparative Analyses.....	56
Appendix N: Comparative Analyses: Focus Group & Questionnaire .....	57
References .....	58

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to look at media literacy and how it is taught. Considering the rapid advances in technology which have led us to read more than just books, this research argues for a new form of literacy. Through focus group discussions and an analysis of a background questionnaire in support of those discussions, this study discovered that media literacy education in its current state may be having more of a negative effect on students than it anticipates. This research demonstrates the students who have taken media literacy courses, in direct comparison with those who have not, are more likely to demonstrate cynical attitudes toward media and be impacted by the third-person effect. The consequences of this, as well as suggestions for improvement, are discussed in relation to interaction versus dismissiveness and cynicism versus skepticism.

## **INTRODUCTION: WHO IS “GENERATION M”?**

Try to envision the last time you were in a crowded room with a group of people you know or alternatively, sitting down to dinner with your family or friends. What did you talk about? Did you talk at all? If you cannot remember what you talked about, or you answered “no” to the second question, you have experienced the impact of Generation M on our culture.

Generation Media, Generation M for short, are today’s youth. These individuals are highly dependent on media, and not just media in the most basic sense – a television or a radio – but on media devices which are portable, all-inclusive, and more technologically advanced than ever before. These individuals are packing 10 hours and 45 minutes a day worth of media content into 7 ½ hours (“Generation M2”, 2010). The Kaiser Family Foundation found that from 2005 to 2010 media exposure increased for 8-to-18-year-olds by nearly 2 ¼ hours daily, and that was before the era of the smartphone *really* took off!

Technology has been changing over the past decade and as a result, so has media consumption. “The mobile and online media revolutions have arrived in the lives – and the pockets – of American youth” (“Generation M2”, 2010). Considering the fact that in 2005, when the Kaiser Family Foundation first conducted this study, youth were already consuming an immense amount of media content, what is causing the increase? The answer to that question is simple: mobile technology.

Generation M is a media multi-tasking, platform agnostic group of individuals. They don’t care where they get their media content, how they end up getting it, or even who is giving it to them. All they care about, simply, is that they are consuming media – and they’re consuming media on multiple platforms at once (hence jamming nearly 11 hours of media content into only 7 ½ hours a day). These individuals can often be seen with a smartphone in hand, sending a text, reading a news article on the Internet, and listening to the latest hit single... all at the same time... on the same device.

If you think back to the question about the topics you talk about during dinner – did you find yourself realizing that all of your friends spend more time engaged in their smartphones than

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

conversation with you at the dinner table? Me, too. I've noticed that the common trend among this generation of teens is a lack of face-to-face communication and an increased dependence on media technology.

Growing up, I read books, I played outside with my friends and we had sleepovers where we stayed up all night long *talking to each other*. We might have watched a movie before bed at that sleepover, and my mom usually allowed me to watch a certain amount of television after I'd finished my homework after school, but I was more interested in playing with my friends outside. When I was 15, I was given a cell phone only because my parents were going to be across the country for a week and wanted a way to be in contact with me at all times. It took me 5 minutes to send a sentence in a text message. Today, I can send text messages with my eyes closed; I use my cell phone for an alarm clock; and I often find myself feeling "phantom vibrations" from my cell phone... when it isn't even near me.

However, that was 10 years ago, and today media have changed, and are changing, more than ever before. Internet usage is rising. 245 million Americans use the Internet today, according to Internet World Statistics. Technology has allowed for high-speed and portable Internet access, and we do not ever have to leave home without WiFi or 3G connections coming from our smartphones. Generation M does not need to have a sleepover to stay up all night talking to friends; they can just send text messages all night long with their cell phones which they keep underneath their pillows.

In addition, Generation M does not need a television in their bedrooms either (although 99% of 8-18 year olds report having a TV set in their home, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, with 71% of them having one in their bedroom). There are new ways of watching and new ways of consuming media. Media platforms have changed especially thanks to the Internet, and most of the content that Generation M takes in comes from not a television screen, but the screen of their smartphone, handheld reading device, or laptop. "Almost half (48%) of all 8-to-18-year-olds say they have ever watched TV online, and 30% report having watched TV on a cellphone, iPod or other MP3 player" ("Generation M2", 2010). Portable is

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

essential for this generation of media consumers and as a result of the portable technology, media have changed their content to accommodate this mobility.

What does this all mean? Since media are the primary means by which most of us experience the world, increased media consumption among our youth can only mean one thing: essentially all of their knowledge about the world is coming from the words and pictures on media screens. Our culture once learned about the world from verbal communication. Next, we moved to written communication and society concerned and scholars spent a lot of time and effort analyzing and freaking out. Now, our communication, and therefore our knowledge about the world, is primarily mediated through messages on screens.

Book or the Internet, the media have always had the power to alter our beliefs and shape our view of the world. Information is how we become informed citizens. Media are where we get our information. This study explores media's profound effect on culture and points out that, as a result of the effect media have on an individual, literacy in all media is imperative. Just as print literacy has always been imperative as it teaches individuals how to encode meaning from written messages, digital media literacy is imperative as technology advances... and we read more than books.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Changing What It Means To Read**

Our consumption of media and its impact on how we learn about the world is changing. In the past, we might have read books about other countries to learn about their cultures, or read a novel about a particular historical figure to learn about his or her life. Today, however, we can just use the Internet to do all of that, so why would we use books? In addition, on the Internet, we do not even need to read an entire book to get the information we want to obtain; we can read for what we want and stop when we get it. The Kaiser Family Foundation actually found that for the first time in years, the amount of time young people spend "reading" has increased. However, the study also pointed out that young people are no longer reading in the traditional sense.

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

Young people are “screen reading.” This comes with positives and negatives. For one, they are reading more than ever before, so that is a positive. However, reading skills among young people are declining – they simply cannot retain information, identify themes, or draw conclusions (Hayles, 2010). This is a result of the fact that what it means to “read” – that is, how they are reading – is different than it used to be. N. Katherine Hayles (2010) has spent considerable time looking at the parallel between screen reading and reading books. Screen reading, she argues, is faster and more sporadic; whereas reading from a book involves a closer attention span. In a digital environment, we are reading in a way which Hayles calls “hyperreading.” This is necessary, she argues, because digital technology and screen reading leads to an explosion of information all at one time in front of our eyes.

Reading on the web, and on screens, involves a lot more cognition than reading from a book. “The small distractions involved [...] clicking on links, navigating a page, scrolling down or up and so on – increase the cognitive load on working memory and thereby reduce the amount of new material it can hold” (Hayles, 2010). In order to move through all of the information thrown at us at once, we skim and scan the information for what we want to get out of it. We are overloaded with information and we have no clue how to properly handle it all at once, so this new way of reading is our only defense.

If technology leads Generation M to become increasingly dependent and attached to media and media are becoming more and more screen-based, it makes a whole lot of sense that the way young people are reading and obtaining information is changing. However, this begs the question, if reading is changing, why isn’t the way we are taught to become “literate” changing as well?

Changing What It Means To Be “Literate”

“Literacy” is by no means a new concept. Since the beginning of recorded history, it has been a marker of the civilized world, a measure of success. The ability to understand and put words together on a page constitutes literacy in the most basic sense – words which when put together create meaning. In order to make sense of the words, we must know how to “read” those words. To start the learning process, parents might spend time reading a story to a child

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

before bed, perhaps having the child try to read aloud as well. Then, children are sent off to school and the first of many tasks in their school lives is to learn to read. Putting words together for understanding and expression has always been the goal of primary education.

Five centuries ago, well respected scholars such as Plato worried about changing technology and how it would affect literacy. Earlier technologies such as the printing press made books and print literacy possible; however, this was the technology Plato feared. The spoken word was being replaced with written communication and Plato worried that all meaning would be lost and people's ability to communicate would inevitably deteriorate. Plato's apprehension was that there would be a greater risk for misunderstanding with written text because there was more room for ambiguity – the message was left to the interpretation of the individual reading it (Tyner, 1998). Today, technology is ever advancing; and although we are not concerned with the same technology and media that Plato was, his point still holds true. For Plato, media were being transformed from entirely oral to written text. For us, media are being altered by digital information technology. Either way, a threat to literacy is the underlying issue.

Despite the obvious differences in technology, we are faced today with similar issues: What do we do with the information that is presented to us? Do we know how to respond to the voice of the media and can we adequately distinguish facts and question information? Ultimately, while it's safe to say that his concerns were understandable, Plato was wrong. It is true that new technology alters the meaning behind what we view and even changes how we view it; however, Plato didn't account for one thing: it wasn't the technology, but the way we use it.

Marshall McLuhan said it best: the medium is the message – it isn't what we read; it is how we read. Although Plato worried we would never find meaning in written communication, and today's scholars worry screens will replace books, the fact of the matter is that people will always actively seek out information – what will change, however, is how they get that information. Just as individuals actively seek media, media are not passive, but active as well. Media supply information to us, but media also shape how we process the information and



**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

how we think. It isn't the message that is important as much as it is how we make sense of the message, which in turn, leads to how we make sense of the world around us. Again, it isn't the message, it is the medium. "[This] demands a new kind of literacy, rooted in the real world of instant information, global interactivity, and messages created on multiple media platforms" (Thoman, 2004). Mediated messages, the messages we now "read" on the daily, use a more complex language than written text, a language with sounds and images tied into words – a language with very different rules than print literacy alone can understand.

It is safe to say that we are past the point where we can say "technology is changing." Technology *has* changed. Whether we like it or not our culture is moving deeper into its digital age. Today, information and meaning come to us not only from words on a piece of paper but through the vast array of media which technology has made possible. We have cell phones, tablets, television screens, video games, and computer screens. Individually, these media have their own rules and uses, but together, they form digital information technology. Together, these media create the need for a completely different form of literacy than we have traditionally been teaching: media literacy.

The book is facing competition from the screen, and the screen is winning. As Christen Rosen (2008) points out "[...] from scroll, to codex, to movable type, to digitization, reading has evolved and the culture has changed with it" (Rosen, 2008). From what and how much we are reading to the way we are reading, there have been advances and alterations, especially over the past decade. Technology has made the book's time as the front-running technology obsolete, but not reading. For those who feared we would stop reading all together, fear not; we may actually be reading more. We are just reading *differently*. However, the question is why are we not teaching literacy differently? Such is the way it goes with change: it takes time for people to first worry and next adapt. Unfortunately, we have yet to adapt in a way that advances the teaching of literacy.

Gone are the days where books, which lend themselves to contemplation and probing questioning and imagination, are our only source of reading. We are now reading more than that – more than just books. Our reading spans multiple screens, sometimes at the same time.

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

Maryanne Wolf, developmental psychologist at Tufts University, explains that reading is not instinctive. Our minds are taught how to “translate the symbolic characters we see into the language we understand. And the media or other technologies we use in learning and practicing the craft of reading play an important part in shaping [us]” (Carr, 2008). The technologies we use to read today inspire a different kind of “reading,” one which is based on interaction and immediate feedback.

The internet is our printing press, our typewriter, our book and our magazine, all rolled into one. If we don’t understand how to properly use the technology, if we don’t become literate in media’s advancements, we will never truly be informed. Electronic media hasn’t destroyed media; digital technology has not destroyed communication. But these advances entail engagement and interaction, and with that, so should literacy skills. Media literacy and print literacy are not the same. Shifts in media technology call for a change in the way we understand and teach communication. The way “literacy” is defined changes as fast as the technology. Media don’t shape our culture, media are our culture. We must learn not only how to analyze the media and the information we receive, but also their purpose.

Literacy has always been the marker of success and intelligence. In the United States, we place a high value on literacy in our schools – print literacy that is. In theory, *media* literate individuals are better educated and well-versed in digital literacy– they have a better understanding and grasp of the information they receive. They understand that media should not only be “read” on the surface, but between the lines as well. Scholars and skeptics both agree that those who are skilled with digital technology and media will fare much better in their futures.

Plato’s concern was that people would misunderstand the “voice” of the new medium and that it would impede their understanding of what was presented to them. Our inability to “read” *today’s* media will do the same.

What R U Reading If Not Books?

Today, we have laptops the size of our palms, iPhones, iPads and even touch screen iPods which not only play music, but allow us to search the internet, too. Media multi-tasking is at

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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an all-time high. We can search the internet on our laptops for a breaking news story while we listen to our favorite band on our iPod, challenge a friend to an online game on our iPad, and watch our favorite reality show in the background on the television. Once, simple ways to get information, media now are part of our everyday lives – media surround us just as much as the air we breathe. What is different about now and 10 years ago should be obvious: our immediate access to multiple media platforms has altered the way we take in information; it has altered the way we read and *what we read*.

The Internet is a universal medium: “[...] the conduit for most of the information that flows through my ears and into my mind” (Carr, 2008). The Internet provides the information, and the media are how we consume that information. When did the Civil War end? We could look that up in one of the dusty books on our shelves, or we could “Google it.” With the immediacy of the new media, why would we ever consult a book? Carr says it is obvious that reading has changed, just look at anyone who “surfs the net.” “It is clear that users are not reading online in the traditional sense; indeed there are signs that new forms of ‘reading’ are emerging as users ‘power browse’ horizontally through titles, contents pages and abstracts [...] it almost seems they go online to avoid reading in the traditional sense” (Carr, 2008). Reading from screens, from computer or iPad, requires a different kind of mentality.

The most basic of differences has been alluded to already: when we used to obtain our information only from books, the assumption was that the answers were all there on the page. We never were led to look to other sources, or were distracted by hyperlinks and advertisements related to the content when reading inside the pages of a book. Since the information inside of a book is already organized and concise, there is no need to use problem solving skills or build our own answers. Reading from books actually requires fewer cognitive skills, believe it or not!

In addition to that, think about the amount of interaction that takes place with screen reading. I’m not talking about face-to-face interaction; we’ve already established that has decreased dramatically thanks to portable technology, but feedback. Digital technology has allowed for us to communicate via the words we “type” about the information we are taking in. With that,

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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the way we obtain our view of the world is not impacted only by the information generated by media content but also by one another more so than ever before.

While it is true that we aren't reading from books, we are "reading." We are reading from screens and we are reading content in a much different way than ever before. Think about it like this: You are reading a news article and inside of that article reference is made with a hyperlink to an event that occurred a week before. You click that hyperlink and suddenly you are reading an entirely different article, on an entirely different subject. At the same time, you're skimming the headlines on the side... oh, and listening to your favorite band. Think about how much information you are taking in at one time; it only makes sense that the way you read is changing based on what you are reading. There is no way this is not going to have an impact on not only how you take in the information, but on what you do with it.

Reading books versus screens is an example of how times have changed for media technology. If we are looking at a new definition of reading, we need to look at a new definition of literacy, too. Now that we "read" more than books, do we need a new "literacy"? The obvious answer is yes, and scholars have been working towards an effective form of media literacy for some time now... they just have not yet come to an agreement on implementation.

Present Media Literacy Standards

According to William G.Christ (2004), there has been no formal association which has directly addressed the standards which should be put into place for effective media literacy education. There has been progress, but not universally, especially in the United States. Among the first to address these standards is the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) an agency which outlines standards that all media programs must meet in order to achieve accreditation. Second is the National Communication Association (NCA), a group which has standards and competencies developed with the K-12 curriculum in mind. Standards established by the College Board take these ideas a step further. Three set standards, with six levels inside each, break down the objectives and expectations for performance. An understanding of these standards implies a

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

confident analysis of media literacy in a student. These standards are used to not only define what makes a media literate individual, but to measure what level of understanding K-12 students have when thinking about the media.

The following chart breaks down the current standards of the College Board for effective understanding of media – media literacy:

**Media Literacy Standards**

Standard 1: Understanding the Nature of the Media	<i>Objective:</i> Student understands the nature of media communication – Student recognizes that media messages are constrained and shaped by characteristics of the media channel and constructed collaboratively for a wide range of purposes. Student understands how media producers use feedback to modify messages.
Standard 2: Understanding, Interpreting, Analyzing and Evaluating Media Communication	<i>Objective:</i> Student understands, interprets, analyzes, and evaluates media communication -- Student analyzes how media producers use media channels and conventional production elements to achieve purposes, affect target audiences, convey a point of view and establish narrative elements. Student recognizes how prior knowledge, experiences, attitudes, beliefs and demographic content, as well as the context, affect the interpretation of a media message. Student evaluates the credibility and ethics of a media communication.
Standard 3: Composing and Producing Media Communication	<p><i>Objective 1:</i> Student analyzes purpose, audience, and media channel when planning for a media communication—Student plans a media communication by determining purpose, investigating audience characteristics, and selecting a media channel</p> <p><i>Objective 2:</i> Student develops and produces an informational or creative media communication – Student organizes what he or she knows and needs to know about the topic and media channel to determine the need for additional reflection and research</p> <p><i>Objective 3:</i> Student evaluates and revises a media communication – Student uses feedback to determine how effectively communication goals and aesthetic goals for the media communication have been achieved.</p>

(The College Board, 2006).

However, regardless of these standards, there is still a divide among scholars on what constitutes media literacy, and, there has yet to be one set “effective,” determined method for media literacy education. Faith Ragow (2004), the president of the National Association for Media Literacy Education, argues that the focus in previous standards and viewpoints hasn’t

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

always been on the “literacy,” but in fact on the media. Instead of setting our sights on how we can become media literate as a society, we are focusing on assessing the media – over and over again (Rogow, 2004). There is an immense difference between actually teaching media literacy and demonstrating students’ media *illiteracy*. It has become a “best practice” to preach cynicism, to keep children away from the media – rather than educate them on proper usage. It would never be advisable to teach any other topic to school children this way, so the question is: Why do so with the media?

Media literacy has been defined repeatedly by scholars and researchers. The most commonly agreed upon and quoted however is, “The ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of forms” (Potter, 2010). Most definitions have been some variation of this idea of media literacy. Media literacy, rightfully so, seems to be an extension of print literacy – an extension much needed based on the rapid advances in technology. However, a look at the example of reading from books versus screens points out that it is more than that.

While it is true that there are many definitions of media literacy and those definitions all differ in their own ways, scholars *all* call for media literacy as a benefit to society because media are connected to society. “The mass media have the potential to exert a wide range of potentially negative effects on individuals; the purpose of media literacy is to help people protect themselves from the potentially negative effects; media literacy must be developed; and media literacy is multi-dimensional” (Potter, 2010). The proof is easily seen in the move from reading print and reading on screens, isn’t it? Nonetheless, the concept of media literacy, and the need for media education, is relatively new.

Shaping Media Literacy

In 2010, W. James Potter’s Google keyword search of “media literacy” yielded 765,000 hits—today (March 2012), that same search yields 2,290,000 hits. That said, almost all of the writing about media literacy was published in the past three decades – which makes sense since the most dramatic technological advances have taken place in the last two decades. Information has become digitized, screens have replaced books, and media have converged more so than

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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ever before (Potter, 2010). There is no question that the idea of media literacy is growing and that curiosity and concern over the matter is at a high point.

No matter the definition or the scholar, media literacy is necessary for one purpose: to improve, through implementation of education, the lives of individuals by giving them more control over how media messages will affect them. It hasn't always been that easy though. Media literacy has progressed significantly since it first entered the conversation.

In 1959, media theorist Marshall McLuhan made what may have been the first step towards real media literacy education. He said he wanted to teach about the “grammar” of the new languages of new media rather than focusing on media content (Provencal, 2004). McLuhan is the same scholar who declared: That “the medium is the message.” It isn't the content of the message that creates an impact on an individual; it is the medium. “As much as media content, the media's ubiquitous presence and their role on daily living, constitute much of the ‘message’ for society: the media's impact on leisure time, on perception and judgment about society, and on the social, economic and political environment” (Brown, 1998). How we *react* to the medium and how we incorporate it into our daily lives is the larger part of media's influence on us, and the part that calls for literacy standards and education.

This brings us to the idea of reaction and what I will now call the two “schools of media literacy”: skepticism and cynicism. During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, media literacy education was understood as a “cognitive defense against the most overt and disturbing forms of sensationalism and propaganda pouring rapidly out of the growing [media] culture industries” (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009). In the 50s and 60s, a grammatical approach to media literacy education was developed, and efforts focused on fundamentals (basic theories and ideas) and a simple understanding of media functions. But media still weren't understood as the basis of our culture though. People still didn't get what an impact media had.

It wasn't until the 70s that media literacy education really began to be recognized as critical (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009). The problem now however is that media literacy education needs to move away from the cynical ways of literacy past. It has been all too common for media

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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literacy education to be based on lectures and a way of thinking which promote a misunderstanding of the culture. Media literacy needs to be skeptical, but interactive, as opposed to cynical and dismissive of media.

Cynicism vs. Skepticism

I pointed out earlier that Generation M is *consumed* by media. If you think about that fact alone, it should be easy to see that attempting to remove today's youth from media content is not only impossible, but ill advised. In her discussion of media literacy, Renee Hobbs (1998) points out that a major flaw in media literacy education is the fact that we “ignore young people's emotional engagement with the media – the pleasures they receive—we substitute cynicism and superiority instead of promoting real questioning and analysis” (Hobbs, 1998). As is the case with most things, if you tell children not to do something, not only are they going to do it anyway, but they are going to want to do it more.

Students are already attached to media as a part of their social being; it is the job of media literacy education not to remove them from this attachment but instead to teach them ways to understand the media. “Educators know that we cannot make people print literate by keeping them away from books. Likewise, you cannot make people media literate by keeping them away from media” (Rogow, 2004). It is my belief that we are teaching students to be cynical instead of skeptical. Instead of teaching them to question media, we are teaching them to believe media are all bad and that there is no hope for positivity. Additionally, with all that, we are attempting to remove media from their lives, or at least reduce the amount of media they consume, which is not the best approach based on how attached they are. What's worse, because we don't have an agreed-upon, effective method for media literacy education, we have no idea we are even doing harm with our current methods.

The assumption, it seems, is that since this generation is being raised with the technology, it is a “digital generation” with no need for proper instruction on how to use the media or decode the messages received from the screens. Instead, it seems to be that brief lessons containing warnings and terminology is all that is necessary in media literacy education. In fact, media literacy educators should instead be looking to help students develop a deeper understanding



**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

of media messages and not simply preaching about the negative implications and effects of media.

At present, media literacy education may actually be enhancing the third -person effect – persuasive media messages are perceived by individuals to have a greater effect on others than on themselves. I believe that media literacy education which is cynical and not continuous leads those in the slightest know to view themselves as superior and think that they know what it means to be media literate. These individuals might feel they aren't susceptible to media effects, which consequently makes them *illiterate*.

This brings me back to the problem that I think exists with media literacy education in its current state: educators are teaching cynicism. Students feel they are absolved of the media's influence solely because they understand that there is an influence. They are cynical about the media and assume they serve only to control or exert an effect on them. With that, as a whole, we aren't asking the right questions of the media. In the information age, media play an integral role in our culture, whether we like it or not, so it should be seen as imperative for us to be asking questions of them. If we cannot escape media, it is better to be skeptical rather than dismissive.

Rosgow (2004) suggests that we need to provide students the tools for understanding and analyzing media, and then allow them to put these tools into practice. This is something which has been suggested by many scholars. This is something which I agree with, and this returns us to my previous question: *Are we doing a disservice to students by preaching cynicism and never actually allowing for them to interact with the media?* At this point, I would argue that the obvious answer is that we are. To be cynical is to be mistrustful and dismissive. Media are an unavoidable part of our culture, so this cynical avoidance will never work. A skeptic might not have complete confidence or trust in media, but will keep asking questions.

Media literacy has for too long been about the negatives in the media and shielding children from them, rather than about exposing children to media in a protective way, which fosters teaching and learning. Just look at the research on violence in the media – the end result is

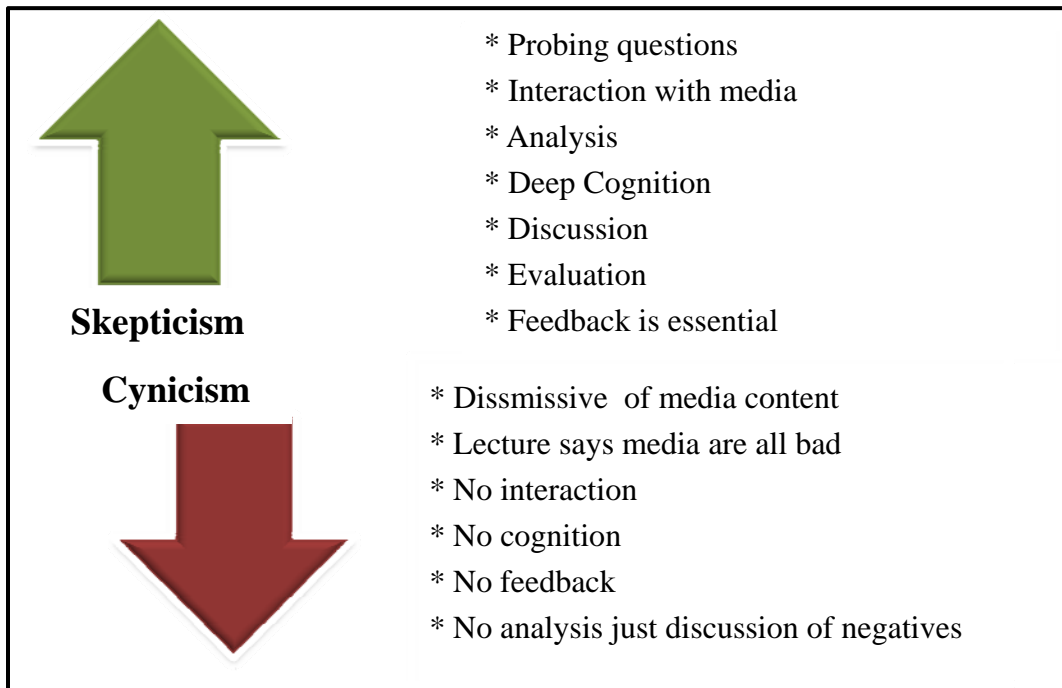
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*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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always an urge to remove youth from the media in order to avoid the negative effects. However, this is not only ill advised, but completely impossible. Instead, the promotion of healthy skepticism, a “consistent inquiry concerning how media portrays cultural, social, political and economic issues, coupled with a general understanding of the media’s role in civil and democratic society” should be at the center of media literacy education (Mihailidis, 2009).

When considering the obvious differences between cynicism and skepticism, it is easy to see why one would be preferred over the other when put into practice; so why has this not been looked at further? The following chart breaks down cynicism and skepticism, particularly in how we might analyze media content:

**Cynicism vs. Skepticism**



Interactive Skepticism: An Effective Media Literacy Intervention

Media literacy education is a form of an intervention. Media literacy interventions, specifically, are designed to help people protect themselves from potentially harmful media effects. “The term ‘media literacy intervention’ refers to an experimental treatment that introduces specific concepts to respondents with the aim of increasing awareness and promoting a deeper understanding of the meaning contained in media messages” (Bryne,

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*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

2009). The goal of a media literacy intervention is to provide tools for media literacy and in turn, teach people to ask the right questions when looking for answers in media. “As people apply these concepts to media experiences, they will build the cognitive skills required to process media messages in a more active way” (Bryne, 2009). But like everything in life, some methods fare better than others when looking for positive results. Studies show that there are effective media literacy interventions and ineffective media literacy interventions.

Based on the analysis of the literature media literacy education would be better off with an intervention strategy which is interactively skeptical. Media research has always used interventions as a way to demonstrate something. Interventions are specific in their strategy and have a purpose. Scholars such as Brown (1998) see the benefits of interactive media literacy interventions – these are the interventions which preach skepticism over cynicism. Brown (1998) refers to media literacy education which incorporates interaction as “Individualized Exploration and Discovery.” This is a process of education which allows students to interpret media messages based on their own experiences with them and their own performance of making sense of them (Brown, 1998). It may hold true that students not only will learn better, but learn more, if they are applying the skills they learn on a “real world” basis.

Students are exposed to the media technology long before they enter the classroom. Media are our culture. Babies are put in front of the television, and young children are socially interacting with the media and one another at the same time. Media literacy should take this into account, but at the same time, not assume this means students don’t need the education *with* the interaction. I believe that if media literacy education were to take into account the existing social development which incorporates media, it could be highly successful. Students already interact with media; it’s just a matter now of being sure that interaction is positive and promotes the right questions.

If we attempt to take media away from youth, we will only further harm them. Instead of a curriculum which encourages students to memorize facts about the media, a curriculum which encourages interaction with the media that they are already interacting with on a daily basis

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

and exploration of the students' questions and concerns would change the way media literacy education.

We cannot remove ourselves from media; media are everywhere. It should be impossible to teach media without interaction with media, and studies show there is hope for success in media literacy education which promotes interaction. Cynical lectures only serve to make people dismissive of media, which won't help anyone since it is nearly impossible to be dismissive of the multiple screens we read each and every day. With the rapid advances in technology and the increasing presence media have in our lives, media literacy interventions are necessary as an educational response to this age of digital information.

We learn more effectively when we are cognitively active during the process. Think about a classroom lecture where you might ask lots of questions and take notes versus one where you sit in the back of the room with a blank stare – which is more productive? In the same way that we are more likely to remember something if we repeat it after we hear it, we are more likely to benefit from media literacy intervention when we are participatory.

Proof Of The Effectiveness Of Interaction Skepticism

A study conducted by Sahara Bryne (2009) advances research which demonstrates the value of this type of skeptical media intervention. Employing three experimental conditions, she used the topic of violent media and its effect on aggressiveness in children uses three conditions. The most basic condition used lecture and no interaction – *what I call the cynical approach*. Children in this condition received a lesson on violence in the media, and violent movie clips were used. The activity condition, which promotes interaction and cognition – *what I will call the skeptical approach* – exposed children to the same content, but afterwards students participated in activities which supplemented the lesson (Bryne, 2009).

Results of her study indicated that when children participated in a cognitive activity as part of a media literacy intervention, they were less likely to use aggression after exposure to violent media. Existing research on media effects suggests that this should not be. Especially when considering violent media content, studies point to children being negatively affected. This would imply that Bryne (2009) uncovered a key to successful media literacy: cognitive

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

interaction, students actively questioning media and interacting with their content. This is the orientation that informs the remainder of this paper.

When considering media effects, the way an individual reacts to a message depends on the way the message is interpreted. When we see or hear something in media, it isn't so much the content that activates our emotions and reactions, it is the thoughts and memories we place with the content. Using cognition and interaction encourages students to immediately activate thoughts and memories and connect them to media content. Devoting more cognition to the material being learned results in more attention given to concepts and ultimately, the media literacy lesson (Bryne, 2009).

Why Media Literacy?

Media literacy has a purpose which spans not only media, but in society. There is a connection between media, media literacy, and the attitudes students have towards the media environment. The way we view our society is highly dependent on how we view media. "Media education has often made its priority to teach students to be critical thinkers of the media, to analyze the contours of media messages, and to deconstruct media messages in the search for intent, perspective, and point of view" (Mihailidis, 2009). Being critical of media is being critical of culture. Asking questions and being skeptical of information in both media and culture makes individuals more active participants in society.

The existing research and literature on media's effects on our society and literacy have made it clear that media literacy in its current state is far too cynical. In the classroom and in the world, individuals' attitudes about the media are increasingly negative. Research on media has demonstrated that media have an effect on individuals – often a negative one. However, instead of interventions which are preventative of the negative effects often triggered by media, currently, interventions only serve to reinforce the notion that media are negative. I believe that media literacy would be more successful if it were focused on a skeptical intervention. People need to be skeptical, but interactive, as opposed to cynical and dismissive of media.

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

The purpose of this study is to determine first, if college students who have taken courses in media literacy are more likely to be cynical of media. Second, are those same students likely to exhibit the third-person effect – the belief that they are unaffected by media because they are already “media literate”? This study will also look at the differences between students who have taken interactive courses on media literacy versus students who have no prior education in the subject. This study aims to determine whether or not media literacy education which focuses on skepticism, interaction with, and questioning of media will produce a more positive outcome than education which is cynical and dismissive of media and its subsequent influence – or worse, no education at all. If this holds true, the result of this study would be to demonstrate that an alternative method is necessary for successful media literacy: interactive skepticism.

## **METHOD**

### Focus Groups

This study attempts to understand the attitudes and behaviors of individuals. Collecting qualitative data and using grounded theory to identify themes in the data is an effective way to gain this type of insight. Although the collection of data through questionnaires and surveys lends itself to producing hard facts backed up by statistical analysis, this is often a misleading method for obtaining information about attitude and behavior. The focus group is a research method used to understand these phenomena.

During a focus group, anywhere from 6-10 people are interviewed at the same time – led by a moderator – and there is opportunity for interaction between participants. The discussion takes place without any insight from the moderator aside from the asking of the questions. Participants are encouraged to have free discussion; however, it is a controlled group discussion in the sense that the moderator determines the topics and length of discussion (Dominick & Wimmer, 1991).

Focus groups typically take place for 60-90 minutes, and they are recorded for accuracy of transcription. Once they have been completed, the moderator reviews the recordings,

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

transcribes them, and identifies themes within the conversations. These themes are then used to draw conclusions and make determinations about the attitudes and behaviors elicited from the topics of discussion.

Grounded Theory

Throughout this study, the use of grounded theory was necessary in order to obtain and compare a variety of data. Grounded theory is the “systematic generation of theory from systematic research” (Miller, 2005). It is theory driven by observation. Through observation, theorists who use grounded theory attempt to draw conclusions and generate new theories with their research, as opposed to verifying preexisting theories. Since this study looks to draw conclusions about new ideas, grounded theory is an appropriate method. Data collection in this method is typically qualitative by nature and involves observation and interviews (Miller, 2005). Since grounded theory begins with observation, focus groups can be used to achieve observational data.

Next, the key findings are analyzed for relationships. Grounded theory places importance on comparison. For this study, background questionnaires distributed to the focus groups were used to profile the participants and enhance evidence of the themes discovered in the focus group discussions. Through the use of a background questionnaire, quantitative analysis is examined and that information is used to better understand the conclusions drawn from the qualitative results. Grounded theory allows a wide range of information to be used to understand phenomena – in this case, the attitudes and behaviors of the participants with regard to media and media literacy education.

Description of the Questionnaire

Although the focus groups were the primary method for obtaining observational data, a questionnaire was useful for comparative analysis and for obtaining demographic information about the participants in this study. The questionnaire allowed for anonymity; however, the first page asked demographic and psychographic questions in order to determine if there were differences in media and non-media literacy students. The participants who filled out the questionnaire were the same participants who were in the focus groups. This was the preliminary step before the discussions began within the focus groups.

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

The questionnaire consisted of a series of 21-questions that provided a better understanding the attitudes of participants with regard to media. In Section I, Questions 6 and 7 asked directly if the participants had taken a course in media literacy and what their feelings about media were based on a 6-point Likert scale (See Appendix B).

Section II was broken into subsections A and B and prefaced by asking participants to think of themselves and peers of their age. They were first asked how many hours they spent with media, and then how many hours their peers spent. The next two sets of questions used a 5-point Likert scale to ask a variety of opinions about the influence of (A) product advertisements and (B) brands. The goal of these questions was to look for evidence of the third-person effect and compare the results of media literacy and non-media literacy students. The questions alternated in asking about the influence of media and ideas were repeated to check for accuracy in responses.

Upon participants' completion of the questionnaire the moderator led discussion began. I had hoped to compare the responses from the questionnaire with the open discussion responses. In theory, those participants who indicated that they were cynical of media would also express cynical attitudes and behaviors during the discussion, and those students who exhibited evidence of the third-person effect on paper would also do so in conversation. The completed questionnaires were compiled and coded for input into SPSS – a software program used for statistical analysis of surveys.

Description of the Focus Group Method

The goal of the focus groups was to gain an objective understanding of the attitudes and behaviors of students with regard to media and media literacy education. I hypothesized that media literacy students would display a higher degree of cynicism than non-media literacy students, and also that these students would exhibit the third-person effect. In order to determine the differences, if any, between media literacy and non-media literacy students, two sets of focus groups were conducted—two composed of non-media literacy and one of media literacy students. In total, I conducted three focus groups were conducted with undergraduate students on a medium-sized New England college campus.



**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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For the media literacy students, participants were solicited from Professor Susan Baran's Advanced Media Literacy course. This focus group took place during scheduled class time and students were informed of the focus group in the week prior. There were 13 students in this focus group. The questions were prepared in advance and included 4 questions: 2 two-part questions and 2 single questions. The goal of all of the questions was to discover more information about how individuals perceive the media and their role in their lives. The first half of the questions concerned the level of involvement with media and media literacy and the questions at the end were more focused on how the participants felt about media and their impact.

When deriving the questions, I wanted to ask questions which allowed participants to freely express themselves. The questions were vague by nature to elicit a wide variety of responses and emotions (See Appendix C). I began the session by explaining myself and that I was conducting research on the media. I explained that I wanted the participants to feel comfortable to discuss anything they wished. My anticipation was that through discussion with one another and thought about the questions, the attitudes the participants had toward media would reveal themselves.

In order to obtain participants who had not been previously educated in media literacy, I had to solicit students throughout the university. I requested the help of faculty from the Communication Department at the university and Dr. Chris Morse allowed me to solicit his freshmen students. These students were offered extra credit if they were to attend one of two focus groups I was holding in the next week. If they were unable to attend either focus group, they were offered an alternative assignment. This assignment was a 1-page response to a video on the importance of media literacy.

I conducted the two non-media literacy focus groups in the same way that I conducted the focus group with the media literacy students. The same questions were asked and the same approach to my involvement within the group was taken. However, these focus groups were not conducted inside a classroom, but instead, in psychology labs at the university at a time and date that did not take place at the same time as classtime. The first group had 8 students

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

and the second group had 10 students. The number of students participating in the focus groups (and subsequently the questionnaire) was 31. Despite the number of participants present in each focus group, it is important to note that in all three groups, the conversations were dominated by only a handful of participants rather than the entire group.

In all three focus groups, I began by handing out a consent form (See Appendix A) and questionnaire (See Appendix B). On the top of each questionnaire was a number and each participant was asked to identify him or herself with that number prior to responding to any question. This helped maintain anonymity and allowed for easier transcription of the conversations afterwards. At the end of the focus group discussion, I collected the questionnaires and consent forms and stored them separately from the recordings to continue to preserve anonymity. Next, I transcribed all of the conversations within the focus groups (See Appendices D-F). This information would later be used for coding purposes.

In order to analyze qualitative data it must be coded and then examined for themes central to the study's questions. I began by looking for repeated ideas within the discussions and gave each repeated idea a number (See Appendices I-J). This was the initial coding. After the initial coding, I reviewed the repeated ideas to determine more focused themes from the conversations. There were 11 repeated ideas and 5 themes within the media literacy focus group, and 15 repeated ideas and 5 themes within the non-media literacy focus groups (See Appendices G-H). This information will be used for comparative analysis between media and non-media literacy students, as well as between the observations obtained from the questionnaire and focus groups.

## **RESULTS**

### **Focus Group Analysis**

The analysis of my focus groups involved careful consideration of a variety of elements: word choice, context, frequency of comments, the intensity of comments, and the specificity of the responses. Ultimately, I was looking for what the big idea themes were within the comments made by the participants. In addition, it was important for me to consider the intensity of the

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

comments as I was looking for specific attitudes: cynicism and skepticism. Theme-based analysis is ideal for this type of research because it allows responses to be considered over multiple groups.

The first question focused on the participants' involvement with media. The point of this question was to get the group thinking about what media means to them, and how much of their time is devoted to them. First, I'd like to point out that, overall, the media literacy students were much more receptive to all of the questions and provided a greater amount of responses. This question in particular, however, provided a much larger variety of response compared to that of the non-media literacy students.

For the media literacy students a majority of the responses describing their involvement with media involved the idea that media are unavoidable. They mentioned over and over that we consume more media than we even imagine on any given day and that they felt "surrounded" by media. Many of the students pointed out the negativity of this aspect: "I think we are constantly entrenched in media which is detrimental to this generation," one student said. Another, "I think that because of the way the media operates we have our own closed bubble of what we actually know is out there." Overwhelmingly, students felt that they were unavoidably attached to media and their attitudes were very cynical.

When I asked the same first question to the non-media literacy students the responses were first, much more concise, and second, almost entirely centered on what the participants felt media meant. A majority of the participants responded by telling me where they got their media and all of them only spoke in terms of television or written news. "I don't feel like I have time to watch the news," said one participant, "... if I do watch TV, I'd watch a show [television program] over a news broadcast." For them, media are equivalent to news and news is equivalent to lies; however, they were much more positive about it, saying that they're aware the news is biased, so they take that into consideration.

I next asked participants to tell me about their education in media literacy and whether or not they considered themselves media literate. The aim of this question was to discover if the

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

third-person effect would be present in either or both groups of participants. While the media literacy students did mention that they felt they were more media literate than most of their peers, they also admitted to still being a bit confused and overwhelmed. Many students actually mentioned directly the term “third-person effect” or said they were unaffected compared to their peers. Others said that because we are so consumed, even being media literate doesn’t help: “I think that just because we are media literate doesn’t mean we aren’t affected by it ... it means we are more aware of the fact that we are being affected by it.”

“Today there is so much media coming at us at a time, I feel like there are a lot of mixed messages... it gets confusing.” For the non-media literacy students, this was the common theme from their responses to this second question. They mentioned feelings of confusion; however, they also felt they were somewhat informed in their own opinions. Common themes found in the responses to this question for non-media literacy students were with regard to the impact of media and positive attitudes about media.

The third question dug deeper into how the participants felt specifically about media. I only asked how they felt, and let the conversation go where it would. This is where the most obvious cynicism and negativity was demonstrated by the media literacy students. In their responses to this question, their intensity of responses was not just rising, but at the highest point. Common themes demonstrated here had to do with the impact of media and general cynicism. Most of the students mentioned that media are everywhere and always influencing us – an unavoidable aspect of culture—and most of the participants agreed that this is not a good thing. “It’s very rare that we make a decision without being pushed in some way by the media,” one participant said, “I think this is awful to be honest.”

For the non-media literacy participants, this question took a different direction. Many of the participants did not refer to specific examples, as did the media literacy participants did, but in fact simply referenced the response on their survey. “I put positive about my feelings...” said one student, “I put skeptical... even though I do have a somewhat positive view of media as a whole,” said another. Since the responses were so brief here, the themes were overwhelmingly related to positive attitudes and not much else.

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**

*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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For the final question, I directly asked students right out if they felt media had an impact on their attitudes and beliefs. The responses to this question by the media literacy students were extensive. Two themes, aside from the obvious theme of impact, were overwhelmingly present here: cynicism and evidence of the third -person effect. For the most part, the participants made mention of the impact media have on our daily lives in a very cynical tone. One participant mentioned disgust over just how much impact the media have on our beliefs, “I think the media has influenced us so much that we don’t know where our own culture ends and where media begins ... our culture becomes the media [...] I’m sort of ashamed when I think about it that way.” These participants also questioned whether we could even be “saved” from media, wondering if even media literacy education was enough.

With this question, the non-media literacy students once again though only in terms of television or print news, which as a common theme, they equated with lies. While they were positive for the most part, they did mention that it was difficult to quantify just how much impact the media have on them. They felt that media provided more grounds for asking questions – a component of skepticism—and to them, that was a good thing. “It provides that kind of impulse to go after more learning to find out what they’re [news casters] are talking about,” said one participant.

<b>Themes Found Within Each Question (Most Frequent)</b>		
	<b>Media Literacy Students</b>	<b>Non Media Literacy Students</b>
<i>Quest 1</i>	Media Presence, Cynicism, Media Impact	Presence of Media, Media= News = Lies, Positive Attitudes
<i>Quest 2</i>	Cynicism, Media Impact, 3rd Person Effect, Skepticism	Media=News=Lies, Media Impact, Positive Attitudes
<i>Quest 3</i>	Media Presence, Cynicism, Media Impact	Media=News=Lies, Positive Attitudes
<i>Quest 4</i>	Cynicism, Media Impact, 3rd Person Effect	Media=News=Lies, Media Impact, Positive Attitudes

Coding and analyzing this data allowed me to uncover a variety of themes which were helpful in understanding the attitudes and behaviors of the participants of this study. These themes

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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were also the basis for what I looked for within the background questionnaire. Appendices G-J list the commonly used words and themes within each of the focus groups.

**Common Themes Found in the Focus Groups:**

<b>Media Literacy Students</b>	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency of References</b>
<i>A: Media Presence</i>	13
<i>B: Cynicism</i>	35
<i>C: Media Impact</i>	46
<i>D: 3rd Person Effect</i>	12
<i>E: Skepticism</i>	13

<b>Non-Media Literacy Students</b>	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency of References</b>
<i>A: Presence of Media</i>	16
<i>B: Media = News = Lies</i>	19
<i>C: Media Impact</i>	21
<i>D: Positive Attitudes</i>	29
<i>E: Skepticism</i>	12

Questionnaire Analysis

The purpose of the questionnaire was to get some background information on the focus group participants and also to stimulate some thought that might lead to a more productive discussion. Out of the 21-questions on the survey, there were two important variables which I was looking at: (1) the respondent’s feelings about media, and (2) third-person effect. The first variable was quantified by question 7; however, the second variable required analysis of Section II in its entirety.

Question 7 asked participants, out of 6 options, which best described their feelings about media. Those who had listed that they had *nottaken* a media literacy course answered “Skeptical” for the most part. Those who had listed they had taken a media literacy course answered with a variety of responses, with “Skeptical” also the most frequent response (See Appendix M). The responses to this question will later be compared with what the

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

---

participants actually said during their conversations. It is important to note one thing about this question: some of the Advanced Media Literacy students who comprised the media literacy focus group selected they had *not* taken a media literacy course because that course was their first class in media.

In order to analyze the evidence for or against the presence of third-person effect in media and non-media literacy students, I ran a basic descriptive analysis of the responses and calculated the average of the responses to all of the questions in section II (See Appendix L). The questions asked all referred to the influence of media on (A) yourself and (B) your peers. For coding purposes, “M” refers to “Me” and “P” to peers.

Out of the six questions which asked how peers were influenced, 4 had a higher mean for non-media literacy students compared to media literacy students. This means that non-media literacy students are more likely to exhibit the third-person effect than media literacy students. However, when looking at the questions which directly compared “peers” and “me” in identical situations, in 2 of those 3 questions, media literacy students selected that peers were more likely to be influenced. This supports the themes found in the focus groups. Additionally, for all of the questions which referred to “Me,” the non-media literacy students indicated themselves as more likely when in direct comparison with the same questions referencing their peers. This would infer that they are *not* exhibiting the third-person effect, while media literacy students are (this will be discussed more in detail later, but in essence, I mean to say that media literate students seem to think they “know it all”).

**Evidence of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Effect**

<b>3rd Person Comparison, ML &amp; NonML</b>		
	<i>Media Literacy</i>	<i>Non-Media Literacy</i>
Ppurch	3.90	3.67
Mpurch	3.20	3.43
Pemotion	3.90	3.81
Memotion	3.80	3.95
Padver	3.70	3.76
Madver	2.60	3.14

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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The results of the survey were analyzed on the most basic level because they were only necessary for my purposes as a comparison to the focus group analysis.

Comparative Analysis

Comparing the focus group analysis to the questionnaire results is the basis of grounded theory. In completing two different forms of data collection, I was better able to understand and uncover the various themes the attitudes and behaviors of the participants. Examining at the data side by side, I looked for the same two variables (1) evidence of the third -person effect; and (2) the attitudes of students toward media—specifically, in terms of cynicism and skepticism.

When looking only at the questions referring to “Me,” non-media literacy students were 100% more likely to reference the third -person effect on paper; however, during the entirety of the focus groups, I only counted 3 references to this idea. The media literacy students, in the questionnaire, were not likely at all to reference the third -person effect; however, in the focus groups, I found 12 references to this idea (See Appendix N).

Next, I compared the ideas of cynicism and skepticism the focus groups and on the questionnaire. I found that for cynicism, media literacy students selected that option 2% of the time, compared to 0% for the non-media literacy students. However, both groups were more cynical in their focus group discussions, with media literacy students having 35 references to the idea and non-media literacy students 5. For skepticism, there was a similar pattern, on the questionnaire, media literacy students selected that option as an answer 5% of the time, compared to 14% for non-media literacy students. In the focus groups, the frequency of references was 13 and 12 respectively.

These findings imply that on paper, media literacy students did not deem themselves cynical, despite how cynical their attitudes were in the focus group discussions. Additionally, the non-media literate students were also more cynical in the focus groups, however, nowhere near as cynical as they were skeptical. On the questionnaire, media literacy students were more likely to answer that they were skeptical towards media (50%), despite the cynicism present in their focus group discussions.



**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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Additionally, because of the high frequency of positive repeated ideas in the non-media literacy focus groups, I also looked at positive feelings in both the questionnaire and focus groups. Media literacy students selected positive 1% of the time, with non-media literacy students selecting it 7% of the time. In the focus groups, the frequency of references was 5 and 29, respectively. Non-media literacy students are overwhelmingly more positive about media than their media literate peers.

<b>Comparative Analysis: Feelings</b>		
	Questionnaire (%)	Focus Group (Frequency)
Media Literacy-Cynical	2	35
Non-Media Literacy-Cynical	0	5
Media Literacy-Skeptical	5	13
Non-Media Literacy-Skeptical	14	12
Media Literacy Positive	1	5
Non-Media Literacy Positive	7	29

Overall, it seems that the specific attitudes of cynicism and skepticism contradict one another in the questionnaire and focus group, and the existence of the third-person effect differs depending on the method of data collection. This leads me to several conclusions about the attitudes and behaviors of media and non-media literacy students, and ultimately, the impact of current media literacy education.

**DISCUSSION**

This study examined two particular hypotheses about media literacy education. After careful consideration of both the focus group themes and questionnaire responses, these hypotheses both are both supported.

H1: Media literacy students are more likely to be cynical of media.

H2: Media literacy students are more likely to exhibit the third-person effect.

## **A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**

*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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My review of literature on media literacy and its subsequent education allowed me to make predictions and prepare my own research in such a way that I would advance the study of media literacy. As we rapidly progress technologically, it is imperative that we bring the lessons of media literacy into the classroom. Through my discussion with both media and non-media literacy students and my analysis of their questionnaire responses, I was able to conclude that media literacy, in its current state, is lacking some important foundations that could result in more positive results.

The most significant findings in this study have been that (1) media literacy students are in fact more cynical than their non-media literacy counterparts; and (2) media literacy students demonstrate the third -person effect more often than their non-media literacy counterparts. The background questionnaire allowed me to more specifically look at the third-person effect, and the discussions in the focus groups really focused on the specific attitudes of cynicism and skepticism. I found that responses to the paper instrument contradicted the focus group discussions – particularly with the media literacy students (these contradictions were not as strong for the non-media literacy groups). Nonetheless, the focus groups offered support for the attitudes and behaviors I predicted.

I think that the explanation for this could be quite simple: media literacy students know how they are *supposed* to think and feel. Their education to this point has argued for skepticism of media and to always remember that they are still vulnerable to the media's impact. However, their attitudes reflect the opposite of that. This makes sense. On paper, the questions they are asked do not have feedback or an audience; the participants are simply circling an answer. It is easy to circle the socially desirable answer here. This bias is what I believe caused the contradictions in attitudes from questionnaire to focus group in the case of both sets of participants; however, it was more profound in the media literacy students, arguably, because of their education up to this point.

Essentially, media literacy students in this study knew how they were *supposed* to behave but their attitudes in practice do not align with that. I believe this is indicative of the impact of media literacy education in its current practice. The literature points to the fact that

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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Generation M is consuming media all day, every day. The literature points to the fact that media consumption is increasing, not decreasing, all of the time. And, the literature points to the fact that our media environment is always changing. However, media literacy education is not exactly keeping pace. By educating on media without interaction, it seems students are actually becoming more cynical; even though they know they are supposed to be skeptical and questioning the media, they are disgusted by it. This could be a consequence of the fact that within their media education, they are not being immersed in the media they are learning about – not putting into practice the skills they are being lectured about, instead, learning dismissive attitudes.

“Regardless of how media literate you are in this day in age we consume so much media passively that I think it’s impossible to be unaffected in a negative way,” said one media literacy student. This statement really speaks to (1) the negativity and feelings of hopelessness that these students exhibited and (2) the cynicism they displayed throughout our conversations. In the minds of these students, it seems, there is no proverbial “light at the end of the tunnel,” and media will always be the bad guy. This is not the goal of media literacy. This should not be the outcome of the attitudes students display after taking courses in media literacy; but unfortunately, based on the findings in this study, this is the reality.

I believe we are actually doing students a disservice by making them more cynical and dismissive of media. Whether it was the goal of current media literacy education or not, students *are* more cynical, and that needs to change if we ever want to see a media culture that is more positive for us.

In addition to the attitudes of cynicism and skepticism, this study also looked at the third-person effect and found that media-literacy students were more likely to exhibit such an effect. This is just as important: after receiving education in media literacy, students believe they are unaffected, while at the same time arguing that no one else is unaffected. There is clearly confusion about what it means to be media literate.

## **A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**

*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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Students who are media literate should understand that they need to question media more often and not accept everything they hear or see – media analysis is important. Instead, they are dismissing media as no good based on their analysis and arguing not only that they are media literate because of this ability, but that they are better off than their non-media literate peers. This cynical attitude, coupled with behaviors that exhibit the third- person effect, does not spell out success for current media literacy educational practices.

All that said, it almost seems as if the non-media literacy students are better off. The results of my analysis did demonstrate that these students are more positive about media than are their media-literacy counterparts; however, they also had little to no understanding about what media actually are. The biggest concern should not be their attitudes in this case but their understanding. For the most part, every participant referred to media as merely “news.” Media are more than the 5 o’clock news. Media are everywhere. This leads to another important implication for media literacy education: it is entirely necessary for *everyone*. There have been numerous studies in the past which argue for media literacy education and that has certainly led to an increased awareness of media and their messages; however, that is not enough. This awareness may be what leads to optimism about media among these students, but awareness does not necessarily lead to skepticism and asking the right questions in this case.

It is important to note that a specific limitation of focus groups in general that might apply to this study is the fact that they are stereotypically a small sample and non-random by nature. That said, they typically cannot be used to generalize to the whole population. However, it is my argument that since media literacy and media literacy education are not practiced everywhere (at least in the United States), and the ideas are not yet comprehensive, this study should be indicative of current themes and trends. These are trends that need to be considered when looking at how current media literacy education is conducted. There is a need for change within this area and this is an important impact of the findings of this study.

So what does this mean for media literacy and media literacy education? If, as was argued by the participants of this study and the literature on media, we cannot escape media, why are we

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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trying to move away from it? Understanding the full impact of media on our lives is imperative to our culture; however, more important is that we understand it in the right way. Media literacy education would be more successful if it immersed students in media rather than lectured about them as if they were a distant force which we cannot control. If more people were asking the right questions, the answers would be different. If media literacy education was teaching students *how* to ask the right questions through interaction with media instead of simply instructing them to do so, their attitudes would be different, which means their behaviors would not only be different, but media literacy would be more successful.

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media  
Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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**APPENDICES**

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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Appendix A: Consent Form

## Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study of media literacy education. I hope to learn more about the traditional practices of media literacy education, including how media are perceived and thought about by students. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a current college student with daily interaction with media.

If you decide to participate, we will conduct an experiment involving the following procedures: a focus group during which there will be group discussion about media in general, as well as your own attitudes and beliefs towards media. You will also be asked to complete a survey at the beginning of the focus group. Each focus group should last approximately 90 minutes.

Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to the general public in a way that can be traced to you. In any written reports or publications, no participant other than the researchers will be identified, and only anonymous data will be presented.

This consent form, with your signature, will be stored separately and independently from the data collected so that your responses will not be identifiable.

Your participation is totally voluntary, and your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Bryant College or its employees in any way. If you decide to participate, you are also free to discontinue participation at any time without affecting such relationships. However, it is requested that you notify the investigator of this.

If you have any questions, please contact Theresa Navarra ([tnavarra@bryant.edu](mailto:tnavarra@bryant.edu)) or Stanley Baran ([sbaran@bryant.edu](mailto:sbaran@bryant.edu)). If you have any additional questions later, I will be happy to answer them. You can have a copy of this form to keep.

Please sign below if you have decided to participate. Your signature indicates only that you are at least 18 years of age and have read the information provided above. Your signature does not obligate you to participate, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

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Signature of Participant

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Date

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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Appendix B: Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions **before** we begin.

*Section I:*  
General Information

1. Please indicate your gender by circling below:

Male                  Female

2. Please indicate your age by circling an option below:

18                  19                  20                  21                  22

3. Please indicate your class year by circling an option below:

2015                  2014                  2013                  2012

4. Please indicate your major by circling an option below:

Communication                  Psychology      Sociology      Other Liberal Arts  
Finance  
Concentration                  Marketing      Accounting      Other Business

5. Have you ever taken a course in media?

Yes                  No

6. Have you ever take a course in “Media Literacy”?

Yes                  No

7. Which of the following best describes you when it comes to your feelings about media? (Please only circle one option)

Cynical      Positive                  Skeptical                  Negative                  Non-involved      Worried



**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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*Section II:*

Please think about the following series of questions in the context of yourself **and** peers of your age.

1. I personally spend \_\_\_ hours daily with media.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

2. My peers spend \_\_\_ hours daily with media.

1      2      3      4      5      6

**A.**

For the following, please think about the influence of *product advertisements* on yourself and peers your age.

**1 = Almost Never True    2 = Rarely True    3 = Occasionally True    4 = Often True    5 = Almost Always True**

1. My peers use advertisements to keep in touch with new product offerings.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2. I am more inclined to purchase an item after seeing an advertisement on television, the internet, or in a magazine.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3. My peers are more inclined to make a purchase after seeing an advertisement on the internet, television or in a magazine for a specific product.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

4. Media advertisements seriously impact peers of my age who often find they think about them constantly and what products they might buy.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

5. I depend on advertisements to keep me up to date on new product offerings.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

6. Media advertisements seep into my thought process and I find myself thinking of things to buy often.

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**B.**

For the following, please think about the influence of *brands* on yourself and peers your age.

**1 = Almost Never True    2 = Rarely True    3 = Occasionally True    4 = Often True    5 = Almost Always True**

1. I am extremely brand loyal.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2. My peers are more likely to purchase products which they feel they have a strong emotional connection to.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3. I purchase brands which are advertised to me.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

4. My peers purchase brands with which they feel they can relate.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

5. I am more likely to purchase a product if I feel a strong emotional connection to a brand.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

6. Brands which are advertised are the ones my peers are more likely to purchase.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
***Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra***

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Appendix C: Moderator Led Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. Please briefly describe your involvement and attention to media.
2. Prior to today, how would you describe your education in media literacy?
  - a. Do you consider yourself media literate?
3. Briefly describe how you feel about media.
4. Do you feel media has an effect on your attitudes and beliefs?
  - a. Why or why not?

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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Appendix D: Focus Group Transcript- Media Literacy Students

**1. Please briefly describe your involvement and attention to media.**

1: Social media influences where this generation gets their media from. Word of mouth comes from posts on Facebook and suddenly it circulates through other realms of the world.

5: Smartphones are useful with breaking news updates.

7: I don't feel the need to "watch" the news because we're always turned on to it and surrounded by it.

5: I think there are different views for people without smart phones or media technologies.

1: I think we are constantly entrenched in media which is detrimental to this generation because no one is able to focus.

2: For me as a media literate student... it's really hard to avoid those messages... but to get the in-depth analysis of what actually happens on the news... I go to more reliable and unbiased sources like the BCC, the news is bipartisan.

3: Its unavoidable getting a lot of messages, but to actually comprehend it go to an outside source. The major problem is trying to get the news without having it sensationalized. It's difficult to find the news on what is actually happening, it's about what do people want to see.

7: What is interesting to me is that you can tell from Facebook where the sources of their articles are and how it aligns with their listed political views

5: I think that I am more aware of visual imagery and assessing things differently [since taking ML]. I feel like I'm not just sucking it in... not a passive viewer... more of an active viewer.

3: I think that because of the way the media operates we have our own closed bubble of what we actually know is out there. When it comes down to that final decision about what I think about anything in the world, if all else is equal, I go with what I know and is in my thought bubble and it really doesn't matter if I'm media literate at that point because I think once you get something in your thought process you'll stay in that narrow line.

4: Regardless of how media literate you are... in this day in age we consume so much media passively that I think it's impossible to be unaffected in a negative way.

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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**2. Prior to today, how would you describe your education in media literacy?**

**a. Do you consider yourself media literate?**

5: I feel like I'm a bit more media literate than the average person.

9: I could take 10 more classes and still not know everything I need to know... unless you are constantly on the up and up you can't consider yourself media literate.

5: Even the 3<sup>rd</sup> person thing... I think yeah it doesn't affect me... I'm media literates so I think that I know I'm not affected.

7: I think that just because we're media literate doesn't mean we aren't affected by it, it means we're more aware of the fact that we're being affected by it... and when it comes down to it, that doesn't really help anything does it?

2: I think that being aware of how others are affected by media and how I am affected changes things for me.

3: Being in a business school, taking marketing classes as well gives conflicting messages... you have this skepticism toward the media which I think people should have... But it's a different thing to think about... I have to put my values and opinions aside when looking at marketing and that industry's values and goals, and then when I'm in a media class or thinking about media literacy, I'm supposed to let those values come back... that's just confusing on so many levels really.

8: Honestly, even though we can't avoid the messages, if we're media literate we look at them with different opinions and judgment.

**3. Briefly describe how you feel about media.**

3: I'm disgusted... with the classes that I've taken here, my thoughts and opinions towards advertising have completely changed perspectives. We should be ashamed of our country just the way that society is okay with companies constantly deceiving each other and ourselves.

1: My feelings about media haven't changed since taking courses in media literacy, but the way I approach media hasn't changed. No matter how much I know about media, I'm still going to consume it... I still need it. It's the way I approach the media I take in is different but my feelings haven't changed.

3: I think it's all summed up by the fact that 6 mega corporations own all the messages we receive. I mean how anti-democratic is that when you think about it really? It's disgusting. We become these drones that consume this media and I can just say whatever I want because of it sure... but at the same time we are limiting ourselves. We are stuck in this bubble that cannot be burst. The news has complete control over what they put in an interview they have with us—they manipulate the sources to give

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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the message they want to give and as a result all of our information could be a lie and we'd never know any better because we never ask questions about it. We do live in a democracy but there are so many people unaware that 6 conglomerates run everything were exposed to.

5: I think that it's [the media] made us all clones of each other... obviously I'm influenced by the media... everything about what I'm wearing right now wasn't a choice by me...unfortunately... it's kind of a depressing thought.

7: It's very rare that we make a decision without being pushed in some way by the media, we are constantly being influenced. I think this is awful to be honest.

5: Granted I am brand loyal to some things... I'm always caught with wondering is it because I know it works or because the media is telling me I should be brand loyal. How much influence does the media really have? I mean based on everything I've learned, it seems the answer to that is it has all the power whether I like it or not.

6: My education in media literacy has skewed my relationship with media to be honest.

2: When it comes to the media, I hold it more at arm's length... I don't love it... but I also don't hate it because I don't find myself being overly affected by it since I've learned so much about it already.

**4. Do you feel media has an effect on your attitudes and beliefs?**

**a. Why or why not?**

7: I think absolutely which is why we need to become more media literate early. If you think about it, you're always being persuaded and affected before you even have the cognition to know it's happening, and that's pretty sad. If they were more media literate younger, kids could make more choices for themselves.

2: I think advertisers can reach you subconsciously... they're good at what they do... If you're just tired and watching TV it's easy to get taken away.

11: It's had a major impact on me to be honest and I have a hard time trying to think of who I am and what made me that way... was it the media or was it other stuff, ya know? Does the way I feel politically have to do with the news station I grew up watching or my own knowledge? It's probably the media and that's awful to think about. It has had a huge effect on me, it just isn't something that is easily quantifiable... we all know... but to what extent I don't think we'll ever know.

9: I think that people pass on the messages we see in other media... for example TV and movies... and growing up we don't think about how these things define reality for us. The things that we watch and have defined us personally are similar all across the

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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board because they're these prepackaged messages that tell us how to think, how to feel and what to believe.

5: I was going to say no... I don't think I'm influenced... but really we all are looking at the fact that we're all striving for that body image that's instilled in us since we're 2 [in the advanced media literacy course this is the topic of discussion for the semester]... Tan... thin body... even though we think we're not influenced... we're all trying to look like the magazine models. Were influenced even when we don't want to be and that makes me really mad.

3: I think that media has influenced us so much that we don't know where our own culture ends and where media begins. Our culture becomes the media... that's what it is... and that's by nature of how this country came about... I think this is a country that's constantly struggling to find a consistent identity and I think the media is one of the biggest parts of it. If I think about it, saying I'm American is great but they're not all great things based on what I consume everyday... what we think of as news... as culture... as who we are... I'm sort of ashamed of it when I think about it that way.

5: Will those of us who are educated be more affected because we can vocalize it, or less? We can expose ourselves more because we know the language and we buy into it but I don't think it's helping us become less affected at all at this point. What's really changed? Nothing.

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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Appendix E: Focus Group Transcript- Non-Media Literacy Students (1)

**1. Please briefly describe your involvement and attention to media.**

17: We're all so connected to media at this point that there's really no escaping it.

18: It's mostly the internet I'm connected to to be honest.

19: Sometimes I do find myself overwhelmed with all the media we're surrounded with at any point during the day and sometimes I feel like I need to get away from it all.

20: I'm not very into the whole idea of media and being consumed by it. I don't let it dictate my thoughts. I'm kind of opinionated on the news I feel they're pretty biased on the news and I feel they're against politics and democracy.

**2. Prior to today, how would you describe your education in media literacy?**

**a. Do you consider yourself media literate?**

18: I took a cultural media class and they said there's a lot of news channels that show one side of the story but I mean, I don't know if that's all that bad if we know that.

17: I feel like it does have a lot to do with who you surround yourself with whether or not you're media literate. Even the classes we've taken now in college if you think about it. That changes your perspective to it... say you're in a friend group versus a class group, it affects how you perceive things.

20: I think that with technology advancing and things like that it's [media literacy] going to be good for education in the future... I think a lot of people get distracted by the media now. I think I definitely do. I think sometimes I've noticed it takes some people more time to notice what they're really here [in college] for.

19: In terms of media literacy... today there is so much media coming at us at a time, I feel like there are a lot of mixed messages coming at us... it gets confusing. Thinking of commercials I feel like I don't even know what to believe. Like in terms of commercials trying to get us to buy something ... buying into an idea with news casting

20: I like what you said about buying into an idea [number 19]... commercials are always telling you to buy into a product... a lot of news media wants us to buy into the idea that we need news media

**3. Briefly describe how you feel about media.**

17: I put positive about my feelings toward media [on the written survey]... personally I love hearing other people's perspectives about media even if I don't agree with



**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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them... I like being exposed to different opinions on situations... and different viewpoints

18: I put positive too, I have those set sites that I go to where I get my news from... I go to places that I know will give me true facts and won't get fabricated stories.

19: I put skeptical... I do feel as if I have somewhat of a positive view of the media, but I'm also skeptical as to whether they're telling me the real truth... sometimes I think they may not be your own ideas like if you think about how much time we spend on social networking it makes sense that they may be someone else's ideas... I think non-factual claims are represented in media, which isn't a great thing at all.

20: I would definitely say I'm skeptical as well. I love the idea of the media but I'm also skeptical because that's the world news that they're telling us and a lot of it is driven by money. I don't think that it's all bad but I would rather look into it myself than just accept it as fact.

**4. Do you feel media has an effect on your attitudes and beliefs?**

**a. Why or why not?**

20: For me it definitely impacts how I live day to day... but I wouldn't follow it blindly. But at the same time if they come out with something on the news and I would like to check on that I'm not going to be the only one saying I'm not positive yet... in my opinion skepticism is good in the news, but I don't think they lie about everything.

19: I think it also gets really difficult to check up on things the media presents to us. There are some things you can't check up on... that's a problem we run into today. All of the sources sort of say the same thing, and how do really know if that's the right thing?

17: I think that if nothing else it serves as a spark... it provides that kind of impulse to go after more learning to find out what they're talking about.

18: You feel like you have your set mind on an opinion and it causes you to question it... you have your viewpoint but you can hear someone else's and maybe tweak yours"

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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Appendix F: Focus Group Transcript- Non-Media Literacy Students (2)

**1. Please briefly describe your involvement and attention to media.**

23: I'd say with a smartphone I use that a lot. Just looking at sports articles.

22: I'm always on Facebook on my phone, Twitter, email.

21: "I'm always online, social media and all of that stuff.

22: I don't even watch the news... E news is as good as it gets for me... Ha

21: If there's nothing else on I will watch the news... but not really.

23: I don't feel like I have time to watch the news... if I do watch TV I'd watch a show over a news broadcast.

**2. Prior to today, how would you describe your education in media literacy?**

**a. Do you consider yourself media literate?**

23: I'd say a little bit. I feel like I have a common knowledge of what they're trying to do.

22: I feel like I understand their approach but I do get sucked in.

21: I have an understanding but I'm not really an expert.

**3. Briefly describe how you feel about media.**

23: I think media is really becoming an essential part of everyone's daily lives. Especially with cell phones and smart phones... people keep up with everything daily. I feel like a lot of people stay connected through it. Personally, I don't think it's a good thing. I don't even really like texting. I'd rather just call somebody. It's kind of weird now the way media is going. I don't really like how dependent we are, I think it's a little weird and I feel like media is getting too complex almost, especially on the social side of it.

22: I am a little skeptical about how far we're taking this but at the same time I do play along with it and participate in the media.

21: I'm not really skeptical about it because it is quicker and easier to just accept it as it is. But I prefer to hear my news online or on a TV news rather than the social media dominated world we've become.

**4. Do you feel media has an effect on your attitudes and beliefs?**

**a. Why or why not?**

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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23: I would say it sparks conversation, but personally I don't know... I'll listen to other people and if I'm wrong I'll admit I'm wrong but the media really stretches things... It gets over-obsessive, right now with Linn and Basketball, why focus on just one thing when there's so much else going on? Once it gets to be too much I just shut it off. I'd like to hear about a lot of news spread out not just one thing.

22: I think that if you're not connected with it you feel like you're missed out a little like if you don't check your messages or email or Facebook you feel alone for that day.

21: I kind of agree with both of them [the previous two speakers], whatever the big story is, I follow it until it dies out. I follow it because it's all they show. So it has to have an impact on my life because no matter where I go it's there.

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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Appendix G: Repeated Ideas & Themes- Media Literacy Students

<b>Media Literacy Students</b>	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency of References</b>
<i>A: Media Presence</i>	13
<i>B: Cynicism</i>	35
<i>C: Media Impact</i>	46
<i>D: 3rd Person Effect</i>	12
<i>E: Skepticism</i>	13
<b>n=13 students</b>	

<b>Media Literacy Students</b>		
	<b>Repeated Idea</b>	<b>Frequency of References</b>
<i>Theme A: Presence of Media</i>	Always turned on; consumed	9
	Social media; smartphones; Internet	4
<i>Theme B: Cynicism</i>	References to being cynical; no hope	23
	Feeling of helplessness	12
<i>Theme C: Media Impact</i>	Influenced	27
	Manipulation; control	13
	Identity issues	6
<i>Theme D: 3rd Person Effect</i>	References that insinuate 3rd person effect	7
	Media literacy hasn't changed me	5
<i>Theme E: Skepticism</i>	Need for a change	9
	References that insinuate skepticism	4
<b>n=13 students</b>		

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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Appendix H: Repeated Ideas & Themes- Non-Media Literacy Students

<b>Non-Media Literacy Students</b>	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency of References</b>
<i>A: Presence of Media</i>	16
<i>B: Media = News = Lies</i>	19
<i>C: Media Impact</i>	21
<i>D: Positive Attitudes</i>	29
<i>E: Skepticism</i>	12
<b>n=18 students</b>	

*\* Due to the wide range of responses, and smaller amount of response intensity, cynicism references have been grouped into the media impact theme*

<b>Non-Media Literacy Students</b>		
	<b>Repeated Idea</b>	<b>Frequency of References</b>
<i>Theme A: Presence of Media</i>	Always turned on; consumed	6
	Overwhelmed	3
	Confused	7
<i>Theme B: Media = News = Lies</i>	News is biased; tells lies	8
	"Media" as "News"	11
<i>Theme C: Media Impact</i>	Peer influence	5
	Influence in general	6
	Blindly follow it all	5
	Cynicism *	5
<i>Theme D: Positive Attitudes</i>	I'm not influenced	8
	3rd person	3
	Insinuating positive attitudes	11
	Media isn't that powerful	2
	I don't consume media	5
<i>Theme E: Skepticism</i>	Insinuating questioning	12
<b>n=18 students</b>		

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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Appendix I: Common Words Used- Media Literacy Students

<b>Common Words Used by Media Literacy Students</b>	
Media literacy	Unaffected
Social media	Negative
Influence	Cynical
Smartphones	Skeptical
Always turned on	Confusing
Surrounded	Ashamed
Entrenched	Disgusted
Detrimental	Feelings
Avoidance	Mega-corporations
Difficult	Depressing
Reliable	Pushed
Sensationalized	Awful
Bubble	Power
Closed	Identity
Narrow	Persuaded
Consumption	Sad
Passive	Choices
Subconscious	Reality
Mad	Culture
Change	





**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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Appendix K: Comparative Analyses- Focus Groups

<b>Comparison of the Presence of Cynicism v. Skepticism</b>		
	<b>Media Literacy Students</b>	<b>Non-Media Literacy Students</b>
<i>Frequency of Cynicism</i>	35	5
<i>Frequency of Skepticism</i>	13	12

<b>Comparison of the Acknowledgement of Media Impact</b>		
	<b>Media Literacy Students</b>	<b>Non-Media Literacy Students</b>
<i>Frequency</i>	46	21

<b>Comparison of Existence of 3rd Person Effect</b>		
	<b>Media Literacy Students</b>	<b>Non-Media Literacy Students</b>
<i>Frequency</i>	12	3



**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
**Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra**

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Appendix L: Descriptive Statistics for Participants

<b>Descriptives for Media Literacy (CLASS) Students</b>				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Media	10	1	1	1.00
Phour	10	3	7	5.60
Ptouch	10	2	5	3.40
Mpurch	10	2	4	3.20
Ppurch	10	3	5	3.90
Pimpact	10	2	5	3.40
Mdepend	10	1	5	2.70
Mthought	10	2	4	2.80
Mloyal	10	1	5	3.20
Pemotion	10	3	5	3.90
Madver	10	2	3	2.60
Prelate	10	1	5	3.50
Memotion	10	2	5	3.80
Padver	10	2	5	3.70

M= Me  
P= Peers  
These stats coordinate with Q 1-6 A,B

<b>Descriptives for Non-Media Literacy (CLASS) Students</b>				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Media	21	1	2	1.67
Phour	21	3	7	4.43
Ptouch	21	2	5	3.43
Mpurch	21	2	5	3.43
Ppurch	21	3	5	3.67
Pimpact	21	1	5	3.57
Mdepend	21	1	5	3.19
Mthought	21	1	4	2.9
Mloyal	21	1	5	3.52
Pemotion	21	2	5	3.81
Madver	21	2	4	3.14
Prelate	21	3	5	3.81
Memotion	21	2	5	3.95
Padver	21	3	5	3.76

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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Appendix M: Questionnaire Comparative Analyses

<b>Which of the following best describes your feelings about media?</b>					
<i>Choices: Cynical, Positive, Skeptical, Negative, Non-Involved, Worried</i>					
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Skeptical</b>	<b>Cynical</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Worried</b>
<b>Have NOT Taken a ML Course</b>	7	14	0	0	0
<b>Have TAKEN a ML Course</b>	1	5	2	1	1

<b>3rd Person Comparison, ML &amp; NonML</b>		
	<i>Media Literacy</i>	<i>Non-Media Literacy</i>
Ppurch	3.90	3.67
<b>Mpurch</b>	3.20	3.43
Pemotion	3.90	3.81
<b>Memotion</b>	3.80	3.95
Padver	3.70	3.76
<b>Madver</b>	2.60	3.14

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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Appendix N: Comparative Analyses: Focus Group & Questionnaire

<b>Comparative Analysis: 3rd Person Effect</b>		
	Questionnaire (%)	Focus Group (Frequency)
Media Literacy (ME Qs)	0%	NA
Non Media Literacy (ME Qs)	100%	NA
Media Literacy (ALL Convo)	NA	12
Non- Media Literacy (ALL Convo)	NA	3

<b>Comparative Analysis: Feelings</b>		
	Questionnaire (%)	Focus Group (Frequency)
Media Literacy-Cynical	2	35
Non-Media Literacy-Cynical	0	5
Media Literacy-Skeptical	5	13
Non-Media Literacy-Skeptical	14	12
Media Literacy Positive	1	5
Non-Media Literacy Positive	7	29

**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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**A New Definition of Reading: We are Reading More Than Books – Exploring Media Literacy in a Changing World**  
*Senior Capstone Project for Theresa Navarra*

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