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Editorial

Editorial: Inclusive Media Literacy Education for Diverse Societies

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Abstract
This editorial introduces the thematic issue titled *Inclusive Media Literacy Education for Diverse Societies*. We start by introducing our aims for developing a more open and inviting approach to media education. We argue for a media education that acknowledges a variety of voices, and that provides skills and recognition for everyone, irrespective of their social class, status, gender identification, sexuality, race, ability, and other variables. The articles in this issue address the role of media literacy education in relation to questions of in- and exclusion, social justice, voice, and listening. The issue covers a variety of critical, non-Western perspectives needed to challenge dominant regimes of representation. The editorial is enriched by the artist Neetje's illustrations of the workshop that preceded the publication of this thematic issue.

Keywords
critical pedagogy; diversity; games; inclusion; intersectionality; media education; media literacy; postcolonialism

Issue
This editorial is part of the issue "Inclusive Media Literacy Education for Diverse Societies" edited by Çiğdem Bozdağ (University of Groningen / University of Bremen), Annamária Neag (Charles University), and Koen Leurs (Utrecht University).

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1. Introduction

The seeds of this thematic issue were sown at the Inclusive Media Education for Diverse Societies workshop (University of Groningen on 11 and 12 November 2022) organized by the editors and Alex P. Smit (University of Groningen) with the aim of bringing together critical and alternative approaches to media education addressing the issue of cultural diversity. The workshop was opened by a keynote by Maria José Brites who articulated important conceptual groundwork to set the stage for dialogue on media literacy, diversity, and inclusion. The artist Renée van den Kerkhof (https://www.neetje.nl) visually harvested the keynote and subsequent panel sessions.

Figure 1 captures some of the main scholarly discussions in the field of media literacy education, which we seek to contribute to this thematic issue. Inspired by the keynote, key points of departure include: (a) An awareness of a plurality of voices, perspectives, and understandings of media literacy proliferate, which demand us researchers to be explicit in positioning ourselves as we produce knowledge on media literacy; (b) media literacy is not an instrumental, neutral domain, rather (critical) media literacy offers means to promote civic engagement and political activism; (c) a commitment to understanding media literacy education as providing the fundament to fulfil potentialities and promote critical thinking, needed for digital citizenship, participation, and a profound engagement with otherness, social injustices and inequalities; (d) media literacy should equip people with the necessary skills to consume, scrutinize and produce a variety of (digital) media content, alongside stimulating ethics of engagement and listening, needed to foster intercultural dialogue and understanding (see also Boyington et al., 2022; Buckingham, 2019; Higdon & Huff, 2022; Hoechsmann et al., 2021; Kellner & Share, 2019).

Figure 1. The need for a diversity of voices in media literacy studies. Image by Neetje (2022).

Of particular urgency during the Covid-19 health pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the impending global warming-induced climate catastrophe, media literacy has often been considered the antidote to the problem of misinformation, giving people the skills for fact-checking and fighting fake news (Stoddard et al., 2021). Conceptualizing media literacy through a set of skills and overemphasizing the role of accuracy of media content, runs the risk of ignoring the ideological role of media practices in establishing and maintaining the socio-political mechanisms of marginalization and exclusion. Thus, for media literacy education to be able to address media injustices and contribute to inclusion, equity, and social justice, it needs to address how a specific racialized, heteronormative, able-body-oriented order is maintained through the media. Moreover, we need to re-design educational programs to support the inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable people in society (Neag et al., 2022).

In order to design a more inclusive approach to media literacy education, we can benefit from existing strands of critical research including critical pedagogy, postcolonial and decolonial theory, indigenous thinking, Afrofuturism, and pedagogy of Black livingness (Griffin & Turner, 2021) among others. We believe that media education can address media injustices and contribute to a more just society by challenging existing regimes of representation. This requires a continuous critical self-reflection process on the side of scholars, educators, practitioners, policy-makers, media-makers, and participants of education programs (Keifer-Boyd et al., 2022). Furthermore, injustices that the media creates or challenges can only be understood through an intersectional approach looking at the mutual constitution of social class, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, migration status, generation, age, and ability (Hill-Collins & Bilge, 2020). We also believe in the potential of media for amplifying voices of those who are vulnerable and marginalized by existing social structures (Butler, 2021). Several programs exist that offer media production education for marginalized communities. However, these often address minorities and other marginalized groups in undifferentiated categories of for example "sexual minorities," "migrants," or "refugees," there is also a need for approaches that recognize the distinct histories and experiences of exclusion in society and the media environments. Researchers addressing the ideas, practices, and materials of critical media literacy education draw from quantitative

and qualitative approaches, ranging from discourse analysis, participatory action research, focus groups, and interviews to case studies or surveys. This thematic issue brings together articles from scholars with a variety of disciplinary orientations, individual contributions address one or more of the above-mentioned points with the aim of developing a more inclusive approach to media education.

2. Overview of the Articles

With the aim of contributing to the rethinking of questions of inclusion, equality, and difference in relation to media literacy, this thematic issue presents 15 articles that develop critical and alternative perspectives, studies, and interventions in the field of media education. Figures 3, 4, 5, and 6 offer visualizations of a selection of the articles presented.

The first article in this thematic issue, titled "Children's News Media as a Space for Learning About Difference" is authored by communication scholar Camilla Haavisto, education scholar Avanti Chajed, and journalism researcher Rasmus Kyllönen (Haavisto et al., 2022). Haavisto et al. (2022) consider how ideas about difference and sameness underpin the lived curriculum of media professionals. They do so by addressing how media products in the Finnish context targeting children discursively construct possible means of co-habiting with difference. The authors put conviviality on the agenda of critical media literacy studies, a critical concept developed by postcolonial theorist Paul Gilroy to address "multiculture [as] an ordinary feature of social life" (Gilroy, 2005, p. xv). Foregrounding the relevance of studying ordinary, everyday lived experiences of difference, and its (digital) mediation, new connections are established between media education and dialogues on mediated cosmopolitanism (Ponzanesi, 2020). Media education scholars Julian McDougall and Isabella Rega (2022), with their article titled "Beyond Solutionism: Differently Motivating Media Literacy," take us on a journey through several countries (Bangladesh, Tunisia, Turkey, and the UK) where they carried out media literacy projects as they argue for a theory of change. They show how this theory of change rather than a neutral, universal set of competences can situate media literacy as a form of context-bound capability development that takes into account the complexities of diverse societies.

Communication scholars Ana Filipa Oliveira, Maria José Brites, and Carla Cerqueira (2022), in the third article titled "Intergenerational Perspectives on Media and Fake News During Covid-19: Results From Online Intergenerational Focus Groups" demonstrate the

Figure 2. Visual harvest of the arguments made in the articles by Haavisto et al. (2022), Oliveira et al. (2022), and Tsene (2022). Image by Neetje (2022).

urgency of considering the axis of generation in studying media literacies. The authors use online intergenerational focus groups to attend to unequal access, use, and understanding of information. Verifying information has been of particular urgency during the Covid-19 pandemic, because in the words of World Health Organization director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, “We’re not just fighting a pandemic; we’re fighting an infodemic” (Ghebreyesus, 2020). The article also offers methodological insight into the participatory and creative elicitation technique of using hand drawings during focus groups. The fourth article “Using Comics as a Media Literacy Tool for Marginalised Groups: The Case of Athens Comics Library” by Lida Tsene (2022) takes comics as a multimodal tool to foster media literacy. Media scholar Tsene, who is also the founder of the Athens Comics Library, in this commentary piece draws from experiences with refugee populations. Tsene directs attention to the distinctive medium-specificity of media genres media educators work with. Each media has specific affordances, enabling particular practices and processes, and discarding others. The process of drawing comics reveals particular potentialities for creative expression and engagement with the politics of difference.

In the fifth article, “Storytelling as Media Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue in Post-Colonial Societies,” Maria Teresa Cruz’s and Madalena Miranda’s (2022) thought-provoking article, they reflect upon the possibilities of digital storytelling to re-open and re-discuss issues connected to African-European heritage, histories, and shared identities. The authors provide an in-depth discussion on how digital technologies and media literacy education can provide meaningful tools for intercultural dialogue. Çiğdem Bozdağ (2022), in the sixth article, “Inclusive Media Education in the Diverse Classroom: A Participatory Action Research in Germany,” presents the findings of a project that aimed to analyze the everyday media use of young people with diverse cultural backgrounds in a socio-economically disadvantaged neighborhood and co-develop teaching modules on media literacy education from an intercultural perspective. In the seventh article, “Aspiring to Dutchness: Media Literacy, Integration, and Communication with Eritrean Status Holders,” cultural studies scholars Rosanne van Kommer and Joke Hermes (2022) discuss the role of media literacy in communication processes between professionals and Eritrean status holders in the mandatory Dutch integration process. Based on qualitative interviews, they demonstrate the need to decolonize and rethink media literacy and citizenship beyond neoliberal and Western-centric frameworks. Gilda Seddighi (2022), in the eighth article titled “Taking a Dialogical

Figure 3. Visual harvest of the arguments made in the articles by Cruz and Miranda (2022), Bozdağ (2022), and Seddighi (2022). Image by Neetje (2022).

Approach to Guiding Gaming Practices in a Non-Family Context," analyzes the perception of gaming practices among unaccompanied refugee youth and social workers in different organizations in Norway. She discusses the importance of a dialogue between the youth and the social workers about gaming and media literacy among youth as gaming has the potential to help in fostering social connections and coping with trauma among the unaccompanied refugee youth.

Education scholars Sílvia Melo-Pfeifer and Helena Dedecek Gertz (2022) discuss the potentials of using disinformation about migration as a pedagogical source for intercultural learning and diversity awareness in the ninth article titled "Transforming Disinformation on Minorities Into a Pedagogical Resource: Towards a Critical Intercultural News Literacy." They propose the concept of "critical intercultural news literacy" for critically analyzing the representation patterns of refugees and migrants in the news. In the tenth article, titled "Joining and Gaining Knowledge From Digital Literacy Courses: How Perceptions of Internet and Technology Outweigh Socio-Demographic Factors," new media scholars Azi Lev-On, Hama Abu-Kishk, and Nili Steinfeld (2022) present the findings of a research project carried out in Israel assessing the short-term effects of participation in computer and internet literacy programs. Interestingly, the authors found that both motivations and knowledge gains were predicted almost exclusively by participants' perceptions of technology and the Internet, and not by socio-demographic or other variables. In the eleventh article "When Everyone Wins: Dialogue, Play, and Black History for Critical Games Education," game and education studies scholars Rebecca Rouse and Amy Corron Youmans (2022) discuss the potential of using dialogue for adopting critical and anti-racist pedagogy in game design education. More specifically, they discuss the potential of transformation through dialogue among students in game design practice focusing on the legacy of Harriet Tubman, who was a black anti-slavery activist.

In the twelfth article, "Digital Rights, Institutionalized Youths, and Contexts of Inequalities," communication scholars Maria José Brites and Teresa Sofia Castro (2022) focus on institutionalized youth. They address how their digital environments are regulated by the institutions and their engagement with the media. Building on the data collected in the DiCi-Educa project in Portugal, the authors point out different levels of constraints on the digital rights of the institutionalized youth, who only have limited access to digital technologies and only under close supervision. In the thirteenth

Figure 4. Visual harvest of the arguments made in the articles by Melo-Pfeifer and Gertz (2022) and Rouse and Youmans (2022). Image by Neetje (2022).

Figure 5. Visual harvest of the arguments made in the articles by Supa et al. (2022) and Sousa and Costa (2022). Image by Neetje (2022).

article titled "Beyond Digital Literacy in Australian Prisons: Theorizing 'Network Literacy,' Intersectionality, and Female Incarcerated Students," the sociologist Susan Hopkins (2022) calls for greater attention to the role of media literacy in the context of incarceration. She addresses from an intersectional perspective the multi-faceted needs of indigenous Australians and women in custody to become active agents prepared to return to the network society outside of prison. Media scholars Markéta Supa, Lucie Römer, and Vojtěch Hodboď (2022) present three case studies focusing on media literacy education and social inclusion in vocational schools in the fourteenth article, "Including the Experiences of Children and Youth in Media Education." They discuss how an experience-based and reflective approach to media literacy education can nurture social inclusion among different groups of disadvantaged youth. Finally, "Mapping the Inclusion of Children and Youth With Disabilities in Media Literacy Research" is the title of the fifteenth article authored by communication scholars Carla Sousa and Conceição Costa (2022) and it showcases the results of a systematic literature review focusing on the inclusion of children with disabilities in media literacy research. As it was expected, there are far and few between such studies, as authors only found 12 articles within a sample of 1,175 articles.

We agree with Douglas Kellner and Share that media literacy is "an unfulfilled challenge" (2019, p. 3). However, we hope that with the conceptual and methodological tools and empirical insights presented in this thematic issue, we have put on the agenda the need for greater attention for inclusion, diversity, and social justice in media literacy education.

Acknowledgments

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Conflict of Interests

No conflicts of interest.

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Article

Children's News Media as a Space for Learning About Difference

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Abstract
In this article, we show how everyday difference is conceptualised in Finland through our analysis of media products for children (*HBL Junior*, *HS Lasten Uutiset*, and *Yle Mix*). We consider media as a part of the "lived curriculum" through which media professionals intentionally or unintentionally reproduce particular discourses of difference and sameness that become part of children's everyday learning and understanding of multicultural society. Our aim in doing so is to consider what marks these discourses produced specifically for children, and what versions of difference they replicate and advance. We find that children's media advances discourses of "comfortable conviviality" through the paradigms of colour-blind friendship, the universal experience of childhood, and through a firm belief in social cohesion as the master signifier of Finnish society. Through the lens of inclusiveness, we discuss the implications of these discourses on journalism and media literacy.

Keywords
children's journalism; conviviality; ethnic differences; Finland; media literacy education; media for children; racial differences

Issue
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1. Introduction

Driven by globalization and global injustice, the movement of people is on the increase despite a temporal slowdown during the Covid-19 pandemic. Today, more people than ever live in a country other than the one in which they were born (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021). Migration from countries in the Global South to the Global North is a phenomenon that carries economic, political, and cultural implications and that greatly influences attitudes, belonging, and ways of living. This movement is aided, as Appadurai (1996, p. 3) points out, by media that creates and disseminates images of mobile lives and multicultural realities through pictures, movies, and traditional media outlets allowing for the "construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds." Media is consequently a means through which immigrants imagine new possibilities for their lives, themselves, and their children and through which both migrants and permanent citizens can learn new forms of togetherness (e.g., King & Wood, 2001; Orgad, 2012; Smets et al., 2020).

Because of this globalized environment where togetherness is commonplace, we are curious to know what marks these media depictions—specifically journalistic ones—of difference in a multicultural society, how these versions are replicated and produced in journalism, and the implications of this representation on journalism and media literacy education. In line with Dewey (1938/1968), Freire (1998), and hooks (2003), we stress that there is a close connection between education, experience, and daily life citizenship. More precisely, we see journalism as a part of the *lived curriculum* (Aoki, 1993) in which teaching and learning occur in daily interactions or, in this case, in the informal curriculum constructed by journalism professionals and media professionals through which children learn about diverse

societies. Therefore, in our reading, media content carries more than pedagogical potential—It is a pedagogy (of the everyday). Following Aoki's theory, this is the case even though it has been shown through empirical studies that when asked, journalists for children's media tend to avoid the position of the pedagogue (Brites & Pinto, 2017; Jaakkola, 2020).

From this position where journalism studies intersect with media and migration scholarship and media literacy scholarship, we examine if and how journalistic content on diversity matters for agendas that strive to "diversify" media literacy education (e.g., Neag, 2020; see also Bellardi et al., 2018). Following Christensen and Tufte (2010, p. 112), we understand media education as a "dynamic concept which constantly reflects upon the connection between children, young people, and media, during free time and in educational institutions." Media education is developed in the tension area between media educational practice, empirical knowledge, and theory (Christensen & Tufte, 2010, p. 112). It encompasses a set of practices and projects through which human actors plan and do teaching in formal settings for various types of learners, and it also covers informal learning and practices that develop media and information competencies (Christensen & Tufte, 2010, p. 113; Hobbs & Jensen, 2009; Kotilainen & Arnolds-Granlund, 2010).

In the outside-of-school setting in which our study is situated, these practices are fundamentally versatile in nature and rarely encompass instructive approaches to learning about mediated dynamics, representations, and practices. Instead, inspired by Aoki's idea of media as lived curriculum, we see media education as a series of invites and possibilities for young readers to make independent and collective inquiries on the media.

With these conceptualizations of media and education, we examine the content in three contemporary news media products for young readers from Autumn 2020 (*Hufvudstadsbladet*'s *HBL Junior*, *Helsingin Sanomat's HS Lasten Uutiset*, and Yle's *Yle Mix*) through critical discourse analysis (CDA). We focus our empirical analysis on content that deals with and/or depicts racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious differences in Finland in general and mode(s) of co-living in particular. By examining content in rapidly produced and distributed media for children, we can begin to understand how we best can support children and young people with one of the crucial moral challenges for media literacy education: their relationship to the "different," the "unfamiliar," and the "other."

2. Media as Pedagogy: Finland as a Case in Point

Ellsworth and Miller (1996, p. 247) have said that identities and differences are constructed in and through the dynamics of our engagement with each other over time, not only in the service of oppressive relations such as racism and sexism but also in the service of the *contestation* of such oppressions. The media is one space where these relations and their contestation can be presented, discussed, and contextualized for children in ways that meet journalistic expectations on ethics and logics, while at the same time being adapted cognitively and affectively for their level. This view on the role of the media as a platform for learning, unlearning, and relearning about difference and multiculture has been highlighted by numerous scholars before us (see Cortés, 2000; Shah & Khurshid, 2017; Yosso, 2002). Also, more specifically, within the paradigm of media literacy education that draws on a Freirean legacy of critical pedagogy (e.g., Kellner & Share, 2019), we can see a recent increase in studies that address issues such as class, race, gender, sexuality, and power (e.g., Bruinenberg et al., 2021; Neag et al., 2022) in a European context. These studies are normative in character, and they call for the development of a more participatory and culturally sensitive media literacy education. In line with critical scholars on media and diversity such as Dreher (2009), they believe that enhanced listening to marginalized social and ethnic groups in and through media can lead to empowerment.

When discussing issues of diversity in relation to education and the media, it is important to acknowledge regional particularities. In Finland specifically, there are certain national particularities that likely influence how scholars, educators and journalists understand diversity and how this understanding manifests in products for young audiences. For example, the egalitarian society that the welfare state promotes tends to be linked to discourses of a "good" Finnish childhood. By international comparison, the UN Universal Rights of the Child are also heavily regarded (Aasgaard et al., 2018) and childhood generally is thought to be "important in its own right, not simply as a platform from which to become an adult" (Wagner & Einarsdottir, 2006, p. 6). In Finland, as in the other Nordic countries, this discourse takes the form of a childhood in which children are centered and valued in the present, are given the freedom to play without "over-supervision and over-control" from adults around them yet develop strong relationships with adults, and finally, understand and develop their own "Nordicness" (Wagner & Einarsdottir, 2006, p. 265). Within this ideological system, various actors have different roles to play that reflect the values Finns place on what it means to socialize children into being citizens and who is responsible for this socialization. We see the media as one actor in this socialization process—i.e., the integration of children into the construction of the welfare state.

Additionally, in historical terms, while Finland has been multicultural with so-called old minorities (Jews, Tatars, Romani, and Sámi) and a national linguistic minority, the Swedish-speaking Finns (5.2% according to Statistics Finland, 2020c), the nature of immigration changed in the 1990s with an increase of migrants from Somalia, Russia, and Estonia of which the last group tend to be travelling back and forth to work. From that time on, the share of people with foreign backgrounds

in Finland's population rose from 0.8% to 8% pointing to a fast but moderate immigration trend (Rotkirch, 2021; Statistics Finland, 2020a). The change towards diversity is particularly apparent when the focus is on children. The number of children between 0 and 18 with a foreign or multicultural background has changed rapidly in Finland (from only 3,735 children in 1990 to 105,178 children in 2020 including children born abroad and children born in Finland with at least one parent born abroad; Statistics Finland, 2020b). Migration to Finland is based increasingly on employment and studies (Ministry of the Interior, 2021) but also the number of asylum seekers has increased significantly compared to the pre-1990s. The record number of Afghan and Iraqi asylum seekers entering in 2015 increased activism against racism and deportation (Näre, 2020) but also increased political right-wing nationalist organizing (Pettersson & Nortio, 2022).

The demographic change, racism, and the politicization of migration and diversity matter for this study for at least two reasons. Children living in Finland increasingly have diverse backgrounds (Statistics Finland, 2020b) but we do not know whether and how their lived realities are represented in journalistic reports, despite explicit aims in media policies about "reaching out" to marginalized social groups (Yle, 2020). Neither is it known how media professionals in Finland, who strive for balance and neutrality in their work, deal with highly politicized discourses of diversity. The reason for this is that children's media is understudied in general and in Finland in particular. Studies on the characteristics of contemporary children's journalism and its connections to media literacy exist (e.g., Brites & Pinto, 2017; Jaakkola, 2020; for Finland, see also Kyllönen, 2022; Mäkilä, 2022) but they do not focus on diversity.

The same contradiction applies to policies. The role of media for learning and in learning in Finland is strong as there is a long tradition of national initiatives using media pedagogies beginning in the 1970s (e.g., Finnish Government, 2018; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013; Minkkinen, 1978; Pekkala et al., 2013). These policy initiatives and industry implementations have nourished many initiatives, projects, and programs for children with a backstory stretching back a few decades. Internationally, Finland is often seen as a forerunner in media education. Finland scores highest in the Media Literacy Index, considers media education in national-level policies and structures, and was one of the first countries in the world to include media education in its national core curriculum (Palsa & Salomaa, 2020). Despite this position, diversity issues are not particularly underlined in policy documents on media literacy. In the most recent national strategy (Salomaa & Palsa, 2019, p. 26), there is one line on how "the ageing of the population and multiculturality affect the target groups and topics of media culture," but that is all.

The question of how diversity is depicted and constructed in media for children is a particularly pressing issue to examine in a framework of informal learning and media as pedagogy as children's news in Finland has seen a surge in recent years, beginning with *Helsingin Sanomat*'s distinct commercial venture for children, the news show *HS Lasten Uutiset*, and growing especially in 2020 with the advent of print and video content for children. In 2020, HS started a weekly print newspaper going under the same name *HS Lasten Uutiset*. Simultaneously, *Hufvudstadsbladet*, the largest newspaper in Swedish, launched *HBL Junior*, a semi-monthly print and Yle launched a new audiovisual program for children, *Yle Mix*, with news-focused videos published online twice a week.

Hence, in the light of recent policies (Salomaa & Palsa, 2019; Yle, 2020) and economic interest (i.e., to guarantee a next generation of newspaper subscribers, see, e.g., Mäkilä, 2022), the beginning of the 2020s where we situate our study marks a cornerstone—albeit understudied one—for children's journalism in Finland.

3. Material and Methods

We focus our empirical analysis on content in children's news media that deals with and/or depicts racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious differences in Finland in general and agency against racism in particular. Six issues of the weekly *HBL Junior* and six issues of the weekly *HS Lasten Uutiset* from September to Oct 2020 as well as 17 episodes of *Yle Mix* (3 September to 30 October 2020) have been analyzed through CDA (Wodak, 1996). These three journalistic media for children were launched in 2020 and they are aimed at children in elementary school (ages eight to 13).

Through processual re-reading and re-organizing the material during a period of several weeks, we searched for commonalities by focusing on different journalistic elements during different rounds of reading (headlines, introduction, storytelling, visual aspects, framework, and the interviewees, what they say and how they say it). Through our critical reading, we produced notes and codes that we modified throughout the process. Finally, the notes came to include a variety of commentary on content, format, and framework including marks on journalism, imagined members of the target group, and issues relating to social relations in general, race, and ethnicity in particular. The notes aided us to do the more structured form of the analyses, which we organized through codes.

We worked with the hands-on analyses in the following manner: *HBL Junior* was analyzed on paper with multicolor post-it notes for notes on commonalities and marker pens for rudimentary codes extracted in an inductive manner during the actual analyses with a focus on social relations and ways of co-living. *HS Lasten Uutiset* was digitized by the National Library. Hence, articles were read on their platform (https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/etusivu?set_language=en) and similar types of notes and codes were made in an Excel file.

Yle Mix was watched through the platform Yle Areena (https://areena.yle.fi/tv), and notes and codes were made in a separate Excel file.

At the final stage of the analysis, we formed nine codes. These were: a child's immediate world, marked by a middle-class lifestyle (school, hobbies, family members, celebrities, technology, pets); children's rights and/or the universal experience of being a child; the mobility-paradigm; nationalism in a variety of forms; distant others who are exotic and/or need our help; addressing and/or creating the white helper; empathy and anti-racism training; non-whites who are "just like us"; and norm-breaking or striving for that. Some of the codes overlap thematically, and we wanted to allow for that. When examining these codes and where they overlap through the critical lens of CDA, two discourses and one story-telling technique could be distinguished. These were Familiar Type of Difference, Finns and Foreign Others as discourses, and introducing the Unfamiliar Through the Familiar as a storytelling technique.

We will come to these specific findings soon, but first need to describe the content on a general level, as CDA researchers study discourse through an analysis of text in context.

On a general level, much of the content reflects major international news events of autumn 2020 including a pandemic, a presidential election in the US, and intensified movement for racial justice. In the three media that were analyzed, hard news and international/global events are "domesticated" (Joye, 2015), presented in an "age-appropriate way," and alternated with stories that take on local and light-hearted perspectives on various themes such as gaming, social media, talent shows, sports, hobbies, and seasonal traditions. In all three products, the journalistic and educational ambitions are high and it is clear that the media professionals producing these products work hard to inform young prosumers about contemporary matters in and through positive emotional experiences. Positive emotions are, for example, generated through pictures of happy-looking children in feature stories and vox pops, cute animals, delicious-looking food and recipes, and funny graphical figures. The overall paradigm of light-heartedness can be assumed to advance a feel-good experience of the children towards journalism, reading, and issues of societal relevance (on a general level, see, e.g., McIntyre, 2015), and perhaps also towards diversity and multicultural realities. However, read through a critical lens, there are certain parallel discursive trends that need to be considered as well.

The four sections to follow will focus on these trends, the challenges that they point at, and also their potential for advancing anti-racism and acceptance of difference. This discussion will not be particularly genre and format sensitive as we wish to take one step away from being media content-centric towards being more socio-cultural and educationally focused. Despite this choice, evidently, audiovisual news content and newspaper articles published on paper are marked by different logics, traditions, and challenges in how to appeal to their target groups.

4. Constructing a Familiar Type of Difference

When examining the findings from the three media analyzed, *HBL Junior*, *HS Lasten Uutiset*, and *Yle Mix*, the analyses clearly show that the producers of all three media strive to depict Finland as diverse and inclusive. This can be seen when examining the visual level, and particularly well when graphics and images are analyzed. When these texts are more closely examined, there are two discourses on multiculturalism, diversity, and difference that are more prominent than others. These are Familiar Type of Difference and Finns and Foreign Others. Let us examine the first one through an example.

In Figure 1, we can see how the subject portrayed, a black version of the Nordic iconic children's book character Pippi Longstocking, is placed in a visual narrative with several connotations to a typically Finnish lifestyle. These are climate activism, generic "Western" clothing, and an independent outgoing and self-secure type of femininity. This is just one example but a representative one as, for example, girls or females wearing visible cultural and religious symbols such as hijabs can rarely be seen in the three media analyzed during the data-gathering period. Instead, the difference is depicted in relation to a paradigm of familiarity and cultural proximity.

Another example of how a familiar type of difference is constructed concerns the choice of hosts for the *Yle Mix* program which both can be positioned as having non-typically traditional Finnish features (Asian and Southern-European). They too, however, represent a familiar type of Finnishness. For example, when they pronounce foreign names and notions, they apply a clearly Finnish pronunciation and the way they dress and behave while on camera reflects a highly generic, standardized, mainstream, and middle-class type of Finnish and global youth culture, with all of its expectations on femininity, style, and behavior. In other words, though the two hosts of *Yle Mix* have darker skin color, everything they say, do, and how they do it, connects these women firmly to majoritarian society, culture, and religion. Hence, they represent an unthreatening "safe and well-known" type of otherness that generates positive curiosity rather than suspicion.

In the three media analyzed, this discourse is further strengthened through the construction of a standardized type of upper-middle-class Finnish lifestyle with all that it encompasses: individualism rather than cross-generational communitarianism, certain hobbies such as reading books or doing volunteer work, an interest in pets and other animals, secularism and scientific worldviews, and so on. For example, there are no depictions in the three media of a more communal way of living and spending leisure time, common for many families with histories of migration or affiliations

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”En bra illustration för mig är en sådan som får en att utbrista “nej men vad smart!”.

Jenny Lucander, illustratör

Pippi Långstrump fyller 75 år i år. Pippis födelsedag till ära har Jenny Lucander skapat en modern version av Pippi Långstrump för HBL Junior.
ILLUSTRATION: JENNY LUCANDER

Du behöver inte vara jättebra på att rita för att bli illustratör

Jenny Lucander vann Nordiska rådets pris för barn- och ungdomslitteratur.
Nu delar hon med sig av sina bästa tips för hur man kan bli en bra illustratör.

Figure 1. The Nordic blackness depicted in children's journalism (*HBL Junior*, 10 December 2020).

to minority cultures; images of cross-generational large families spending time in public parks; or images of transnational familial relationships that immigrants in Finland actively seek to maintain (see Chajed, 2022). Neither can we in the material find stories of children simply hanging out in the neighborhoods, a leisure time activity which Oittinen et al. (2022) have shown to be a marker of lower socioeconomic background in Finland. Instead, the imagined prosumer of these media is a child who has organized hobbies such as ice hockey or football, animals, values nature, masters the storyline of the most influential Nordic children's books, has a recent mobile phone with unlimited or at least a fair amount of usage, cares for people who are deprived in terms of their socioeconomic status, and has the skills required to independently seek help when in need (feeling lonely, for example).

5. Constructing "Finns" and "Foreign Others": Where Do Immigrant Children Fit in?

While in the context of Finland, racial and ethnic differences are depicted as safe and familiar, in a global context, they tend to relate to a paradigm of cultural distance, victimhood, and racialization. This paradigm produces a discourse of Finns and Foreign Others—a contrast structure (Gill, 2000)—in which presumed "wes" and presumed "theys" are positioned at different ends. Various cues (Davies & Harré, 1990) in the text and its context indicate how actors are positioned. These cues can relate to journalistic choices that create emotional distance, like the practice of not providing names in the image texts for people from the Global South who illustrate a generic news topic, such as the Covid-19 disease (e.g., *HS Lasten Uutiset*, 30 September 2020 and 21 October 2020). They can also relate to frequently used words and expressions such as "poor," "illiterate," and "deprived of rights" (e.g., *HS Lasten Uutiset*, 7 October 2020). Particularly in news on migration, the stories are consequently constructed so that there is an explicit "we" who is expected to help a victim, "they" (e.g., "The migrant question is about whether we should help others and why we should help. It may be that we will need help one day"; *HBL Junior*, 10 December 2020, p. 7).

As an illustration, although the upcoming Finnish independence day clearly has influenced a quiz featured in *HBL Junior* on 26 November, it is noteworthy how the imagined prosumer is invited to be interested in (a) the final word in the lyrics of the national anthem, (b) a yearly media spectacle organized by the Finnish PSB company for raising money for children in the Global South, (c) a game launched by a Finnish gaming company, (d) the institution that is behind the children's convention, and (e) a Finnish war film from 1955 with a story about the Continuation War between Finland and the Soviet Union shown on the Finnish PSB company (for adult audiences) on Independence Day. Although this is just one quiz amongst many others, it exemplifies how the discourse on Finns and Foreign Others is constructed, through its depictions of Finnishness compared to foreign others who are portrayed as being elsewhere and significantly different from us in terms of race, culture, and socioeconomic background.

Despite the fact that the media occasionally engages in border crossing in terms of challenging norms and conventions (e.g., allowing for Lucia to be a boy and including drawings on black Nordics to illustrate generic news topics; e.g., *HBL Junior*, 15 October 2020, pp. 12–13),

there is an educational undertone that strives to educate the imagined prosumers about the ideo-historical aspects of the state, "good" citizenry, global solidarity, internationalization, and digitalization skills, resonating with what Billig (1995) has coined "banal nationalism.'' Through representations of the healthy, wealthy white Nordics and the far-away, poor, and black in need, a racialized foreign other is constructed in and maintained in journalism, irrespective of good intentions. In this dichotomized construct, immigrant and transnational children with mobile family histories risk feeling non-represented and unheard. They must choose between either Finnishness or foreignness. If they cannot, perhaps, they create for themselves a position of non-belonging. This can be a quite lonesome position and bewildering part of growing up.

6. Introducing the "Unfamiliar" Through the Familiar

Besides these two dominating discourses, we could, through the material, note a certain storytelling technique through which discussions on diversity, co-living, and anti-racism in Finland were turned into *teachable moments* (Hobbs, 2011). When analyzing the material rather closely to see how these moments are constructed and timed, we can see some common features. For one, these moments tend to be introduced into the storyline in an unexpected manner. In other words, articles, reports, and video inserts rarely have a lead or a formal introduction that would relate to race or ethnicity in Finland/the Nordics, to racism/anti-racism, or other types of tensions within diverse societies. Instead, when race or ethnicity is introduced, it is often unexpected and unannounced. This finding particularly concerns *Yle Mix*, where several content modules/inserts are compiled so that a certain theme such as Halloween, bullying, or the US presidential election, is introduced on a generic level after which there is a sudden turn to an educational note made on race, ethnicity, or diverse society (*Yle Mix*, 30 September, 7 October, and 30 October 2020).

The sudden and unannounced appearance of teachable moments in relation to race and ethnicity is particularly apparent in the *Yle Mix* video from 30 October 2020.

In the video (Figure 2), the host discusses Halloween from a historical perspective (0.00–3.16 min) without any references to racism or cultural appropriation, followed by a brief insert focusing on Halloween lights and décor in an elementary school (3.16–4.00 min) and costume trends on a general level (4–5.30 min). After this, the focus turns to costumes, first on a generic level, but then taking a sudden educational turn to cultural appropriation (at 5.30 min)—a central aspect of contemporary public debates on race and ethnicity internationally and increasingly also in Finland. First, the discussion on appropriation deals with a US context and then Finland (at 6.20 min). At this point, when the host tells the prosumers an example of cultus variation in a Finnish context, the light-hearted background music stops and there is no other soundtrack than the voice of the host, which further underlines the seriousness of the point she is making. The example that she gives is about the Sámi (i.e., the indigenous peoples of the northern part of the Scandinavian Peninsula) and how they have not been allowed to wear traditional clothes but how replicas of their clothing are sold in tourist shops, thus monetizing their culture. The actual educational point (at 6.40 min) is how "it is not particularly respectful or fair to dress in the traditional clothing of minorities for pleasantry [*hassuttelumielessä*].'' After that, the discussion on cultural appropriation continues until a more general type of comic relief at the very end of the video (7.25–8.09 min).

The *Yle Mix* videos from 7 October 2020 and 30 September 2020 are two other examples of this storytelling technique. In the video on the US presidential election (*Yle Mix*, 7 October 2020), the story starts with a general discussion on the importance of voting and children's thoughts on democracy and continues with a discussion on how the two candidates' agendas differ from each other. When a Yle correspondent reporting

Figure 2. The suddenness of the teachable moment on diversity (*Yle Mix*, 30 October 2020, 8.09 min).

from the US links the discussion to Finland and rhetorically asks why Finns should care about the outcome of the election, a teachable moment occurs. Finns should care as trends in American culture, music trends, and celebrity culture tend to be copied in Finland; so "if many people there think that people of a different color are not as valuable [as whites], then it may reflect how we here treat each other" (4.02–4.07 min). In the video on bullying again (*Yle Mix*, 30 September 2020), the informant continuously mentions how her accent, facial features, last name, and parents' mother tongue were at the center of the bully's attention for years, and at one point she makes an explicit appeal to the prosumers on how they should "accept difference." Despite her appeal, the overall storyline is on bullying on a generic level, as all experts interviewed and the host avoid dealing with racism, race, or ethnicity.

There are various ways to make sense of this narration technique. It may be that the production team has ambitions to teach prosumers about how to act as politically correct citizens with social consciousness and high awareness of human rights issues yet feel that opening up with a normative and politicized perspective may turn prosumers away. Instead, they lead prosumers towards the teachable moment via a sort of narrative backdoor. In our viewing, this practice can also show how news producers of children's journalism function as "journalistic actors who promote learning" (Jaakkola, 2020); having a title or introduction on a politicized topic, such as anti-racism and/or cultural appropriation, could be interpreted by the youth as overtly educational and/or simply "not interesting." In this way, by starting from a totally different and sassier topic but coming to an educational point on race, ethnicity, and/or multiculturalism at some point, prosumers are invited to learn about something that they possibly would not have chosen to learn themselves.

7. Discussing the Findings: Journalistic Practices and Representation of Togetherness

In this section, we take a step back from our analysis of the content to place our findings alongside journalism practices of representation and storytelling. When content in three recently launched children's news media products in Finland is read through a critical lens and in the context of media as *lived curriculum* (Aoki, 2005), we can notice that media producers make an effort to depict children's realities as diverse. Particularly on the visual level when considering pictures, illustrations, iconography, and the choice of hosts, black and other non-white subjects regularly are featured in reports on all sorts of generic news topics in the cultural or political sphere with little or no relation to race, ethnicity, and diversity. When these reports deal with domestic news topics, racial and ethnic differences in Finland are presented as safe and familiar. These efforts are valuable as "feeling represented" in and by the media has an important positive effect on minority children and youth (e.g., Nikunen, 2011). It is similarly important to show in the media and through the media that "mixed friendships" (Vertelyte, 2022) and diverse comingling are possible, "normal," and enrichening, particularly as research shows (e.g., Oittinen et al., 2022) that school realities in Finland are increasingly segregated. These representations are thus in line with what scholars have termed *conviviality* (see Gilroy, 2006; Wise & Noble, 2016), where togetherness in diverse societies is depicted in the everyday interactions of ordinary citizens.

There is a downside to the discourse of familiar difference too as it advances paradigms of color-blind friendship, the universal experience of childhood, and a firm belief in social cohesion as the master signifier of Finnish society. Besides, familiar difference does not challenge, and perhaps even perpetuates, discourses of binaries between Finns and Foreign Others, who are presented in a contrasting structure where others are anonymous beings often in need of "our" help. This happens through journalistic practices and discursive choices that echo banal nationalism and white-savior mentality although packaged into what in Finland is known as global education (*kansainvälisyyskasvatus* or *globaalikasvatus*; e.g., Riitaoja, 2013), namely a pedagogical approach with good intentions that strives to foster critical awareness of global challenges, but often fails to avoid colonialism and nationalism.

It seems that in this framework—marked by a safe type of diversity "as we know it" that does not test boundaries of cultural, religious, or ethical codes and conventions, and the more unpredictable type of diversity outside the borders of Finland—does not acknowledge transnational lifestyles and such ethical and cultural dilemmas that children see and experience in their immediate living environment. The reasons for this unwillingness to tell stories about important but difficult problems in a multicultural society are many: These themes may not be considered to be age-appropriate, the consensual history of Finland and the important role the media has played in keeping up illusions of consensus (e.g., Lounasmeri & Ylä-Anttila, 2015) has left a mark on journalistic traditions, and, perhaps, the children's media wish to explicitly counter-act the hate-rhetoric on migrants and minorities put forward by the Finns party and often also echoed in generic legacy news media (Pantti et al., 2019).

Furthermore, a recent movement within journalism called "constructive journalism" has argued that journalism should not only focus on social problems but also the possible solutions and spaces of action in their coverage and that this would lead to positive social impact and committed readership through better audience engagement (Ahva & Hautakangas, 2018). This tendency can also be read as a side-effect of discourses on "regional representability" constructed by producers in the newsrooms of children's media. When the producers are concerned about how to be regionally inclusive in order to

create a product that feels relevant for various audience segments (Kyllönen, 2022), they may miss other types of meaningful differences that matter for identification and relevance too, such as transnational family-situation, language, religion, socio-economic status, lifestyle, feeling of belonging, and, most importantly, how these differences can cause conflicting expectations, beliefs, and behaviors. Complicating this discussion, Finland is a multilingual state and Swedish-language media form a complete media system with newspapers, radio, television, and web-based content in order to cater for a Swedish language minority. This is particularly true for minority language children's media such as *HBL Junior*, where the primary we-group constructed is geographically scattered but linguistically united. As our analysis considered Finnish and Swedish language products together, the comparison of representation within content in these two languages remains an area for further study.

This practice of highlighting regionality does not mean that the producers would fully ignore themes or discussions in relation to diversity that potentially could upset prosumers. Instead, our analysis shows that when uncomfortable themes in relation to difference, such as racism and cultural appropriation, are introduced to children, it happens through a more joyful, neutral, or generic topic. Our empirical material covering three media for two months is not large enough to say how common the strategy is to "introduce the unfamiliar through the familiar." Neither can we yet say what the impact of this technique is on agendas that call for more inclusiveness in the media for pedagogical and/or societal purposes. Rather, what we can say is that despite valuable efforts to depict difference, be inclusive, and connect with the child, this storytelling technique and the two dominating discourses show a tendency in the children's media to refrain from engaging in uncomfortable conversations. This, in our viewing, reinforces the comfort that is afforded to the white majority in discussions about race (see also Leonardo & Porter, 2010). The result is that conflict is ignored, and in line with universalist ideals, all individuals are considered the same.

The concept of *comfortable conviviality* can help us to understand this process, give it a name, and connect it to ongoing scholarly discussions on difference and togetherness. This concept has implications for media literacy which we turn to briefly to conclude.

8. The Implications of *Comfortable Conviviality* for Journalism and Media Education

As we see it, comfortable conviviality presents a society of diverse comingling in various social and mediated spaces as an optimal society in which "feelings of togetherness…[are] actively produced through social practices, often in the face of change and conflict" (Wise & Noble, 2016, p. 424). The problem with such ideals is that existing power structures rooted in race and colonial history make such comingling always unequal (Back & Sinha, 2016; Lapiņa, 2016; Wise & Noble, 2016). Even while the children's media acknowledges diversity then, the understanding of what diversity encompasses is limited by the majority's desire for safety, comfort, and predictability. Thus, uncomfortable differences (i.e., religion, segregation, multiple belongings and conflicting sympathies, and non-normative ideologies) are left out and "others" are made to fit into more familiar boxes in their values, behaviors, and interests. In this reasoning, cosmetic diversity can become a "smokescreen" (Deverell, 2009) that hinders "listening across difference" (Dreher, 2009) in cases where the habits, beliefs, and norms of minorities are seen to hinder social cohesion. This assimilation occurs regardless of the intent of the media professionals creating this content for children. Furthermore, this togetherness is limited to the national borders as colonial discourses are used to represent others who are *not* in Finland and are depicted as being inherently less "developed" than their Western counterparts and thus in need of their help (see Cronin-Furman et al., 2017).

What then are the implications of comfortable conviviality for media literacy education in general and agendas that strive to advocate for stronger recognition of cultural diversity within literacy movements? When children's journalism is seen both as lived curriculum in a setting of everyday life and as a plausible tool for instruction (when integrated into formal teaching), these comfort-seeking discourses can be valuable as contributions to constructive journalism. However, they can become harmful too, as they do not acknowledge differences beyond skin color, particularly differences in the experience of power and privilege. The risk with too comfortable and convivial a gaze on children's multicultural realities is that children's media products lose credibility in the eyes of their potential prosumers. When these realities neither match more agonistic personal social media flows nor more conflict-centered depictions of a multicultural society in generic news media, we may end with cognitive dissonance and lost educational opportunity.

In sum, due to the tendency in children's journalism to see diversity through the lens of comfort and conviviality, we should be careful in thinking that children's journalism would advance social justice and communicative rights for marginalized groups just because it "shows difference." Living together can be hard. It can create practical challenges and evoke complex affective responses where dejection, envy, and frustration co-emerge with more positive feelings such as awareness of cultural affinity and belonging despite difference. Not everyone can identify with the polished and child-proofed version of a socially cohesive multicultural society. If the producers of children's journalism begin to listen and value children's own stories of their complex feelings of belonging and their lived multicultural realities on a local level, even on the level of the neighborhood, the media products could reach out to new groups of prosumers. In a best-case scenario, this could lead to an increased interest in reading, journalism, and developing early citizenship skills.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Beyond Solutionism: Differently Motivating Media Literacy

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Abstract
This article discusses three research projects conducted in partnerships in diverse societies. We assess the implications of each project for media literacy's motivations and intentionality through a theory of change. For the first project, BBC Media Action, we developed the theory of change which frames this article and a media literacy training programme for in-country practitioners to strengthen media ecosystems and support resilience to information disorder. Our second project was Dual Netizenship, a youth-led, intercultural partnership between Tunisia and the UK at the intersection of media literacy, civic agency, and decolonisation. Thirdly, Digital Arts—Refugee Engagement (DA-RE) brought together refugee youth in Bangladesh and Turkey to combine media literacy and digital artivism with civic capability development. The status of media literacy as a conduit for positive change (rather than a solution in itself) was different in each partnership—from the production of counter-script youth-led media to capacity-building for refugee participants in host communities to the situating of "mainstream media" itself as the agent of positive intervention in the ecosystem. Our theory of change situates media literacy as a form of context-bound capability development as opposed to a set of neutral, universal competences. The research that we share here was conducted with "third space" media literacy design principles. In addressing both the positive change initiated by these projects and the tensions and challenges in play in the motivating imperatives of partnerships, the article speaks to the complexity of media literacy in diverse societies.

Keywords
capability; change; civic engagement; media ecosystems; media literacy; third space

Issue
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1. Introduction

This article compares media literacy interventions facilitated through differently motivated partnerships in fragile contexts, working with participants in the Global South. It uses a theory of change for the role of media literacy in the health of media ecosystems in diverse societies. Media ecosystems are "the dynamic systems of relationships between various actors, processes and structures that influence how media content is generated, shared, consumed and used" (BBC Media Action, 2021, p. 2). They can be national or broader in scale. Change occurs as media literacy develops in people from access to awareness to capability to consequences, potentially disrupting media ecosystems in positive ways as this develops among and between citizens as a collective media literacy.

In this article, we compare three media literacy partnerships to assess how their configuration makes a difference to the motivating imperatives of media literacy work in diverse societies and fragile contexts. Our methodology for understanding this is to analyse how the kind of space each project generates relates to the four elements of our theory of change for media literacy (access, awareness, capability, and consequences). The purpose of the study is to generate new knowledge about the role of media literacy in positive ecosystem change and the importance of "third space" in the design of the partnerships that seek to bring about such change.

Media literacy is dynamic, living, and unsettling (Lee et al., 2022; Pahl & Rowsell, 2020; Potter & McDougall, 2017). It develops as such through "third space" partnerships involving education, training, subcultural and community activity, activism, and media "artivism" (Medrado & Rega, 2022). We see media literacy as deeply situated in cultural, geo-political and media ecosystem contexts and therefore our approach attempts to avoid universal, "neutral" solutionism as manifested in competence models which assume positive outcomes from the development of media literacy in itself. We think this assumption is not only problematic but also counter-productive when the evidence clearly demonstrates that the negative, harmful uses of media literacy (Bennett et al., 2020) far outweigh the positives.

We worked with BBC Media Action (2021–2022) to develop the theory of change, which we then brought to the other projects and informed a media literacy toolkit and training programme for in-country practitioners to strengthen media ecosystems and resilience to information disorder.

Dual Netizenship (2021) was a youth-led partnership at the intersection of inter-cultural media literacy, civic agency, and decolonisation. Funded by the British Council, this third space project brought two youth media organisations, Fully Focused (UK) and Boubli (Tunisia) together to create youth-led alternative media artivism.

Digital Arts—Refugee Engagement (DA-RE, 2021–2022), funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund, brought together Rohingya and Syrian refugee youth groups with academics and practitioners in Bangladesh and Turkey to combine media literacy and arts-based research with refugee capability development.

The problem this research addresses is the need for media literacy to be a conduit for positive change as opposed to a "neutral" end in itself. The context for this was different in each partnership—from the locating of "mainstream media" itself as the agent of positive intervention (BBC Media Action) to the production of counter-script media and inter-cultural co-creation (Dual Netizenship) to the use of existing media literacy in combination with newly motivated activities for capacity building for marginalised communities (DA-RE).

In this article, we assess what these projects share, by way of the change agency we are seeking to elicit, and also the tensions and challenges in play in the motivating imperatives of such partnerships. We argue that this duality speaks to the complexity of media literacy in diverse societies. Our over-arching research questions are linked to the theory of change elements:

RQ1: How do media literacy partnerships in third spaces make a difference in the ways in which people access media?

RQ2: How do media engagements generated by media literacy partnerships in third spaces develop more reflexive awareness of the relative health of the media ecosystem?

RQ3: How do media literacy partnerships in third spaces convert access and awareness into capability through their function as non-formal education?

RQ4: How can the capabilities generated by media literacy partnerships in third spaces impact media ecosystems with positive consequences?

2. Beyond Solutionism to a Theory of Change

Media literacy is prominent in both political and media rhetoric when solutions to misinformation and polarised discourse are sought. Whilst this is currently amplified, this is a perennial "fix," as Buckingham (2017) observes:

> Media literacy is often invoked in a spirit of "solutionism." When media regulation seems impossible, media literacy is often seen as the acceptable answer—and indeed a magical panacea—for all media-related social and psychological ills....This argument clearly frames media literacy as a protectionist enterprise, a kind of prophylactic. It oversimplifies the problem it purports to address, overstates the influence of media on young people and underestimates the complexity of media education.

The more agentive uses of media literacy for positive change are generally elusive to the oxymoronic neutrality endemic to this solutionism because this requires more longitudinal evidence of media literacy in society beyond education, and also with a commitment to good consequences, as opposed to the gaining of competences which can be—and often are—used to create the problem. In other words, they bear witness to the paradox that unhealthy media ecosystems are not caused by a lack of media literacies so much as the toxic uses of them. Our research seeks to address the problem by moving beyond skills and competences alone to focus on these uses, a first step is to work with Sen's (2008) capability approach to emphasise the significance of active media behaviours and decision-making (functioning) and be more attuned to variations and local contexts (resources).

Change occurs as media literacy develops in people from access to awareness to capability to consequences. Access is enabled as people first gain the means to be included as an individual in the full media ecosystem and then increase and/or change their access through changing media behaviours. Awareness develops as people come to understand, at the micro level, how media re-presents the world from particular points of view with particular intentions and, at the macro level, the relative health of their media environment. The Capability stage involves people using their media literacy for particular purposes in their lives. This can include civic engagement,

employability, or community actions. However, there is no reason why this capability will lead to the positive uses of media literacy unless this is combined with consequences in particular ways, through the conversion of media literacy capability into positive change, requiring an active desire for our media to promote equality and social justice. Far from being the inevitable outcome of media literacy, the evidence suggests the opposite. Polarising discourse, "othering" media representations, misinformation, and conspiracy narratives are produced *by* the media literate.

3. The Third Space

Moving beyond solutionism, to work instead with media partners, civil society, and citizens in local contexts—for the "how" of media literacy—requires the design and sustainable operationalising of a conducive "third space,'' which:

> Involves a simultaneous coming and going in a borderland zone between different modes of action….The third space is thus a place of invention and transformational encounters, a dynamic in-between space that is imbued with the traces, relays, ambivalences, ambiguities and contradictions, with the feelings and practices of both sites, to fashion something different, unexpected. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 406)

Third spaces for media literacy work involve the reciprocal exchange of aspects of the "first space" of everyday living media literacy practices with the "second spaces" of formalised research, with the ultimate goal being to make the research encounter itself the third space. We have previously researched the affordances of media literacy for third spaces (Potter & McDougall, 2017) and, in the projects we share in this article, we observed the ways in which the configuration of first spaces of participants and the second spaces of the partner organisations we were working with made a difference to the social and civic practices of media literacy for positive change in diverse societies.

4. Media Action

In this project, we produced the theory of change which frames this article in order to help Media Action (the BBC's international development charity) to progress their activities to ecosystem consequences through integrating a more strategic media literacy approach into their existing work. Media Action works in 20 of the world's poorest, most diverse, and most fragile countries, supporting independent media, and providing training and outreach work on media literacy for journalists and publics in audience and community contexts. Our research identified four clusters of activity where media literacy is developed through the projects the organization facilitates. Here we describe three clusters and offer more detail and examples for the fourth.

As the four elements in the theory of change do not happen through linear progression, from one to the next, our research into Media Action's existing practices and potential for media literacy development identifies clusters of activity where the elements of the theory of change are evident, often partially.

In Cluster 1, media literacy is baked in to activities, rather than explicit. Interventions which directly support and bolster media ecosystems through working with public service and independent media organisations improve Access in the short term but the sustainability of the publics evaluating this access for themselves (Awareness) and the sustainable Capability for audiences to be active in the ecosystem are longer term, expected, but indirect outcomes. For example, strengthening the media ecosystem in Zambia through a mixed methods approach to supporting local radio was informed by a deep diagnosis of potential impacts through this medium and addressing barriers. The combination of community outreach and co-production enabled a third space for journalists to work with BBC Media Action, but this was partial as it was more of an exchange between two second spaces and did not engage the public's first space media literacies. In Cluster 2, interventions partially address media literacy, as media content and audience separation are maintained throughout projects. Access is the core objective, Capability is evident. For example, Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap in Sierra Leone uses storytelling and advocacy (#ChooseToChallenge) for change for women and girls through radio co-presenting. This is a form of "changing the story" with Access and Capability at the core of the intervention. Awareness (of how "the story" needs to be changed) and Consequences (of accepting "the story") are more long-term aims. In Cluster 3, media literacy is the *what* but not the *how*. Such work operates at the level of Access by sharing impactful practice to address barriers and inequalities, in some cases leveraging peer and community support, moving towards "third space" (between Media Action and this peer and community activism). However, progression to the Capability stage is limited because working to change the conditions required for media literacy to develop at the *access* stage was not within the scope of interventions. For example, Increasing Women's Digital Literacy in India works at the level of Access and sharing impactful practice to address barriers and inequalities, for example, handset cost, social norms in rural settings, and gendered perception barriers to digital investment. Leveraging women's empowerment collectives involved peer and community support, moving towards "third space." However, a lack of impact on the external normative environment impeded progression to the Capability stage because working to change the conditions required for media literacy to develop further at the Access stage was not within the scope of the activity. This project speaks compellingly to the complexity of media literacy

in diverse societies and the need for the "glocal" adaptation of approaches.

Cluster 4 is the body of work where there is rich potential to fully integrate media literacy. For example, Tea Cup Diaries (a radio show set in a busy tea shop on the outskirts of Yangon, Myanmar) shares many characteristics with media literacy projects in educational contexts, raising awareness of source and healthy scepticism about the trustworthiness of material, acknowledging young people's emotive engagement with media and information rather than only imposing the "false binary" of true or false. The potential for this approach to address media literacy "head on" is capturing the more critical or mindful engagement with information on social media that participants reported: How did playful questioning translate into sustainable media literacy practices, post-project? How can this be replicated for peers, to progress from short-term, reactive treatment to more developmental inoculation, in a third space between this "mainstream media" content and the community? Capability and Consequences are evident; Awareness is partially demonstrated. The Climate Change Asia report on Cambodia disseminates findings from a mass survey of citizens' experiences and perceptions to inform the creation of communications that motivate people to act. The "journey" framework for media intervention, integrating media audience segmentation, is agile, developmental, and dynamic and offers perhaps the closest "fit" to the capability framework: "When a media intervention begins, people in Cambodia may find themselves at any stage on the communications ladder. The goal is to help them move up the ladder, towards the adapting rung" (Southall et al., 2019, p. 69). This development but segmented "ladder" approach is well aligned with our theory of change, where audiences and beneficiaries of Media Action work might be at the Access stage, or they might demonstrate high levels of media literacy but have no means for Capability. Or they might be using their media literacies for negative Consequences and need to be reached for educational work on Awareness.

With regard in particular to Global South contexts (see Rega & Medrado, 2021), it was clear that this potential to develop media literacy activity as a more overt and measurable component of Media Action's work needed to be fully informed by the challenge presented by the hardest groups to reach with media literacy being at opposite ends of the spectrum. At the one end are those without safe Access to media literacy, for either economic, technological, educational, or political reasons. On the other are those with Access and Awareness who are already demonstrating Capability and are aware of Consequences but for whatever reason are not concerned for them. Media literacy work in diverse societies is complex and beyond solutionism, it takes place between these poles.

From this field analysis, the strategy we developed for Media Action builds on these clusters of partial activity and potential for development to facilitate outreach work to enable dialogue between media and people/communities to integrate media literacy practices into new forms of third space opportunities to learn new skills from each other, discuss the role of media and information in their lives and the problem of information disorder from their lived experiences, and enable them to get involved by suggesting new content, upskilling to co-create it, and/or generating community media maker-spaces. This work involves collaborations with NGOs and community-based organisations and with civil society to amplify the programming and promote media literacy among communities, support journalists, and local media organisations to partner and build coalitions with local, regional, and global media literacy networks. These ways of working focus on the kinds of "glocal" capacity cited above as essential, through connecting the international media literacy community with in-country work and in reaching the more vulnerable, who tend to have the least access to mass media and also to be (unintentionally) excluded from media literacy projects.

5. Dual Netizenship

We worked as embedded researchers (for the British Council) with Boubli, a youth-led alternative media platform in Tunisia. We conducted an ethnography of Dual Netizenship, their inter-cultural partnership with Fully Focused Productions, a youth media organisation in the UK, and, more closely, a case study of Boubli's methodology for civic intentionality from media literacy. For this, we used content analysis, audience analytics, a focus group within Boubli's online Discord platform, and interviews with community and team members.

The third space was complex for the inter-cultural media literacy project as the source project spaces were more dynamic and differentiated configurations than just home (first) and second (project) since youth-led media is in itself a third space endeavour. Explicit distrust of mainstream media was more pronounced among the Boubli participants, who were seeking an alternative, outside of the ecosystem, and were also very concerned with inter-generational tensions, whilst Fully Focused participants were sceptics about mainstream media more than direct resisters and seemed also to have the capability to access to a greater variety of media. This presents an interesting challenge for intercultural youth-led media projects, as the existing media literacies of participants may be culturally specific with regard to critical reading and dynamic engagements with media as opposed to distrust and resistance. The starting point and cultural motivations for media literacy may, then, be very different. We also observed how Dual Netizenship was a struggle to facilitate as "youth-led" whilst maintaining the integrity of objectives due to the number of adults involved and a sense of "flipping" the hierarchy to a different way of working from what people were

used to, which was perceived to be intimidating for youth participants at the start. Tunisian respondents reminded us that inherent to this kind of project is the imbalance between countries; therefore, it might be harder to avoid the colonising framing.

Our findings formed a set of transferable principles for this kind of partnership (Rega & McDougall, 2021). These include: negotiating media literacy objectives, nuanced for local contexts, which enable a tripartite capability approach, to combine (a) third space intercultural knowledge exchange, (b) counter-script media representation, and (c) media training and development; working with values for capacity and resilience—sharing across cultures, negotiating, refining, agreeing, and reviewing—neither imposing nor evading, as this is the core of the "uses of media literacy for positive change"; addressing gender and power in the moment through strategic design to bear witness to youth itself as another "problem space" and respecting difference as a first principle; transforming the frameworks for media production so that changing media or positive change through media—to make the world more equal, diverse, and inclusive—is privileged over "the media" in all contexts and between them and looking out for both intercultural nuance and textual moments that "change the story" for each partner and going with them. In this case, inter-generational concerns were more prominent than "youth vs. media" in Tunisia and also the fusion of aesthetics and poetry with social realism was formative on the UK side, but each media literacy partnership will have equivalent "sparks." Using our theory of change, our findings were as follows.

5.1. Access

Boubli uses entertainment with high production values and connections to existing subcultures and influential media agents as an "engagement pathway" to media literacy for civic intentionality. This is achieved through a distinctive convergence of content and community, with the impact on youth achieved through an interplay of environment and belonging, non-hierarchical third space values, and the textual field itself. In the spaces generated by Dual Netizenship, access was extended to intercultural peer support with shared values.

5.2. Awareness

The Boubli community demonstrate the highest levels of experiential "meta" reflexivity with regard to their understanding of the Tunisian media ecosystem. Whilst there was consensus that the Tunisian media ecosystem is unhealthy, there was less agreement over the purpose of treating it, as opposed to operating in resistance to it in the margins or as an alternative environment. Boubli's convergence of content and community "bakes in" media literacy awareness of its media practices, in the sense that producers and audiences are in constant reciprocal dialogue and content is produced with sensitivity to the audience's very high expectations and sophisticated interpretation of both content and values. This dialogue also forms the bridge to Capability. In Dual Netizenship, this "meta-awareness" of the relative health of participants' own media ecosystems was clearly enhanced by the comparative dimension being played out experientially, as the youth-led production navigated these differences and tensions.

5.3. Capability

Experiential learning in Boubli's third space environment provides creative and technical opportunities in a digital incubation hub for those excluded from media practice in conventional environments, combined with an ethos of peer-learning and learning to learn. People engaging with Boubli across audience and community groups reported an interest in researching further into issues, topics, and debates, instead of forming first impressions or taking information and perspectives at face value. This, in turn, boosts resilience to misinformation and has the potential to reduce polarization. Respondents reported a "mindset shift" with regard to tolerance, understanding of conflicting perspectives, and respect for diversity. In Dual Netizenship, the Fully Focused participants' relationships with their "second space" and the new inter-cultural third space seemed more straightforward, adding another layer to the more comfortable duality of using media for change whilst training to work in "the media." This is due to the ecosystem differences between the two contexts.

5.4. Consequences

Boubli has impacted the Tunisian media ecosystem in positive ways. On the one hand, since this impact has been strategically manifested more in providing an alternative media platform, the criteria in our theory of change for improving the health of *the* media ecosystem are more difficult to assess in this more complex situation.

But on the other hand, the "third space" social infrastructure which Boubli has developed, and our respondents valued so highly, does provide compelling evidence of the progression to positive consequences in the integration of agentive media literacy, community, and critical thinking about divergent views. In Dual Netizenship the counter-script aspect of media literacy work provided an unintended consequence, as the potential of the inter-cultural project to develop the capacity to act for positive change brought to the surface the more complex dynamics between the Tunisian "source project," mainstream media, and youth-led agency as a more complex problem space than the environment their UK counterparts were working in.

Across the visibility threshold (Rega & Medrado, 2021) of capability into consequences, we expect Boubli

to represent a media literacy intervention which will continue, sustainably, to impact the Tunisian media ecosystem, youth efficacy, and civic intentionality. However, our findings raise questions about the risk of hegemonic colonisation of "the voice" for young people, especially since responses to our questions about the future of Boubli as an alternative platform were the site of the least consensus. Nonetheless, it is clear from our research that the interplay of media literacy, audience and community which Boubli embeds as a values-driven approach and operationalises in and across all of its social practices is, subject to geo-cultural specificity, transferable as a model of both agentive media literacy for social justice in diverse societies *and* the productive unsettling of media literacy itself in the new spaces it brings into being (Lee et al., 2022).

6. Digital Arts: Refugee Engagement

DA-RE was an exploratory research partnership between refugee youth, academics, educational practitioners, and community activists working with refugee research assistants using arts-based activities in combination with existing media literacy for developing the capabilities of refugee youth in Turkey and Bangladesh.

DA-RE's participants co-created digital arts and connected with one another in a virtual space to share narratives from their situated perspectives and lived experiences. In these ways, they developed skills of engagement and agency in a digital "third space." This digital "third space" is embodied in the virtual exhibition in which young Syrian and Rohingya refugee artists and activists displayed their digital arts to offer a counter-narrative to "othering" discourses at work in their host communities (see Bademci & Karadayi, 2013; Uddin, 2021) and in the UK (accessible online, see Bournemouth University, 2022) and this became live in the reciprocal exchanges between the refugee youth in the two settings in real-time, during a live-streamed virtual event across the UK, Turkey, and Bangladesh. During the virtual event, the creative outcomes were screened to an international audience and the participants and research team reflected on the project, and this enabled funds of knowledge and media literacies to move across and between borders. At the same time, as with the "source projects" for Dual Netizenship, we observed that Gate of Sun, the project partner in Turkey, is in itself a third space endeavour as an alternative media platform for young refugees.

Eighteen digital art texts/portfolios were produced for DA-RE. The project generated three uploaded paintings, four collections of poetry with photographs, five films, two educational/informative videos for YouTube, one music video, one collection of videography, and two photojournalism pieces. Our analysis of this textual data located the connecting points between the media literacies our participants brought to DA-RE and the digital arts contexts the project's third space provided and identified moments of conversion in these connecting points of literacy into capability. We understand these as liminal spaces, visibility thresholds (Rega & Medrado, 2021) with consequences. Neag and Sefton-Green (2021, p. 17) observe how "forging a new life means not only finding a place to stay but, today, also making a presence visible across the migrant's difficult platforms," whilst Marino (2021, p. 8) observes the complex tension between the technological processing of refugee identities into "data subjects" and technology for social good: "an alternative, techno-mediated framework where the possibility of a counter-hegemonic project around a new idea for social justice for refugees can be imagined."

The artwork produced, displayed in the virtual exhibition and commented on and shared in a virtual international event can be categorised into four "meta-representational'' critical positionings, providing different but thematically connected motivations for the attention our participants wish for and from their audiences: (a) counter-representational storying of life in the camps included accounts of non-formal education, inter-generational digital networking, and participative development, including advocacy for cultural preservation; (b) narratives of crisis and trauma, aesthetically rich as well as deeply reflective; (c) gender equality as a focus of all media in the exhibition; and (d) a fourth theme fusing elements of the other three and converging in hopeful but complex digital arts.

The intention to convert existing media literacies into capability through art-based activities to facilitate positive consequences in terms of social justice and social good was at the foreground of the project, and, in terms of the theory of change, the project leveraged high levels of Access and developed reflective Awareness among its participants and also moved towards the more agentive levels of Capability and Consequences.

6.1. Access

We could see that our participants had, despite their circumstances, high levels of Access (the means to be included as an individual in the full media and information ecosystem, through technology access and the skills to use the technology).

6.2. Awareness

Through the work they developed and the reflections they shared, we also discern high levels of Awareness (of how media content and online information represent people, places, news, and issues from particular points of view with particular intentions and how the media environment we are engaging with is created and constructed, including who has a voice).

6.3. Capability

The artistic activities were used to channel experiences into messages, and the media literacy skills were utilised

in the process and developed further by the partners, but there was, as expected, no sense in which media literacy itself constituted the Capability needed for these forms of reflection and expression. Instead, in this relation, the application of such literacies into artistic acts, or modes of artivism, was the significant threshold. It is important to highlight that participants referred to themselves and one another as refugees but primarily presented themselves as artists, musicians, filmmakers, animators, writers, poets, and motivational speakers. So, whilst the themes of their media work related to identity negotiation, digital storytelling, and counter-representing lived experience as refugee youth, this was at most equal in importance and in many cases less important than the sharing of their work as creatives. Participants expressed a variety of motivations to produce their work, from the importance of articulating their lived experience in the camps and in the host community, to broader social justice objectives such as gender equality or early marriage, to the need to expose injustice and criminal activity but also messages of hope and resilience for one another and to others in similar situations—"Nothing is impossible"; "everybody wins by their own means."

6.4. Consequences

In DA-RE the use of existing media literacies combined with artistic practices was, from the outset, intentionally driven by the desire to contribute to social good and social justice. The way in which the project tried to contribute to social good was to enable a space for ethical listening to the stories that were shared by our participants in this convergence of their literacy repertoires and the possibilities DA-RE presented, to connect and to tell those stories to fellow artists experiencing a refugee life and to an international audience. This was very much in line with the motivations described, on behalf of the participants, by the peer research assistants involved in the project, for the work produced focussed almost always on being heard across the world; for example, "voices are bound by state and margin, art becomes the voice to the world." Their artistic outputs, digitally circulated, have the potential to "change the story," generate self-efficacy, and engage virtual and media audiences in an alternative discourse than the one of the refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers as passive and silenced, or dangerous and "other," as was also reflected in the virtual panel held at the end of the project. Nevertheless, the sustainable longitudinal impact (Consequences) of such an endeavour depends on "a dynamic conception of voice in which listening is clearly foregrounded" (Dreher, 2012, p. 157), and it is, therefore, the responsibility of both host communities and diverse audiences for such research, in the West/Global North especially, to differently engage in these spaces where media literacy can enable "seldom heard voices" to be articulated. We acknowledge, however, the inherent contradiction in locating power and agency in the act of listening. Even if "under erasure," there can be no evasion of the paradox of stating such intentions without bearing witness to, in Spivak's (1988, p. 83) phrasing, "the general violence that is the possibility of an episteme," in implying that positive consequences of this kind of work in the first spaces of the "seldom heard" can only be realised through benevolent listening on our part.

7. Conclusions

The contribution this thematic issue makes is indicative of the compelling objective for the international media literacy field to acknowledge how the kinds of work we share in this article can address the complex challenge of "(g)locally" adapting or moving away from:

> A view of media literacy that is rooted in structures and production of knowledge that assume a universality of socio-cultural and educational experiences in the Global North. Critical reflection is needed, however, to understand if and how these conceptualizations can be relevant to other societies for which "the West speaks" or indeed to racialized and otherwise marginalized groups living in Western countries. (Neag et al., 2021, p. 1)

In this article, we have been primarily concerned with locating the nexus of each partnership and assessing how the configuration of partnerships makes a difference to the motivating imperatives of media literacy work in diverse societies and fragile contexts. Our methodology for understanding this has been to think through how the kind of space each project generated relates to the four elements of our theory of change for media literacy.

These partnerships are between various "stakeholders," participants, youth-led media organisations, NGOs, a charity, journalists, and academics. Whilst everybody involved in these projects brings funds of knowledge from their first spaces, we are concerned here primarily with the coming together of these first space experiences with second space media literacy development for the participants in the projects—those for whom the theory of change is designed to evaluate progress in and between the four elements.

In this "matrix" (Table 1), we locate the three projects we have assessed in this article, each intending to develop media literacy for social justice in diverse Global South societies, through a visual mapping of partnerships, spaces, and change.

The matrix, in representing where our analysis intersects spaces with our theory of change, indicates the following four key findings, which directly answer our four research questions (see Section 1).

In RQ1, the three projects all either enabled, improved, or built on high levels of first space media access, consisting of digital skills, technological resources, informed media engagement, and a diverse media environment. In two of the three projects (Dual

Table 1. A matrix mapping the intersection between spaces and the theory of change.

	First Space: Everyday Life	Second Space: Organisations	Third Space: Partnerships
	Multicultural London, disadvantaged youth in Tunisia	Boubli, Fully Focused Production	Boubli, Fully Focused Production, Bournemouth University, British Council, Million Youth Media, 5orti, Bird by Bird projects, No Ordinary Experience, Arab Media Lab, Intric 8
	Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Syrian refugees in Turkey	Gate of Sun	Gate of Sun, BU, University of Chittagong, Malpete University
	In-country journalists, audiences, and communities	BBC Media Action and in-country local media	Local media, audiences, and communities
ACCESS			
AWARENESS			
CAPABILITY			
CONSEQUENCES			

Note: Dual Netizenship in orange, DA-RE in green, and BBC Media Action in blue.

Netizenship and Media Action), there was also evidence of access improvements for second space organisations.

In RQ2, awareness of media representation at the micro level and media ecosystem health at the macro level was developed in the first space for participants working with Media Action and the refugee youth involved in DA-RE. For Dual Netizenship, both groups had high levels of awareness, cultivated in the partnership's second spaces, the "source projects." In addition, the inter-cultural dialogue increased the reflective meta-awareness of the relative health and nuanced contexts, comparatively, of the participants' media ecosystems, so we observe this a change enacted in and by the third space.

As for RQ3, the conversion of media literacy into capability was evident for all of the second space organisations we worked with in these partnerships, as they all developed new ways of working and new ways of using media literacies to further their objectives. In both Dual Netizenship and DA-RE, we could also see this capability conversion taking place in the media literacy third spaces: in the inter-cultural exchanges and film production (Dual Netizenship); and in the exhibition of digital arts and the attendant opportunities to grow as creative artivists (DA-RE). For Media Action, we saw potential, as yet partly realized, for the capability to be fostered in third spaces between mainstream media, community, and audiences.

Finally, in regard to RQ4, at the level of observable positive change, it must be acknowledged that the projects discussed here were all developed with the explicit intention of using media literacy for good consequences in terms of social justice and voice, so we would expect to move towards this element of the theory of change. However, the configuration of the partnerships meant that these consequences were differently motivated. The Boubli community are clearly agents of change in their first spaces, and this can clearly be linked to their enhanced media literacies. The DA-RE participants and Media Action's in-country communities are at earlier stages of ecosystem change, but our findings show the trajectory to this, hence the "dotted line" mapping. Media Action has tangible, positive impacts on second spaces, the local media it supports through the

media literacy development it provides for journalists. For Boubli, the visibility threshold we identified presents a challenge in terms of how the organization develops, as there is an argument that its impact on the ecosystem might require a step back in the future, hence another dotted line. For DA-RE, we could see most clearly how the third space partnership itself, in terms of the ethical listening it required by partners and the audience reached with the digital arts, created good consequences from media literacy work. This was the only case where consequences could be observed more clearly within the third space, as opposed to the third space being a catalyst for impacts in the first spaces of participants or consistent with new directions of travel for second spaces.

The limitations of this study are to do with the short-term potential for positive change we have been able to assess, without the scope for longitudinal follow-up to see evidence of ecosystem health improvements and also the way we had to work remotely, due to covid, not only as researchers engaging with participants through screens, but also in the ways that the partnerships themselves were reliant on virtual third spaces by necessity rather than design.

Our theory of change assesses media literacy in diverse societies as an aspect of broader capability and goes further to focus on the *uses* of these media literacies for positive change. In both these shifts of emphasis, the implications of this work for the field of media literacy oblige researchers and practitioners to see media literacy as context-bound and differently motivated, case by case, as opposed to neutral and in itself a solution to complex ecosystem problems. In also mapping this theory of change to third spaces, we have been able to understand in new ways how these motivations are both framed by but also inform the design of the partnerships through which media literacy interventions come into being and are evaluated for impact.

In diverse societies, where we work in partnerships in and with the Global South, it is crucial to understand this interplay of space and intentionality, towards an ethics of difference for a dynamic, unsettling of media literacy. In this way, we are not only thinking about media literacy *for* diversity but also striving for a more *diverse* media literacy.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Intergenerational Perspectives on Media and Fake News During Covid-19: Results From Online Intergenerational Focus Groups

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Abstract
This article reflects on intergenerational perspectives on media habits and fake news during Covid-19. Active participation is closely linked to the citizens' media literacy competencies. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, inequalities in access, use, and understanding of the information conveyed by the media became more evident. Digital skills are essential to encourage co-learning and active ageing among different generations. This article relies on data collected during two online intergenerational focus groups with family pairs of different ages (grandparents and grandchildren) conducted in Portugal in the context of the European project SMaRT-EU. The focus groups addressed subjects such as news, fake news, critical perspective towards social networks and digital communication, and younger and older people's perspectives regarding these matters. The thematic analysis of the Portuguese data suggests that, by placing grandparents and grandchildren side by side, the online intergenerational focus groups promoted sharing and exchange of knowledge, valuing the intergenerational encounter and the voices of one of society's most fragile groups. Data also shows that participants have different perspectives on communication and digitally mediated interaction, mainly related to age factors and media literacy skills. As for fake news, although grandparents and grandchildren show awareness of the phenomenon, for the youngest participant it was complex to identify characteristics or the spaces where they are disseminated. The young adult participant was the most proficient and autonomous digital media user. Results further indicate that, although the online environment contributed to continuing research in times of pandemic, bringing together family members with different media literacy skills and ages poses difficulties related to the recruitment of participants.

Keywords
fake news; information disorders; intergenerationality; media habits; online focus groups; Portugal

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1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted inequalities. The most vulnerable groups in society—in particular, if we consider their digital and media competencies—have found themselves more isolated and affected than others. The growth of phenomena associated with the pandemic contributed to the increase in some of these inequalities (Pérez-Escolar & Canet, 2022). Information disorders have had a strong impact contributing to the pollution of the communications environment, the promotion of fear and distrust, and the dissemination of information that undermines democratic values. According to Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), this phenomenon comprises three notions that are distinguished by their purpose and impact, even if they can overlap. As they explain:

> Dis-information. Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization or country.

> Mis-information. Information that is false, but not created with the intention of causing harm.
>
> Mal-information. Information that is based on reality, used to inflict harm on a person, organization or country. (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017, p. 20)

In this complex context of information disorders, disinformation and fake news are diffuse terms that entered the common discourses of daily life. They became commonplace words and two of the most mentioned terms in any discourse on media—The pandemic has dominated the media scene and fake news has dominated digital media (Rocha et al., 2021). So, given the complexity of these phenomena, we take the complex notion of information disorders (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017) as the basis for the reflection conducted within the scope of this research. The sharing of fake or harmful content is often rampant and, because this content is typically structured in a journalistic format, it gives the receiver an appearance of trustworthiness that misleads, raises doubts about fundamental issues such as medicine and technology, and even incites hate and violence. This massive virtual sharing has contributed to the spread of misinformation and raised alarm for subsequent implications for citizenship (Kharod & Simmons, 2020).

Among the most vulnerable groups that are affected by this phenomenon are older people (Guess et al., 2019; Osmundsen et al., 2021). In modern societies, there is a trend towards an ageing population which highlights the need to consider older adults' heterogeneous nature and experiences (Amaral & Daniel, 2018). With this comes a number of challenges, including defining the age groups of the "older adults." On the one hand, according to the World Health Organization (2019) older people's age groups should be defined based on their socio-cultural and economic-political characteristics. On the other hand, the European Union (Eurostat, 2019) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022) acknowledge that older citizens are people over 65 depending on retirement standards. Some of these individuals are newcomers to digital environments and social media channels with low experience in digital media, traits that can hinder the detection of manipulated images, deceptive information, sponsored content, clickbait, and other forms of deception. As the use of social media increases, by both young and old, "fake news is also on the rise. The role played by age in the consumption of fake news on social media, however, is unclear" (Loos & Nijenhuis, 2020, p. 69). Further research about these matters is therefore relevant to the field of communication sciences and media studies.

Critical thinking is one of the key elements for detecting possible risks in media environments and promoting enlightened media use (Kellner & Share, 2005). On the same grounds, information and knowledge are fundamental to access, analyse, and create own media content. According to the European Union, media literacy involves the capacity of accessing, critically understanding, and engaging with the different media available (European Commission, 2022), which "creates knowledgeable individuals, empowers communities, and encourages democratic participation" (Mihailidis et al., 2021, p. 1). If we consider media literacy as "the ability to identify different types of media and understand the messages they're sending" (Common Sense Media, 2020), we can find the inspiration to relate media education to effective and contextualised work with communities. Following this line of thought, intergenerational approaches can contribute to promoting media literacy, based on experience and practice, within particular settings and groups.

Aiming to promote media literacy as a form of resilience against fake news and misinformation as well as to find out if shared media experience could be used to promote resilience towards information disorders, the SMaRT-EU project conducted 16 online intergenerational focus groups (OIFGs) in Croatia (n = 1), Belgium (n = 2), Estonia (n = 10), Portugal (n = 2), and Spain (n = 1). All partners agreed in advance on the number of intergenerational focus groups (FGs) to be held, considering the total expected number of activities and participants. By creating an environment conducive to the exchange of ideas and sharing of knowledge, the OIFG gathered grandparents and grandchildren, totalling 34 participants from five countries, in an experience of critical reflection about media habits before and during the pandemic, communication in the digital age, and perceptions and impact of information disorders. In this article, we present and reflect on the results of the two OIFGs conducted in Portugal. On the one hand, the analysis aims to compare and contrast the ways grandparents and grandchildren communicate and meet via digital media, both in the pre- and the post-pandemic context. On the other, it strives to understand and explore the meanings that each generation associates with misinformation and the fake news phenomenon, reflecting on the specific Covid-19 pandemic context in which the project was carried out. For such, a thematic analysis of the FGs' content was performed, having as a starting point three main questions: (a) What are the media habits of grandparents and grandchildren? (b) What importance did the media have in times of isolation? (c) Where do they find information and what impact does false information have on their daily routines? Field notes were also used to complement and cross-reference the results of the thematic analysis.

2. Infodemic and Information Disorders During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Access to reliable, varied, and substantiated information is vital for all citizens. Ensuring that quality information is available creates opportunities for individuals to contribute to their communities' sustainable development and to hold their governments accountable (UNESCO,

2021). The growth of digital technologies has led to the emergence of new media and channels and to phenomena such as media convergence (Jenkins, 2006), aspects that have caused profound changes in media environments and in the ways people communicate. The dynamics and flow of information have become more intense, leading human interaction and society to a highly interconnected and complex level that challenges pre-existing ideas of time and space (Melro & Oliveira, 2012), as well as the relationship between individuals and the media (Pinto, 2000). In this scenario, and despite the increasing supply of and easier access to information, several events threaten citizenship. Information disorders (Frau-Meigs, 2019) are one of them. And while the sharing of misleading information in public spheres is not exactly a modern-day phenomenon, it is understood that the growth of digital technologies and, more specifically, the internet and social media leveraged its reach and generalised its impact (Damasceno, 2021; Hobbs & McGee, 2014). The reach, as Frau-Meigs (2019, p. 77) points out, is due to three main characteristics: their "viral presence (they can reach many people), advertising (which can be monetized and generate traffic and profit), and automation (they can be amplified by robots and algorithms)."

In the pandemic context, the sharing of misleading information and misinformation became particularly worrisome. With the Covid-19 outbreak, the various communication channels were hit by an abrupt growth in information—accurate and inaccurate—on the same topic in a short period of time. The spread of different information disorders reached disturbing proportions, leading the World Health Organization to declare that, in addition to a pandemic, the world was experiencing an "infodemic" (Guarino et al., 2021, p. 1). This overabundance of information disorders about the pandemic made it hard for citizens to find reliable guidance and make informed decisions regarding their health and well-being. In times of isolation, with few opportunities to socialise in person with family, friends, and peers, time at home increased and consequently so did the use of digital media to keep in touch and updated about world events (Kemp, 2020).

3. Intergenerationality as an Approach to Media Literacy and Digital Citizenship

Intergenerationality points to the connections that result from the interaction between different generations. In the scope of this article, it particularly refers to younger and older people's interaction. If the era of traditional media (namely audiovisual media) highlighted generational gaps, the digital era allows and enhances decisive connective patterns (Amaral & Brites, 2019). By promoting contact between groups of people of different ages and from different backgrounds (sometimes living in different geographies), intergenerational approaches promote communication, moments of sharing, and, consequently, a better understanding between them, solidarity, and inclusion. Particularly regarding the promotion of media literacy, research has shown that intergenerational approaches can positively contribute to lifelong education (Patrício & Osório, 2015, 2016), cultural expression, and personal fulfilment. Therefore, intergenerationality can have positive results when one seeks to address issues related to everyday practices such as media uses, the impact of media in daily life, the opportunities and dangers of its use, and the importance of (digital) media for a broad citizenship experience.

Compared to other generations, older people are regarded as being unlikely to domesticate technologies (Hirsch & Silverstone, 1993) and are commonly subjected to multiple disadvantages (Livingstone et al., 2005), such as age, gender, and difficulties in using media. The domain of digital skills is, by definition, shown as an inherent characteristic of younger generations, especially those born without knowing analogue technologies. However, this is a static view of generations that ignores multidimensionality as well as the stereotypes faced by older adults (Loos, 2012). While at the dawn of the digital age generational gaps were promoted, this path was changed, for instance, with the interactivity that we are familiar with nowadays:

> The digital age promotes the blurring of barriers between different age groups that interact through and with technologies. Intergenerational relationships that narrow in digital can overcome the so-called generation gaps, fostering intergenerational interaction, which allows the sharing of knowledge and forms of sociability anchored in different generational contexts. (Amaral & Brites, 2019, p. 5113)

The frontiers between generations are fluid (Bolin & Skogerbø, 2013), indicating that media literacy can be a channel to bridge the intergenerational digital divide (Meimaris, 2017) and that digital media-based intergenerational proximity is a recent—and viable—research approach (Brites et al., 2019).

4. Context and Methodology

The SMaRT-EU—Social Media Resilience Toolkit project was conducted with the main purpose of promoting media literacy as a form of resilience against information disorders. The project ran between October 2020 and December 2021 and distinguished itself by using OIFGs (promoting younger and older generational mutual learning in each task) and a participatory approach, and by prioritising learning by doing as a way to discuss topics related to media education, digital citizenship, and information disorders with specific target groups, approaching them from their points of view. Among other activities, the team conducted online FGs with families, teachers and students, scholars, communication professionals, and youth workers to promote reflection

on the project's main themes. This article focuses on the family OIFG.

4.1. Online Intergenerational Focus Groups

FGs are one of the most widespread qualitative data collection techniques, allowing data collection through the interaction of a group of people on a particular topic (Morgan, 1996, 1997). They can be very productive in media studies (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999), as interaction takes the place of data source, recognising the active role of the researcher as a discussion facilitator. By promoting a focused discussion on specific topics among participants who share some characteristics, FGs help to deepen knowledge about topics of interest to the research from the target audiences' perspective (Krueger & Casey, 2009). FGs can also produce new ideas and creative concepts and enable understanding of how participants talk about a phenomenon as well as the interpretation of previously obtained results (Stewart et al., 2007). Regarding online FGs, Stewart and Shamdasani (2017) underline that studies have been demonstrating that online-based interaction tends to be similar to in-person interaction (Hoffman et al., 2012) and that web-based approaches can replicate the social interaction that takes place in offline environments (Eastwick & Gardner, 2009; Slater et al., 2006). Online FGs also enable research teams to conduct research in challenging times. By relying on online tools, teams can overcome cost-related issues associated with research in offline contexts, difficulties to access specific locations, and even access to specific groups of participants, such as youth or people with disabilities (Abrams & Gaiser, 2017; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2017; Stewart & Williams, 2005).

The SMaRT-EU team conducted 16 OIFGs involving grandparents and grandchildren. Understanding that the option to use this research technique and denomination to describe data collection with two participants might not be consensual, in the earlier reflection phase the European team discussed not only the terminology but also the option of conducting pair FGs during the research project.

As the literature points out, FGs do not require a specific number of participants. They are characterised by the interaction and collective reflection promoted among their participants (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999), this being the crucial aspect to be ensured in these activities. By conducting OIFGs, the team aimed to address the need to bring into the discussions of the field new, innovative, and creative forms of addressing and debating media literacy with older people (Rasi et al., 2021).

The basic script and guidelines were created by the Estonian team. While developing the script, the Estonian team intended not only to address the main issues underlying the project but also to promote moments of critical reflection and interactivity focused on three media and information literacy videos (named "YouTube News") produced within the project. These videos addressed—in simple and accessible language—issues related to media literacy, content production, and news and information-related issues. Two of them explored aspects more familiar to younger individuals (e.g., influencers and content production) and the other subjects also familiar to the older ones (e.g., information and communication). For these reasons, the team agreed that the videos could be a useful tool to spark intergenerational discussions over the aforementioned topics. Since the FGs would be conducted online, besides using the videos, the research team conceived other strategies to promote interactivity and intergenerational exchange and knowledge sharing. Therefore, researchers also relied on the value of using drawings as effective techniques to explore or extract hidden meanings from discourses (Varga-Atkins & O'Brien, 2009). Participants were asked to make drawings that could represent their media habits that were afterwards used to complement the data collected and analysed. The final script consisted of three sets of questions structured around three main themes (media habits and communication routines, information disorders, and influencers/content producers), moments of individual and collective reflection (even with zoom sound disconnected, to ensure privacy), drawing activities, and video discussions. The final version was then translated into the partner's national languages.

Furthermore, the work package that included the FG was tested and implemented by the Estonian team before the other partners proceeded with it. All these aspects gave us leverage in the results that could be achieved through the OIFGs. By then the researchers were aware of the relevance of the intergenerational and family dimensions in times of Covid-19. The team intended to bring to light the challenges that families, namely those with older people—regardless of the socioeconomic and educational settings—faced to maintain communication routines during the pandemic. Considering all these aspects, the team agreed that the script and the activities planned for the OIFGs met the aim of encouraging participants to actively discuss and critically reflect upon certain subjects with each other and not only to provide answers. The researchers were confident that the OIFGs with family pairs brought an innovative dimension without jeopardising the quality of the sample and the results. The OIFGs were always conducted by two researchers, both focused on conducting and taking notes, even if in particular moments one was more focused on a specific part of the task. The sessions lasted between 80 and 90 minutes and were conducted on Zoom.

4.2. Recruitment and Privacy Matters

This analysis focuses on the results of the two intergenerational, family FGs conducted in Portugal with grandparents and grandchildren. Participants were recruited from the researcher's network, aiming to ensure a diverse representation. The final group of participants included two

older women aged 63 and 73 (a group with lower digital skills), a younger child aged seven (digitally skilled but with content-based deficits), and a young adult aged 22 (with deep digital understanding and knowledge of the context, being a journalism student and a digital influencer).

In the particular Portuguese case, several contacts were made until two groups of families were available to participate in the OIFG. The people contacted indicated several reasons for declining the invitation to participate. The topics of media literacy, information disorders, and digital media use make people uncomfortable and doubtful of their ability to discuss and reflect on related subjects. Besides, the invitation to engage in research projects causes anxiety, making people afraid of being judged for their participation. Yet another aspect emerged during recruitment concerning activities that rely on the use of digital tools. Older participants, in particular, demonstrated fear towards using these tools—Some of the people that were invited to the FG reported they had never used the internet before and did not know how to use it properly to engage in these meetings and provide a valid contribution to the research.

Previously to the OIFG, all participants received a research consent form where the purpose of the sessions and how they would be run were explained. Participants were also informed about the data that would be used in the subsequent analysis. In this phase, grandparents and grandchildren were informed that anonymity would be guaranteed through the use of fictitious names in all publications and presentations that addressed the results of the FG. Internally, and in order to ensure this anonymity and avoid possible lapses, after the transcription of the FG, the participants' names were replaced by fictitious alternatives.

4.3. Thematic Analysis of the Focus Groups

We relied on thematic analysis to reflect on the FG and explore the data collected, as this approach allows us to go beyond counting words or extracting clippings, making it possible to identify the meanings and themes that can indicate patterns. In the context of this research, it was considered relevant to centre the analysis on identifying, analysing, and reporting the major themes/dimensions that emerged (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012; Clarke & Braun, 2017) within the data from the OIFG. To conduct the thematic analysis, we followed the six-step approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarisation, code formulation, generation of themes, themes review, defining and naming themes, and report formation.

After the analysis and identification of the pressing themes that emerged from the discussions with the participants, the field notes were used in a complementary manner to enrich the analysis. The team considered the field notes to be particularly useful to clarify aspects related to the participants' expressions or visual aspects identified in the recordings that had not been expressed in the transcribed discourses.

As previously mentioned, the drawings were used and analysed to complement the participants' discourse, namely their descriptions of media and habits and routines of media use and consumption.

5. Findings

From the data analysed, and considering the literature review that underpins this research, the thematic analysis allowed four major themes to be identified. The themes are presented in detail in this section.

5.1. Media Habits and Intergenerational Learning Experiences

Regarding the theme of media habits, both grandmothers (Antónia, 63, and Sofia, 73) and granddaughter (Ana, 7) had no profiles on social media, and evidenced a low level of digital use and interest, especially when compared to the grandson (Rui, 22), a journalism student and a digital influencer. When we look closer at the first FG, which brought together a young child and a grandmother (Antónia and Ana), we notice that, although the child had contact and experience with digital media and was already independently performing tasks using digital tools, some issues challenged her understanding. Namely, the questions related to the matters of information disorders (including the "fake news" expression, as it is used in common sense) proved to be more complex. The grandmother Antónia, on the other hand, despite not using social media and only using Google for occasional searches showed interest in discussing the proposed topics and appreciated the opportunity to share her opinions. The grandmother's speech was, therefore, predominant in this session. As to the preferred medium, television plays an important role in this family's routines, being also a companion during the day, especially for Antónia—as Figure 1 depicts—although she said that she is occasionally confronted with aspects on television channels that she labelled as fake news. According to her, this is due to the race for ratings and the urgency to get the information out before everyone else. From her point of view, however, these aspects lead to inconsistencies, inaccuracies, and viewer confusion.

The second FG brought together a different (digital) family context. With a grandson (Rui) that is a journalism student and also an influencer and a grandmother that is still learning how to deal with technology (Sofia), we could note that the grandson's skills influenced the family context and views on technology. As was the case with the first OIFG participants, this grandmother indicated that she did not have social media profiles, like on Facebook and Instagram, and only used messaging applications such as WhatsApp and Skype to contact family. On the other hand, the grandson claimed to use most of the existing social media on a daily basis. In the

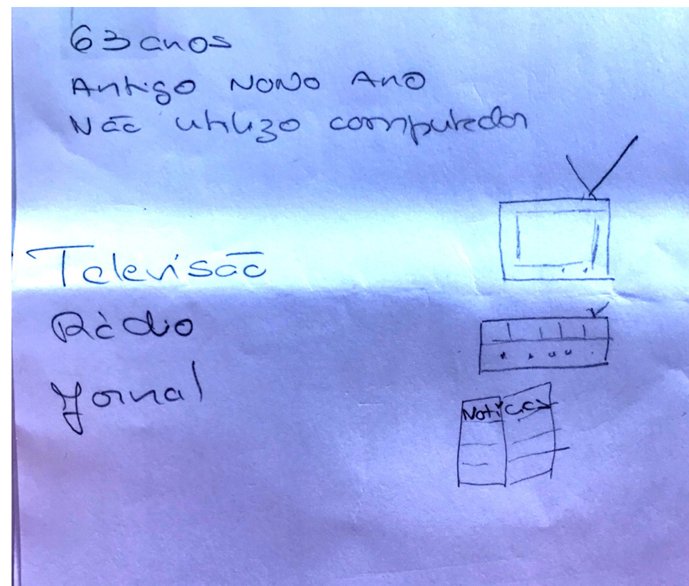

Figure 1. Antónia's (63) drawings point to traditional media consumption (television, radio, and print newspapers) and include a statement saying she does not use computers. Note: The text in the drawing reads "63 years old; Former ninth grade; I don't use the computer. Television; Radio; Newspaper."

case of this set of participants, however, we can say that both already had previous experience using digital media and networks as a way to keep in touch with family and friends. Although physical contact and proximity were also mentioned as preferential and essential to their family and friendship relationships, both recognised that, whereas before the pandemic digital media allowed them to keep in touch with people who were distant, during the pandemic these media became crucial to keep in touch with their immediate family as well.

Something that became quite evident during this session was that not only the grandmother had already attended technology-related training to improve her digital skills, but also the grandson had been gradually passing on his knowledge about these technologies to her. According to Sofia, the grandson was extremely important for her journey as an independent user of technologies, mentioning that the contact and sharing between different generations help to foster bonds and to integrate, especially the older ones, into the new digital worlds.

Briefly pointing to the data collected at the European level in relation to news habits, overall, we can conclude that intergenerational communication appeared as an effective way to promote everyday news consumption, a diversified understanding of news, and news validation. In addition, it was visible that interaction between generations can positively contribute to preventing the risk of misinterpretations of information. All of this increases resilience towards harmful consequences of information disorders.

5.2. Media Routines in Times of Confinement

Concerning media habits in times of isolation, the granddaughter and grandmother from the first FG clearly stated that the pandemic changed the family dynamics. Whereas before the pandemic, in-person conviviality was preferred and smartphones were only used occasionally to text, make calls, or video calls, the pandemic reversed the situation. The smartphone became a central and fundamental part of their relationships and allowed them to keep in touch, especially in times of isolation. Digital media devices facilitated proximity and social interaction. Antónia recognised, for example, that video chatting allowed her to follow the growth of her grandchildren, and that in the case of the older ones the use of the cell phone to make video calls with family members was something important to bring them closer to each other and to make them aware of what was happening in the world.

Antónia, who still has a very close relationship with her parents stressed that digital media were crucial for them, both older people with locomotion and communication handicaps, to be able to contact their family, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, alleviating the impact of isolation and feelings of loneliness. The granddaughter mentioned that during the quarantine periods her parents often made video calls so that she could keep in touch with some friends.

Although by the time of the OIFG a number of restrictions had been lifted and contact between families was allowed once again, the smartphone had not ceased to be part of their family routines. The use of this tool was, however, reduced to sending messages and making video calls through WhatsApp. In the case of the child, Ana, she also had access to TikTok through her parents' cell phones, facilitating her social and mediated interaction. Antónia, even if—as pointed out above—she had no social media profile, recognised the importance of social media to mitigate isolation, as was the case in periods of

confinement during the pandemic. In line with this idea, the granddaughter mentioned that, although she really enjoyed playing with her friends, social media allowed her to keep up with people in a more consistent manner, nurturing ties and knowing what people were doing and where they were.

5.3. The Role of Social Media and Digital Devices

In spite of the evidence of the important role of digital devices in connecting families, going outside this close group, and thinking about social media to maintain the connection between people and even create new friends, Antónia shared a very strong opinion on the subject. She stressed that "friendship" and "social media" are two aspects that for her are not intrinsically linked. She mentioned that:

> To be someone's friend I have to be with the person, to know the person…being friends at a distance is not friendship for me. Maybe I'm a bit old-fashioned…about these things, but for me friendship is to live with the person, to know the person, to be with the person, because even being with the person day after day and knowing them minimally, many times you never really create friendship. I think that at a distance you can make it easier, and I believe that many people do. They'll be acquaintances at most…friends, I don't think so, I think it's very strong. (1st FG, Antónia, 63)

It is easy to note that the other grandmother, Sofia, takes a similar line of thought. Despite not being a user of social media, she also recognised the importance they have in the new ways of communicating and in the new dynamics of meeting people. In line with her grandson, she states that social media are no substitute for meeting people in person, stressing that:

> Digital networks make contact much easier, but I think that physical contact, talking, looking at a friend who is present, without a doubt the human being is a being of affection. And, as he [the human being] is a being of affection, he doesn't lose, even with the digital medium, this feeling….Because even when we touch an animal, moving our hand over the animal's fur, we relax. We feel that there is a contact there, that there is a caress, that there is affection. (2nd FG, Sofia, 73)

She also adds that:

> This is very important and we must not forget that. Despite the great evolution of all the new technologies, all of this, we must not forget this part that the human being needs and will continue to need throughout humanity [human contact, touch, and presence]. (2nd FG, Sofia, 73)

For those that already lived in digital environments, the pandemic only raised their importance. As previously referred, the three female participants were low users of digital environments before the pandemic. On the contrary, Rui—highly skilled—says that the pandemic context only contributed to increasing his use of social networks and exploring new ones, namely TikTok. Concerning what he likes the most about social media, he points out interactivity and the fact that they allow people to overcome the barriers of time and space as the main reasons for people's amazement with social media. However, he recognises that they are no substitute for the presence and physical contact with others.

In regard to social media presence, Rui also refers to the issue of fabricated online personas. He believes that these are frequently forged as a mask for social media networks, rarely corresponding to reality, being many times the result of illusion and the fascination with the digital world. About this, he states that:

> When they [people] are fascinated by the online [medium], fascinated by the digital [world] and create a persona only in the digital [world], they lose contact with the natural, with the organic and, in the end, we are made of flesh and blood, we are not made of zeros and ones. (2nd FG, Rui, 22)

News consumption, fake news, and its meaning, as previously highlighted, proved to be complex issues for the granddaughter, Ana. However, it was interesting to notice that, despite not being able to verbalise what she understood by "fake news," the granddaughter was able to associate examples that she was confronted with in the media, namely empty supermarket shelves and the unbridled rush to the malls that this piece of news triggered. Antónia, in turn, mentioned that during the most critical phases of the pandemic she encountered false news and misinformation in various media, especially on television, and felt confused—never deceived. However, and despite suggesting that it is important to question, she thinks that sometimes people become too confused and have too many doubts. Especially those who consume more information, like her husband.

5.4. Covid-19 Changed How People Communicate

Rui and Sofia, considering the pandemic context, believe technologies have changed the way people communicate. From their point of view, people came to value the potential of the digital medium more as well as the immediacy that media contact allows, and there is no way back from this evolution. In addition, Sofia shares that this proximity and greater use of the media has also been important for people to have more access to diversified information and different means of communication. She mentions, for instance, the possibility of consulting health specialists located abroad and joining group consultations with people from other countries. She adds

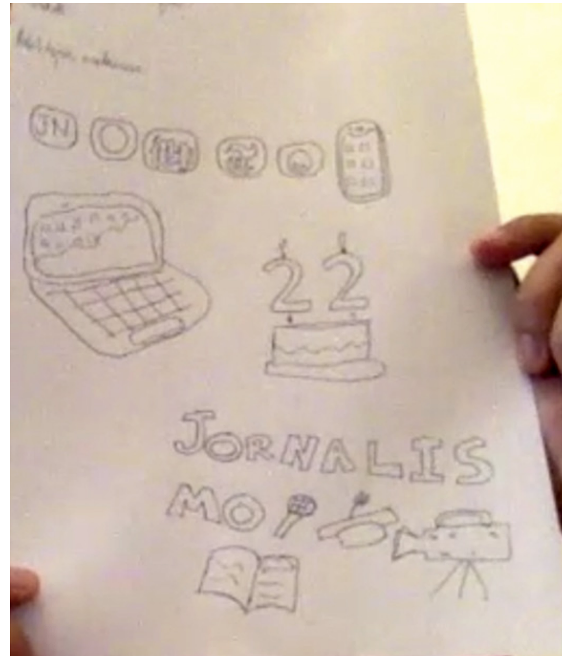

Figure 2. Rui's (22) drawings on his (digital) media preferences. Note: The text in the drawing reads "journalism."

that, in her opinion, it is possible to combine both worlds and the links created. As far as information consumption and research are concerned, both the grandmother and grandson refer to consuming information essentially from media that they consider being "of reference."

They do it, however, through different channels. Sofia refers to finding information in newspapers and on television, while her grandson uses the computer and the smartphone—as Figure 2 shows—especially the applications of the media he favours. Rui also mentions occasionally clicking on the news he finds on social media, namely Facebook. When asked what "news" means to them, both say it is the information that reaches them through any medium.

6. Final Notes and Future Perspectives

The research conducted within the scope of the SMaRT-EU project allowed for a reflection on a set of aspects in light of the present social context deeply affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Firstly, and from a methodological perspective, it allowed us to understand that by placing grandparents and grandchildren side by side in a joint reflection on their media habits and practices, on the impacts of information disorders, and the pandemic itself on these habits, it was possible to promote an environment of reflexivity on their practices, of sharing and intergenerational exchange of knowledge and experiences. Particularly, and in line with the literature (Amaral & Brites, 2019; Patrício & Osório, 2015, 2016), the intergenerational approach contributed to bridging the generational gaps and encouraging practices anchored in media literacy, while serving as a strategy to span the intergenerational digital divide as well. Although the OIFGs' results show that grandparents and grandchildren were already in the habit of using mobile media to communicate—namely through messaging applications such as WhatsApp—it became apparent that these practices intensified during quarantine periods and did not disappear with the easing of physical contact restrictions. The reports, especially from the older participants, show that they found in these media a way to keep in touch more regularly, to follow the growth and life events of their loved ones more closely. This is one of the most positive aspects they point out and value the most in the use of mobile media. The younger participants also mention it, further stating that, in addition to family, digital media was also important to maintain and nurture friendship relationships with peers—not, however, something new to their routines. In contrast, grandmothers believe friendship is lived and built in the physical world, through direct contact between individuals.

From an age perspective, the data collected in the FGs shows that the complexity of some topics hinders the active involvement of the younger participants and even affects their motivation during the sessions. The young child who participated in the first OIFG mentioned that she had access to social media through her parents (particularly TikTok), and also that television and even print media were part of the family routine of news consumption. However, the concept of "news" and "fake news" was something she was not familiar with, which may be related to the fact that her media consumption focuses on entertainment and that she is not an independent media consumer and user (her practices are usually supervised by an adult). As for the remaining participants, the two grandmothers and the grandson report having felt a more marked presence of fake

news from the media where they consume information—either digital (e.g., social media) or traditional (e.g., television). These aspects have bound them to develop (and improve) information research and analysis skills. In the case of the grandson, being an undergraduate journalism student, these skills were partially acquired within his academic training. In the case of the grandmothers, their discourses suggest that these skills were gradually developed in a self-taught way, and very much motivated by curiosity and questioning provoked by the information war.

As for the online participatory approach, the OIFGs show that the use of digital platforms allowed the research team to reach grandparents and grandchildren in times of social restrictions. It was also evident throughout the OIFGs that, by switching to an online model it was possible to promote rich context-based dialogue and moments of co-cooperation and co-learning. During the sessions, participants were in direct contact with the tools and were actually working in the environment that was the focus of the discussions, something that proved to contribute to a proper mindset and to ensure that people with digital competencies and others with low literacy levels had the opportunity to explore new tools, environments, and subjects, through learning-by-doing and contextualised exchange of experiences. As an example, Antonia (63) learned during the sessions with her granddaughter (Ana, 7) how to use Zoom and how to activate and deactivate the sound of the application; Sofia (73) reflected during the OIFG with her grandson (Rui, 22) on her own relationship with digital media and on everything she had learned about them with Rui's support.

Even though the shift to the digital environment was crucial for the project to continue, it is important to underline the challenges that arose from this change in the environment. Regarding the OIFGs, the aspect that became more evident was the difficulty in recruiting participants willing to meet through digital media to participate in discussions related to media literacy and digital tools and environments. Other challenges also arose. By moving from the offline to the online environment, the team had to deal with a series of technical challenges and issues such as poor internet connection, lack of devices, and demanding technical conditions. These constraints were persistent and made the sessions last longer than expected, with several interruptions throughout them.

7. Perspectives Drawn From the Fieldwork

Conducting OIFGs in several countries allows for comparative studies, without ignoring the specificities of each context. This is a line of research to be explored and which will allow an understanding of similarities and differences. Our study shows that intrafamilial exchanges across generations have the potential to promote dialogical lifelong learning opportunities related to media and digital platforms. Future research can incorporate FGs with people of various generations and with different intrafamilial relations, in order to understand the complexity of dynamics in the use of media and digital platforms.

Another aspect that can be a valid contribution of OIFG is that their results can contribute to improving other methods used in research projects, namely those conducted in different educational settings. In the case of the SMaRT-EU project, the results of the OIFG and the feedback obtained from families were taken into consideration both to improve the contents of the presentations used in the intergenerational workshops and to design a set of online materials aimed at older people that were made available in the last phase of the project.

In future research, it will also be essential to conduct intergenerational FGs with people from different social classes, racial-ethnic belonging, and genders, and to allow a much-needed intersectional approach. Understanding how situations of oppression or privilege impact the dynamics related to the use of media and digital platforms is crucial to developing digital and media literacy strategies better adjusted to distinct social realities.

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Conflict of Interests

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Commentary

Using Comics as a Media Literacy Tool for Marginalised Groups: The Case of Athens Comics Library

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Abstract

Comics and graphic novels not only have the power to narrate the stories of superheroes, but they also have the superpower to transfer knowledge. Using pictures and images is a great means to overcome cultural or language barriers and, at the same time, cultivate critical thinking, creativity, and empathy. Among their superpowers is also the ability to teach media literacy. Comics are a visual medium and people tend to react better to visual communication than verbal. Discussing multimodal literacy, we can claim that comics can become an efficient media literacy tool, especially for children, and with a special focus on diversity. In an era where misinformation/disinformation and fake news are all around us, marginalised groups, such as refugee populations, are more vulnerable. At the same time, Covid-19 brought upon us not only an infodemic but also digital inequalities, as several communities are excluded by the digital transformation. In this commentary article, we will present and discuss examples of how Athens Comics Library is using comics in order to provide a more inclusive media literacy education to refugee populations highlighting the correspondence between comics storytelling and media literacy abilities.

Keywords

comics; diversity; media literacy; participatory culture; refugees; storytelling; visual literacy

Issue

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1. Introduction

We are living in the era of Gen-Z, iGeneration, Gen Tech, or Net Gen. Kids, teenagers, and young people who were born in the middle of the 1990s and grew up in parallel with the development and spread of social media and the web 2.0. Always on and connected, they tend to spend millions of hours on Instagram and TikTok, having YouTubers as their influencers. Their personal communication is mostly based on images, symbols, emojis, and digital platforms, and sometimes those are their only public space (Boyd, 2014, p. 21).

At the same time, the pandemic brought upon us a domino of changes in various sectors and created, globally, an environment characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Moreover, Covid-19 caused an infodemic where:

> A few facts, mixed with fear, speculation and rumour, amplified and relayed swiftly worldwide by modern information technologies affecting national and international economies, politics and even security in ways that are utterly disproportionate with the root realities. (Rothkopf, 2003)

Therefore, the need for media literacy education became necessary and governments, media, and educational organisations took action in order to equip the citizens with critical abilities in the fight against misinformation and disinformation.

The pandemic had another serious effect: accelerating dramatically existing digital inequalities. In an era where "the status of digital spaces is switching from an amenity to a necessity" (Beaunoyer et al., 2020, p. 2), more and more individuals faced the challenge of feeling

isolated and excluded from a variety of economic, educational, and leisure activities and social interactions. Marginalised communities, such as refugees, socially isolated older adults, or digitally disadvantaged students became more vulnerable having difficulties coping with this new digital transformed environment, leaving themselves unprotected from fake news, misinformation, and disinformation practices.

For children with a refugee or migrant background, those inequalities were reflected in their ability to follow up with the new educational schemes proposed by the pandemic response. The closing of schools across many countries introduced online learning, but:

> Although schools are better equipped with digital tools than ever before, access to digital learning opportunities is still not equal: Children of immigrants tend to be less equipped to face this new transition. In most OECD countries with significant shares of children of immigrants, students with immigrant parents are less likely than students with native-born parents at the age of 15 to have access to a computer and an internet connection at home. (OECD, 2020, p. 15)

In addition, language barriers and the lack of interaction with peers made it even more difficult for those students to succeed in this new way of learning (OECD, 2020).

2. Comics and Media Literacy

Taking into consideration all the above, we may conclude that there is a need for adopting creative and innovative ways of tackling those inequalities and shaping a more inclusive educational system, allowing all diverse communities to gain media literacy skills in order to adapt to the ever-changing current landscape. Comics can serve as such a solution, as they have the superpower to transfer knowledge even to the slowest learners. According to Huda and Saptura (2015, as cited in Arini et al., 2017, p. 75), "learning with using comics a medium can improve the performance of learners, increase active learners, increase inters of students and receive a positive response from students." In addition, comics have certain "superpowers" that make them an efficient educational-learning tool. Skills, such as storytelling, visual literacy, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity (Tsene, 2019, pp. 154–183), empathy, seeking and synthesis of information, understanding of reality, and multimedia and transmedia content production are encouraged during the process of reading or creating a comic story.

Comics are a visual medium and human beings tend to respond to visual communication sometimes better than to verbal communication. In a study comparing comics to text, Sones (1944, pp. 232–240) found that comics' visual quality increases learning, while Duncan and Smith (2013, p. 279) stated that the increase in comics use in academics addresses the need to teach different literacies that correspond with the multimodal culture of today's world, a culture that uses "textual, visual, and aural stimuli simultaneously to communicate its message." Comics, according to McCloud (1993), are a medium that allows the audience to become a "willing collaborator," as the reader is asked to fill the gutters between panels, co-creating the story with the writer. In addition, one has to imagine sounds or other effects that cannot be implemented in order to reconstruct meaning in the comic story which is actually a story full of holes (Groensteen, 2011). This collaborative relation between the comic creator and the reader fosters critical thinking and creativity, as the reader "invests his or her own intelligence, imagination and emotion" (Krusemark, 2014, p. 43) during his or her participation in the reading process.

All the aforementioned are very close to the skills suggested by media literacy scholars. According to Collins et al. (2011, pp. 159–185), media-literate citizens have the ability to better understand how a message was created and to construct meaning out of it. If we attempt to move a step forward, we could identify similar skills between Jenkins' (2006) participatory culture and the ability of reading or creating a comic. According to Jenkins (2006) experimentation in problem-solving, mixing media content, evaluating the sources, searching and synthesising information, and following transmedia stories are some of the characteristics and skills gained within the context of collaborative intelligence and participation. Those elements are similar to synthesis, decoding, interpretation, and transmedia navigation that comics reading or creating also suggests.

3. The Case of Athens Comics Library

The Athens Comics Library was designed to be a place of inspiration and creation of experiences, learning and exploration, participation, creativity, and experimentation around a collection of 2,500 comics. The team believes in the healing and educational value of comics and storytelling, an approach that has supported numerous children and families who have fled war and conflict. Their work aims to hold space to share those impactful stories and lived experiences and at the same time encourage people to learn how to listen to someone else's story and realise that humanity is composed of many overlapping stories. Since 2008, they design and facilitate educational workshops, and, since 2016, they have also been active in offering educational programs for refugee children and mothers through the Booster the Emotional Dimension of Social Inclusion for Immigrant Mothers and Children program. Since October 2019, they are operating as Baytna Hub, a program for the education and creative employment of preschool refugee children. Over the past year, the Athens Comics Library has carried out a series of community empowerment projects, with an emphasis on refugee and immigrant families participating in their activities, with comics storytelling as the main platform (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Character design during the Athens Comics Library's workshops.

Inspired by all the aforementioned, Athens Comics Library's workshops are designed in order to introduce to participants the dynamic language of comics and train them to creative thinking, content creation, energetic collaboration, empathy, and other media literacy skills (Figure 2).

There are only seven basic rules during the workshops and those are (Tsene, 2019, pp. 154–183):

- Timeframe: All exercises are completed in a certain, strict timeframe (e.g., five minutes, 10 minutes, etc.).
- Rubbers' prohibition: We do not allow rubbers during the workshops, encouraging the participants to make creative mistakes.
- The "is it ok if" question: This is the most common question we get from participants. Our reply is that everything is ok if it drives forward the story.
- Mind the gutter: The gutter is where the co-creation between the creator and the reader happens. We encourage participants to use this space cleverly.
- The caption: This is one of the most important elements of a comic story, as it is where the narrative

Figure 2. Collaboration during the Athens Comics Library's workshops.

happens. Once again, we encourage participants to use this space mindfully.

- The panel limitation: We usually ask participants to create either six- or nine-panel comics. This limitation assures that we will get complete stories with a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- The "I cannot draw" excuse: Most of the participants often complain that they cannot draw, therefore they cannot participate. We explain to them that, in comics, drawing is communication, so even a stick figure can tell the story.

Behind those rules, there are certain goals, such as creating a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end, allowing readers closure with a clear message, taking responsibility for the choices you are making during the content production, or giving the space to readers to interact with the message. As we know, today we are experiencing the epitome of the era of the prosumer of the content, where content production is as critical as content consumption. By encouraging the participants to create a comic story, we are encouraging them to do the research, validate information, take decisions, and, in the end, the responsibility of sharing the content with an audience. And then, some questions follow. How do pictures and words work complementary in a comic story? What is the information I have to use in my story and what is not needed? How do the different balloons work? What is the gutter and what is its role in the comic format? How can we tell a totally different story with the exact same pictures if we just change the wording, addressing a different audience? Those questions again enable the participants to expose themselves to multimodal literacies and audiences and to better understand the mechanisms of composing a complex message today. Finally, by reading each other's stories, participants have the opportunity to reflect on their own reality and truth and to witness alternative truths, shaping a better understanding of the world, feeling connected, but also to stand critically towards the content/messages they receive everyday (Figure 3).

4. Reflections and Conclusions

Comics are a narrative medium with many perspectives and for sure they can be used as an efficient teaching tool encouraging equal participation, creativity, and critical thinking. Our risk and fast-changing society demands a flexible and more inclusive educational system in order to equip all citizens with media literacy skills. Arts-based teaching programs are gaining ground as they "teach us to judge in absence of rules, to appraise the consequences of one's choices and to revise and then to make other choices" (Eisner, 2004, as cited in Romanowska et al., 2013, p. 1005). So, what can comics teach about media literacy? Creativity, collaboration, teamwork, storytelling skills, content production, empathy, research, and validation are some of the answers.

Figure 3. A comic story created during the Athens Comics Library's workshops.

If we would like to discuss media literacy with children and marginalised communities in an alternative way and offer them a variety of motivations, comics can be an interesting platform. As McLuhan (1964) has stated, comics are cool media, in contrast with the hot ones, such as movies. According to him, hot media demand little interaction as in a way they spoon-feed the content, while cool media engage all senses and demand a great deal of interaction. Let communities experiment and interact with cool comics and discover on their own the capabilities that will allow them to become more active citizens.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Storytelling as Media Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue in Post-Colonial Societies

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Abstract
This article reflects upon digital storytelling and collaborative media practices as valuable tools for reassessing memory, questioning identity discourses, and unveiling the cultural diversity of contemporary societies. The digital age allows for a constant re-reading and re-mediation of cultural archives by ordinary citizens, namely by younger generations, and for the production and dissemination of alternative narratives about the present. These are crucial opportunities for post-colonial societies to overcome silences around difficult memories that hinder a collective reappropriation of the past, confront some of the current issues on ethnical diversity, and discrimination and reimagine a more inclusive identity. However, taking advantage of this opportunity implies fully recognizing the role of media technology in shaping memory, social individuation and establishing networks, making media literacy and media education crucial aspects of cultural dialogue. Based on the experience of a citizenship project about the post-colonial condition and Afro-European interculturality, this essay reflects on digital storytelling, and co-creative practices as relevant literacy and education strategies for furthering interculturality in contemporary societies.

Keywords
afro-european dialogue; desktop cinema; media literacy; post-colonial societies; storytelling

Issue
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1. Introduction: The African-European Narratives Project

The reflection shared in this article concerns an ongoing European project initiated in 2018 under the Europe for Citizens Program. This project aims to gather narratives on the African-European interplay of cultures present in the life and memory of European citizens. This interplay is based on social life and everyday experience, cultural roots and family history, and the long historical relationship between the two continents. We produced a digital storytelling application made available as a collaborative web platform on the internet: African-European Narratives | Sharing Stories (www.africaneuropeannarratives.eu). During the project, we also fostered various contexts of conversation and public debate around some of its central topics: colonial memory and post-colonial condition; African roots and African descent; racializing and discrimination discourses and practices; the need for alternative narratives and more diverse visibilities; and the goal of a more inclusive European identity, boosted by cultural dialogue and educational strategies. In preparation for the project's methodology and tools, we collected testimonies and carried out a series of digital storytelling workshops in collaboration with various African roots organizations and communities as well as other universities and schools in the participant countries (Portugal, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom). One year after its launch, the project's collaborative web platform featured around 200 multimedia stories, using specific or combined media of text, illustration, photography,

video, sound, and music. These stories can be viewed and browsed using the metadata proposed by the authors of the stories themselves. After this first stage, the project carried out yet another experience around storytelling and mediation practices. Some of the participating authors produced a collaborative documentary film featuring and remediating their specific set of stories (Miranda, 2021).

The work carried out in the African-European Narratives project shares common assumptions with other research proposals and activist practices concerning the necessity of fostering cultural dialogue in contemporary societies: firstly, the assumption that we live in diverse, or even hyper-diverse, societies, and secondly, that micronarratives, co-creative practices, and digital networks are interesting tools for showcasing this diversity, voicing minorities and discriminated groups, and fostering intercultural dialogue.

However, concentrating on the African-European cultural dialogue adds a particular historical and social complexity to this kind of working program since the relationship between the two continents is marked by the colonial histories of several European countries, whose imperial regimes lasted until the middle of the 20th century. Cultural dialogue in post-colonial contexts is not only hindered by estrangement and othering. It establishes itself over the false familiarity of the other, shaped by a history of colonial violence and exploitation, including, in the case of the relationship with Africa, a long history of slavery. This historical background implies deeper-rooted issues of ethnic discrimination and racism and more complex social, and cultural tensions. Probably, no other construction of identity and otherness is so deeply rooted in the idea of race than that of the European discrimination of African identities. Moreover, the contemporary history linking the two continents is one of conflict and war (preceding and sometimes following the decolonization processes), a history of African diasporas and migrations, and European citizens' homecomings. Although recalled among communities and families, this vernacular memory has remained largely absent from collective representations and national identity building. On the one hand, it includes an "unsettling difficult heritage" (Macdonald, 2010) buried under traumatic silence, and on the other, it cannot fit into a coherent image or a consensual narrative. On the other, it testifies to multiple tensions, opposite views and affections, and even different senses of non-belonging. The only archives of colonial times are those of the colonial states themselves, which cannot, for that very reason, be appropriated as collective memory either. However, their re-opening and re-reading have been crucial for the present to emerge as post-colonial existence, disclosing new discrimination issues and new conflicting stories, such as those of Afro-descendants and mixed identities, but also a more open and vibrant interplay of cultures. The post-colonial condition sets forth a much longer task of decolonization (the decolonization of institutions, discourses, practices, and minds) and the task of reimagining the European identity.

2. Reflecting on Contemporary Media Literacies in Post-Colonial Societies

Through the academic breakthrough of post-colonial studies (following a rich lineage of African authors in essay and literature and the role of social, and activist movements), there is finally a set of new perspectives on colonialism, the acknowledgment of persisting discrimination and racism in European societies and new claims of identity and representation. It is important to acknowledge the role of pioneers in the intertwined fields of politics, essay, and literature, such as *Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poésie Nègre et Malagache*, edited by Léopold Sédar Senghor (1948), *Discourse on Colonialism* by Aimé Césaire (1950), or *Black Skin, White Masks* by Frantz Fanon (1952/1967), and the persistent influence of Edouard Glissant with *Monsieur Toussaint* (1960), *Poétique de la Relation* (1990), *Traité du Tout-Monde* (1997), as well as the social and activist movements on racism and civil rights. The resonance of such references in Portuguese post-colonial cultural debates appeared around some projects such as the website BUALA, (https://www.buala.org/en), or the work of Griot Theatre (https://en.teatrogriot.com). #BlackLivesMatter as a global movement raised local awareness and new actions and groups across the cultural and social agenda.

The complexity of postcoloniality is frequently approached through the segmentation of colonial memory, contemporary identity claims, and primarily, ethnicity, ultimately "falling into the trap of racialization" (Mbembe, 2008, p. 3) to empower just and necessary fights over the backdrop of failed "color-blind" promises. However, some contemporary debates related to race theory are a relevant addition to the insufficient efforts of the critique of western reason, especially of its claims to universality and humanism, proclaimed by a self-centered European culture and carried out as projects of domination, such as the imperial nation-states. The aim of "provincializing Europe" (Chakrabarty, 2007) can be seen as part of the critical task itself, centrally undertaken by contemporary European thought. In fact, European critical thought is particularly marked by the aim to think of the outside, the repressed, and otherness. This critical affection also translates as a permanent sense of "crisis" and, specifically, a crisis over the identity of Europe, as in Esposito (2016). However, this kind of negativity has been of fundamental importance to deepening European democracies and a citizenship project based on universal human rights. In the words of Mbembe (2018), post-colonial critique of universalism is also not "an end in itself." It, too, "stresses humanity-in-the-making" and nurtures "the dream of a new form of humanism, a critical humanism…the dream of a polis that is universal because ethnically diverse" (Mbembe, 2018, p.12). The same could be

noted concerning Paul Gilroy's defense of a convivial multicultural world despite all the forces ready to declare its "death at birth": "resurgent imperial power," "xenophobia and nationalism," "institutional indifference and political resentment" (Gilroy, 2005, pp. 1–6).

Precisely because of all these adverse forces, it is essential to build a rich and nuanced post-colonial vision of Europe that speaks to all and avoids forgetful and revisionist versions of history, especially among the younger generations. It is crucial to explain colonialism not only to those who endured it directly (without portraying them as victims) but rather to speak to all and build a collective enunciation space where everyone can become a subject and not an object of discourse. The participatory engagement of ordinary citizens of different ethnicities and generations is of great importance, with schools playing a key role as partners insofar as they aggregate themselves as communities, families, and generations with whom they share an educational, social, and cultural responsibility. This kind of partnership enables an environment that reflects the complexity of the post-colonial condition in a context of post-memory and new cultural diversity.

The idea of citizenship continues to imply, as in its modern constitution, participation in a constructed universality, although we are now more aware of the historical forces that shape it and the diversity that composes it. In any case, the notion of citizen remains a political and legal abstraction whose function is also protecting our corporeality and preventing a (bio)politics of the flesh. However, this construction is currently less abstract as it includes a set of particularisms to equally protect and value a diversity that expresses itself on various levels (gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or religion). These particularisms tend to restore the importance of the ethnological in human individuation, although technology plays an equally central role in this process. Anthropology (from Lévi-Strauss and Leroi-Gourhan to Simondon) has shown that human individuation takes place in an "associated milieu" (Simondon, 1958/2017) which is fundamentally technical and symbolic. This techno-symbolic milieu mediates all human experience, ensuring its retention and transmission as an external memory, shared by all individuals but distinct from genetic memory. According to Bernard Stiegler (1998), all media technologies are, in this sense, mnemotechnics and constitute the basis of culture, i.e., the human form of intelligence, action upon the world, and relationship with others. Media or mnemotechnics is central in the processes of individuation of the "I" and the "we," as well as in the processes of social transformation that Stiegler designates as "transindividuation," for they require a co-individuation in which both the "I" and the "we" are transformed through one another (Stiegler & Rogoff, 2010). The ethnological and technological dimensions of individuation are therefore associated, and this has become increasingly clear in the civilizational processes, culminating today in the process of globalization.

Belonging to a culture and participating, in the form of citizenship, is to be introduced to a set of mediations and cultural techniques. In most modern societies, citizenship implies a minimum of schooling and familiarization with reading, writing, and performing numerical operations. "Citizenship and literacy are inseparable" Babo (2003, p. 7): Just as learning to write and read was understood as a central element of civic consciousness formation, citizenship is now a central element of school education. Thus, the new media and the new digital environment demand new literacies and educational strategies, on which the new possibilities of transindividuation and citizenship will largely depend.

New information technologies and digital networks are increasingly planetary, but they do not by themselves guarantee the advent of global citizenship or the prevalence of cultural dialogue. The fact that we are more connected than ever does not necessarily amount to more inclusive societies. In fact, digital media have been taken as much as the virtuous instrument of global networking as a toxic avenue for polarization and othering. According to Bernard Stiegler (1998), media technology is constitutively ambivalent, a kind of pharmakon—both remedy and poison—the concept Plato used to describe writing because it enables both memory and forgetfulness. That is why our relation to media technology cannot dispense with critical reflection, experimental practice, and educational strategies. Media lie at the core of our ability to share experience, cultivate, and take care of our mode of existence as humans, demanding political and educational thought. In the words of Achille Mbembe, "ours is a time of planetary entanglement" but also a time of "contraction," "enclosure," and "borderization," with a drive towards "sorting" and "categorizing" (Mbembe, 2018). Therefore, maybe we need a media education and politics that can foster "co-individuation" (Stiegler) or "co-constitution" (Mbembe) more than we need a politics of identities.

One of the goals of the African-European Narratives project is to contribute to the research and practice of such a politics of mediation in the age of new information technologies, challenging a mere self-evidence of "digital activism." Media education and literacy can foster the kind of cultural processes and engagement that Stiegler characterizes as the "long circuits" of individuation, in opposition to the "short-circuit" produced by processes of mobilization, viral sharing, and reactivity. These other forms of engagement authorize a constant disruption of experience, disposing it to abstraction and transitivity by the algorithmic economy, and preventing the individual and collective investments necessary to invent new ways for its re-organization as in Stiegler (2010, 2019). On the contrary, the involvement in "long circuits" of individuation allows forms of attention that favor "transmission," the deepening of memory, intergenerational relations, and learning, which are fundamental for a critical view of the present and the projection of a future.

According to Stiegler, the "great institutions of transmission ('family education,' 'academic education,' and 'cultural education')" are being "short-circuited" by a particular media regime that does not favor transmission, i.e., a "relationship to time and human experience" (Stiegler & Rogoff, 2010) nor, consequently, critical use of media in cultural production. Social networks and the archival capabilities of the digital lead to an often superficial appropriation of experience, and the constant display of Doxa and reactivity, although this does not invalidate other highly relevant and transformative aspects of digital culture. Neither does this invalidate other much more relevant and transformative uses of the digital. Storytelling is resumed in this project as a persistent practice throughout the history of humanity and, at the same time, in productive transformation in the digital age. A practice that encourages transmission and the kind of "long circuits" of individuation that Stiegler speaks about: research-based engagement with archives, creative articulation between memory and imagination, the connection between collective history and individual stories, and the exploration of collaborative practices.

3. Storytelling: A Tool for Intercultural Dialogue

Referring to the modern origin of the western nation, rooted in romanticism and the metaphysics of history, Homi Bhabha (1990) speaks of an intrinsic relationship between Nation and Narration, explaining how "it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historic idea in the west" and how "narrating the nation" (Bhabha, 1990, pp. 1–7) is, therefore, in itself, the foundational act of national states. Therefore, to counter their mythical horizon, their logic of inclusion and exclusion, identity and otherness, requires the production of alternative narratives. In a more or less intuitive way, all liberation movements seeking to escape the oppression of a political destiny look for a counter-narrative. And so too in cultural experience at large. "The danger of a single story" finds the most effective antidote in storytelling itself, as novelist Chimamanda Adichie so effectively points out through her own exemplary story (Adichie, 2009). The resurgence of storytelling, a central practice from the very early age of human culture, is playing a significant role in fostering critical self-awareness and the creation of counter-narratives in post-colonial societies. The relevance of self-authorship and the way it influenced the perspective of participants in the African-European Narratives Project was noticeable in various activities and feedback from audiences, as documented on its website (https://africaneuropeanarratives.fcsh.unl.pt/feed-back).

The crisis of modern experience was characterized by one of its leading interpreters, Walter Benjamin, as a crisis of storytelling. Describing the structure of modern experience as one of fragmentation and acceleration, he anticipates that "the art of storytelling is coming to an end" (Benjamin, 1936/1969, p. 83). However, we are witnessing the persistence of narrative, whether in the dominant genres of the cultural industries (populated by countless narrative archetypes), hypertextual and multimedia formats, or accessible and derivative formats of micronarratives. In *The New Digital Storytelling*, Bryan Alexander (2011) points out the expansive meaning of "story" in digital culture, which is used to identify a great variety of meaningful objects as opposed to mere data. In the digital world, therefore, it seems to be easier to define what "is not a story": "data, especially data without meaningful patterns," lacking "intrinsic meaning" (Alexander, 2011, p. 4). The persistence of stories in the era of big data reveals their cultural significance as an "overload-coping mechanism," as a "tool for generating meaning and context," a necessary aspect of "our modern information ecosystems" (Alexander, 2011, p. 215) and, to that extent, a relevant dimension of psychic and social individuation processes.

The ability to tell stories has existed at least since the Paleolithic birth of images and seems to correspond to an anthropological dimension that cuts across all cultures. At the individual level, and according to the cognitive sciences, it is linked to the emergence of self-awareness or "the autobiographical self"—an event "in brains endowed with abundant memory, language, reasoning and narratives" (Damásio, 2011, pp. 203–204). Moreover, as modern literature has often revealed, the subject's ability for self-referentiality and self-interpretation is only possible through their othering. The French poet A. Rimbaud famously described himself as "I is another," and F. Pessoa, the Portuguese poet who invented several literary heteronyms, spoke of "othering oneself." The auto-biographical self already arises from multiplicity and co-individuation. Telling stories helps make sense of the world and whom we are by intertwining memory and imagination, fact and fiction, identity, and otherness. That is why stories are such powerful artifacts against dominant narratives and ideology. They allow us to rediscover history's complexity, relate personal experience and collective memory, and open a space of trans-individuation. These aspects explain the anthropological centrality of stories and why comparative literature or world literature have become key disciplines in cultural and post-colonial studies, contexts of negotiation between humanistic universalism and its questionings. They force us to enquire about the "translatability" of stories, their "competing conceptions of the world," or even their "alternative universalities" (Vanhove, 2022, pp. 8–11).

One of the starting questions of the African-European Narratives Project was determining whether post-colonial stories could, despite their diversity, be told in the same space. Could their plurality and tensions be brought together in a joint report? What would have been impossible to achieve through the unifying medium of a book is making its way as a digital object through multimedia storytelling and contributory content production

and tagging. The African-European platform is a narrative Atlas, co-created by its participants without erasing the differences and tensions between the individual stories that compose it. It is also a digital network and a multimedia environment that transcend national, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries and foster the diversity of cultural expression, enabling, at the same time, their contamination. Its archive supports multiple cartographic readings and reveals new intercultural geographies while safeguarding the integrity and accessibility of each story.

The engagement of participants through storytelling practices is also an educational and media literacy proposition. "Traditional mass media seemed to be able to do without any kind of specific proficiency" Gentikow 2007, p. 81), not only because their presence became familiar and habitual but because we were intended primarily as receivers (Gentikow, 2007). Therefore, media education has been primarily focused on reception studies and content analysis, a task that is now taken up by traditional media themselves (as an aspect of their competition with new media), calling our attention to the dangers of the information society and digital networks (providing "fact-checking,'' denouncing "fake news" and information bubbles, etc.). However necessary this kind of practice may be, digital media education requires more than content and reception analysis.

The idea of "changing literacies" (Livingstone, 2004, p. 10) has accompanied most of 20th century culture, mainly in what has come to be described as its "pictorial turn" (Mitchell, 1992), giving rise to visual studies (Elkins & Naef, 2011; Mirzoeff, 1998) and the need for a new formal, technical, and ideological critique of images. The acknowledgment that "the 'reading' of pictures has to be learned" (Gentikow, 2007, p.7 9) sets itself as a parallel aspect to the familiarity with "selected canonical works of literature" that is expected from a "literate education" (Frechette, 2002, p. 23). Moreover, modern media environments (radio, television, cinema) demanded what Tyner has called "communication multiliteracies" (Tyner, 1998, p. 113) as well as rethinking the idea of a definite overcoming of orality by the literate cultural regime McLuhan, (1964/1994), Ong (1981/1992). However, it was primarily digital media that brought along a more general discussion around what counts as literacy, and cultural competencies, and deepened the anthropological dimensions of this discussion. With the emergence of digital programming languages and software, we are reminded that all writing and reading systems have been associated with specific skills and technologies such as handwriting and the alphabet (from which the very concept of literacy derives), typography, and the printing press. "Writing is completely artificial": It is "a technology, calling for the use of tools and other equipment" (Ong, 1981/1992, 81–82).

The comprehension that the symbolic is not an innate human ability but rather constitutes itself as the mastery of specific cultural techniques (such as writing, reading, and counting) raises the question of knowing what will be the new operations and competencies corresponding to the digital age of the "symbolic machine" (Kittler, 1997). On the one hand, the emergence and impact of the digital induce a comparison with the leap that occurred with the first generation of symbolic recursive (self-referential) techniques, introducing us to a cultural experience of great sophistication. On the other hand, the generalization of numerization, the automation of calculus, and the simulation (by this means) of human intelligence seem to point to a generalized automation of human practices and a corresponding deskilling process. However, we are still far from an explicit configuration of the computational apparatus, leaving us with the task of responding to its challenges and maybe influencing its course.

The idea of "cultural techniques conceived of as operative chains that precede the media concepts they generate" (Siegert, 2015, p. 11) seems particularly interesting to think about digital culture and the literacies it may be eliciting, despite the conquest of machines capable of performing certain "intelligent" operations. As Sessa points out, media technologies will always end up raising a media literacy, understood as "the socially widespread deployment of skills and capabilities in a context of material support (that is, an exercise of material intelligence) to achieve valued intellectual ends" (Sessa, 2000, p. 19). One of the interesting aspects of writing/reading symbolic systems (which is also the case of the computer) is that they constitute "reading as practice" (Babo, 2003). "Seen through this prism, reading is not decaying but rather in a process of enrichment and complexification, appealing to an aesthesic perception and the development of a creativity and interactivity indispensable to immersion in the digital environment" (Babo, 2008, p. 13). Determining what skills, we need to develop at the level of interaction with computational systems, whether we should generalize the learning of programming languages and software mastery, how we can participate and influence the design of systems and interfaces, and how we can deepen and expand textual, visual, and audiovisual production in the digital post-media environment have become urgent cultural and educational questions.

4. Co-Creation and Multimedia Practices in the Making of a Collaborative Documentary

Developing a documentary film in the project relates to the goal of creating a space of intersection between two forms. Creating a space of intersection between a collaborative methodology and a panoramic view of the number of stories and cultural diversity, accumulated as a result of the digital and multimedia structure of the base platform of the African-European Narratives project.

Thinking about a documentary film that would integrate this methodological amplitude was based on responding to three different challenges: the relationship with the multimedia and digital interface of the

accumulated collection of stories; the relationship with the authors of these stories in an encounter between the present order of the film and the reactivation of their testimony within the materials shared on the platform; the experimentation of the film media, in an intermedial return to the mosaic and scroll mode of the digital. How to return to linearity with such a collective object and contemporary form of the fragment?

Concerning the genre, the film was organized based on the argument that the documentary is not a cinematographic cutout of reality but rather a relationship with this reality that surpasses it and subsists within it. In this case, the documentary is an unfolding of realities—the platform and the set of shared authors, narratives, and multimedia materials. In such a perspective, " 'the end' is merely a threshold to the ever-varying processes in which we and the world around us take shape" (Hongisto, 2015, p. 12). This reality with which the film engages is also a process of mediation or remediation, redefining an engagement that as a "new materialism emphasizes the 'lively powers of material formations' that coexist with discursive configurations. Here, the matter is not a dull substance for vibrant interpretations but 'an exhibiting agency' that co-composes" (Hongisto, 2015, p. 12).

Anchored in the matter of this mediation, the methodology of the film takes on a processual, medial character both in co-creation and as an object on this interface, itself an interface of literacy and cultural encounter—technologically mediated. It is a process between the actual and the virtual, where representations and the genre's potential "engage in a productive dialogue with the world in its becoming." (Hongisto, 2015, p. 13).

The development of the documentary went through several phases, where these levels of interaction and questioning were present, and new questions and solutions were solved or added. Its final form occupies a mass of moving images and sounds that are a temporal and contingent outline of an initial architecture—the platform—and seeks to shape that formally, in correspondence to a linear film. Its proposal is not exhausted in the testimonies or stories chosen, it is rather a mold to potentially highlight other stories from the platform, expanding its potential, with each contribution opening new moments between the digital immediacy of the platform, the persistence of the recorded narrative, and the imaginary landscapes that a film can constitute.

With this framework, the film's development was a reflection and consequent construction of a sustaining structure, where the political-cultural arc that the platform puts in its objectives could also be projected, the "long circuits" mentioned before. Most of the stories introduced were investigated on different axes: their narrative, historical and cultural potential, and media potential. In this case, meaning the media format introduced in the platform: sound, videos, and images—which could be visual materials of different orders such as photographs, illustrations, or others. The link between the different materials was the text to which each story was linked, the storytelling core purpose of the project. Few stories were introduced whose text was not central. The vast majority of the platform's contributions, even when crossed by other media, were shaped by narratives.

Dealing with such a volume of textual contributions, the balance with the diversity of other materials required a cinematographic montage to be created with new visual research within the platform and workshops' audiovisual materials. The chronology of postcolonial European societies punctuated a historical arc and an initial thread to the creative work. On the one hand, the narrative structure of the stories, often shared in moments of training or events with schools, concentrates an important part of the contribution of each participant, and in these cases, the other materials, photographs, videos, and even music, like the one shared as a memory (Figure 1) are an accessory part of the centrality of the text.

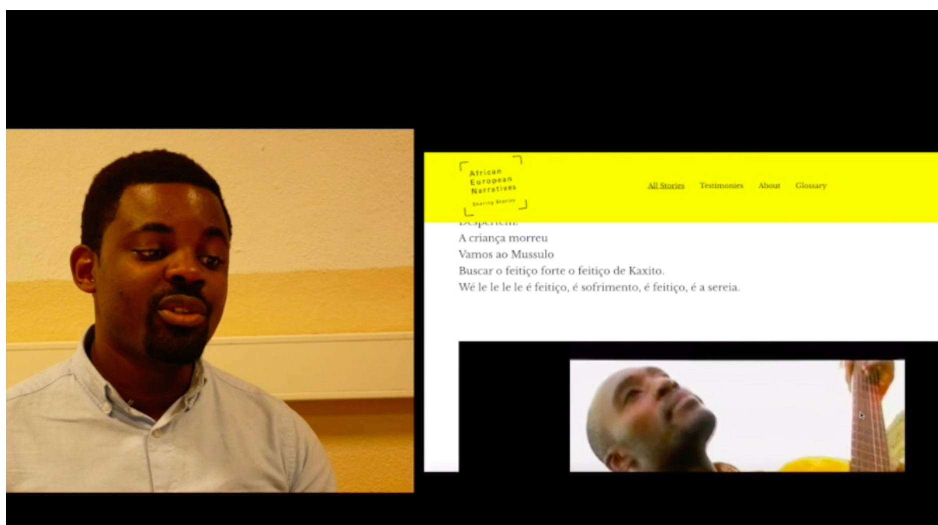

Figure 1. Film still from "From Here and There." Source: Miranda (2021).

By beginning a process of textual montage, the film did not evolve into an audiovisual or multimedia montage, nor did it bring its strategies closer to a digital mediation such as that which organizes the platform. Thus, the next strategy organized the selected moments of each participant from the diversity of materials used, photographs, videos, and sounds that would support an audiovisual grid as the film axis. Despite this, this tactic created an illustrative appearance, which displaced to a compacted audiovisual form the rhythm and the heterogeneities present in the platform liveliness, diminishing the discursive space of the mosaic in composition. The range of questions that came across the process situated in a contemporary debate that interrogates digital mediations around the concept of "desktop cinema" and its cinematic and even literacy potential:

> What does the formal system of a desktop film tell us about visibility? As a product fully embedded within contemporary visual culture, what does its meta-reflexive operation suggest to us about this visual culture, or—more broadly—about contemporary media culture in general? (Ugenti, 2021, p. 177)

This corresponds not only to interrogation, that of the place of the screen and the mediation devices but also in a cultural perspective; the place of the author and the interlocutor, the place of individual experience through the tactics and the gesturality of this media environment. A perspective is where the mediated everyday experience emerges as a more prominent form of perception rather than merely the experience of digital-visual culture. The cultural encounter as an argument for literacy also happens in this dimension. Where the screen and the interface, in their global communicability, bring together the horizontality of the digital platform and the heterogeneity of identity and post-colonial and Afro-European configurations. The place of film, and hence the form of "desktop cinema," interrogates the social and intercultural reality of the digital platform, assuming that its mediation is not transparent but rather structural in accessing the possibility of composing this mosaic. The platform interface is an autonomous zone of interaction (Galloway, 2012), here assumed as intercultural and shared, from which documentary film mediates new connections, as Catarina's close-up where she interacts with the screen (Figure 2):

> Historically, cinema has brought multiple realities to the screen, adapting them to the nature of the screen itself by means of the 'specificity' of film language. In the case of desktop films, cinema brings to the screen a reality that is already 'screenic' in itself. (Ugenti, 2021, p. 180)

The solution, where different moments of capturing images were integrated, embeds a hybrid organizing principle of the film, a new summoning of the authors of the stories of the platform for the second moment of co-creation, interpellating them with this contribution, making them reflect on it, re-creating a new space of interaction for the documentary. A renewed moment of dialogue—medial and cultural: from the platform to the documentary, involving a cultural and citizen proposal to the subjective imaginary of each individual. The attention to this unfolding presents itself as a formal and aesthetic proposal in the documentary as well as a space for dialogue in the field of digital literacy.

This means that assuming digital mediation not as a transparent border of mediation but as an experience in itself, as "the analysis of forms of interaction with other people and the surrounding environment today cannot disregard the many forms of interaction with the media devices inhabiting our everyday spaces and structuring our everyday practices and gesturality" (Ugenti, 2021, p. 179). Thus, for the interaction between media, the

Figure 2. Film still from "From Here and There." Source: Miranda (2021).

proposal was to take the platform as a documental reality in itself, stating that the materiality of the digital object was brought into the film as part of the audiovisual experience. The surface of the screen and the gestures of the interaction with the platform were filmed as an integral part of this mediation experience. The editing was built upon this gesture of incorporating the desktop visuality or the screen as part of the film's diegesis. The manipulation, the platform scroll, the interaction within the screen, the editing within the frame, and the cutting or reoccupying of different places on the same screen were formal strategies and aesthetic options where the documentary genre was porous before the nuclear digital mediation of the platform. The film took the path of meeting the platform's dominant cultural technique, and its database architecture as its cultural form as in Manovich (1999)—digital and multimedia, immediate and fragmented, individual and collective, simultaneously. The film is composed as this refracted mirror, and from this level, it develops its engagement strategies, both in the flow of kaleidoscopic and collective montage and in the tactics of co-creation:

> The desktop film thus appears to stage a kind of inverse relocation, inasmuch as the film appears as an audiovisual space that welcomes the replacement of new digital media to reconfigure on the screen certain peculiar traits of the experience deriving from their use. (Ugenti, 2021, p. 178)

It is at this level that the reflection on the grammar of the documentary and its hybridism is also placed, questioning itself from the contact with its authors' gestures: "The settings we regularly move around are distinguished by a substantial presence of technological media with which (or should we say, more precisely, within, or through which) our daily gesturality interacts and by which is partially reshaped" (Ugenti, 2021, p. 179).

As described above, the language to be used was transversally built by the encounter with digitality and multimediality of both the structure of the platform and the reenacting of the narratives by digital formats. A second approach to the subjects and their participation, namely in a new contribution, reactivated the participants' relation with their own stories in a new dynamic. This composition had two parallel strands: a collaborative but autonomous co-creation and the use of vernacular technologies by the authors. Concretely, each participant engaged in a new phase of creation for the film, filming their daily moments with their daily gadgets. The proposal was that each one would read their shared story, create a voice-over of it, take a silent close-up with their cell phones, and film a journey of their daily trajectories.

What followed was an articulation of these different materials, outside the scope of the platform, where each protagonist returns to their story and constructs a set of images and sounds that frame and reveal part of a double commitment through the close-up of the face. The voice-over also introduces a new thread to connect with the *narrative principle*, as developed earlier, also in the performance of storytelling.

In a sequential diversity, we pass through different scenes where cellphone images share the computer split screen, its texts, and web pages in a remediation that unfolds each scene and each language. The voice-overs and the silent close-ups of complicity and consent intertwine with the everyday paths filmed by each participant, sharing a screen between the individual, the platform, and the narrative. Gilberto confesses the importance of education to him with his mobile phone (Figure 3). The film itself "becomes an interface capable of generating a complex interaction between cinema and digital media, accessing a definition of the very concept of interface: one that might broaden its sense" (Ugenti, 2021, p. 180).

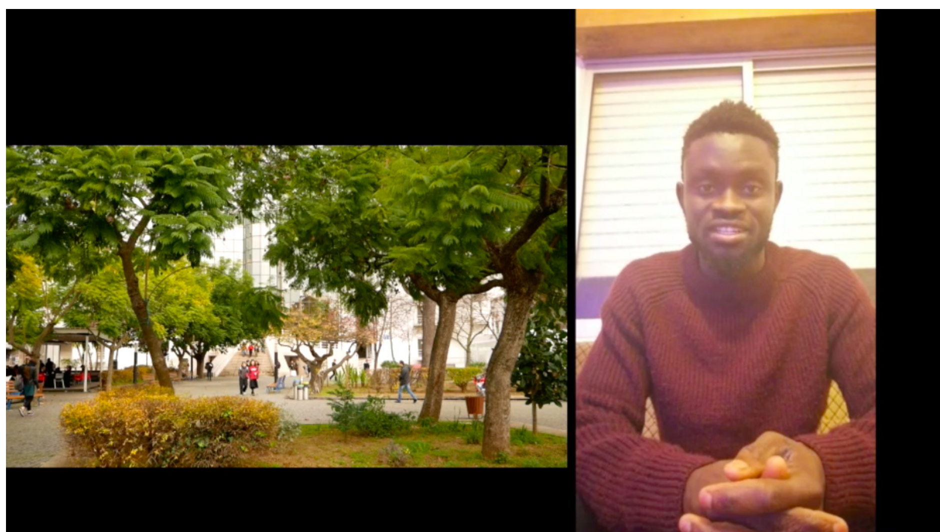

Figure 3. Film still from "From Here and There." Source: Miranda (2021).

Thus, two structuring levels of the film are combined, its intermedial character, in the formal construction, and the collaborative co-creation of meaning. The first ties itself to the contributions of the platform, and the second, within it, reveals a landscape of relevant protagonists in the framework of the project—young people of African descent in Europe, the Afro-Europeans—in the space of the project itself, the university. In a gesture of visual political meaning, to place a black visuality in the university and their Afro-European students as privileged interlocutors of this necessary ongoing dialogue. This was a fundamental issue as an output, once the film places other origins than the stigmatized peripheral neighborhoods, also present in different films, to position these characters, symbolically at the end, in the university. The chosen landscape was also, by the structure of the project, the place of school, and by being at different levels of education, questioning what education stands for today, in its practices, mediations, and contemporary cultural interplays.

5. Conclusion: Critical Perspectives on Digital Literacy

We need to put aside the myth of "digital natives" natural ability to the digital. Alphabets and writing have been invented for over 3,000 years, and we still have to learn and practice them at school for several years before becoming proficient writers and readers, just as we learn our mother tongue through family transmission during our early years. The European Union study "EU Kids Online" (Smahel et al., 2020) shows that, although almost half of the teenagers in nineteen European countries spend at least two hours a day socializing through digital media and networks, their digital skills have not risen to a level higher than that of users. Some of the basic digital tools, such as text editors or spreadsheets, are largely unknown to a significant number of them until they learn how to use them at school. Image and video editing seem more familiar but mainly through basic tools embedded in social media or game applications.

As the computational apparatus sustaining the "meta-medium paradigm" develops (Manovich, 2005), the earlier expectations around the plasticity, interactivity, and connectivity of the digital and the breakaway from 20th-century mass culture give way to a new set of concerns and critical themes: dependencies affecting wellbeing and happiness (Dorsey, n.d.), neurologic consequences such as attention deficits (Hayles, 2012), neoliberal exploitation and governmental surveillance through plataformization and the data economy (Zuboff, 2019), AI and machine learning techniques "making us 'subjects' of code" (Chun, 2011, p. 177) and algorithms. Instead of an impulse to creativity and knowledge—digital culture may be enclosing us in what we already know and want and culminating in the automation of aesthetics, desire, and taste (Manovich, 2017; Stiegler, 2004/2014), leaving little space for symbolic re-invention and free-will. Subjectivation is becoming an analytical operation performed for us by recommendation systems. As Horkheimer and Adorno (1947/2002) already described, the aesthetic is the core affair of the cultural industry that seeks to perform its total "schematization."

This is why Chakravorty G. Spivak (rereading Schiller's aesthetical and political proposal) calls for a "training of the imagination," arguing that "perhaps the literary can still do something"—"not as a substantive source of good thinking alone," she writes, but as "the task of the aesthetic education we are proposing: at all cost to enter another's text," another's story (2013, p. 6). Therefore, not only writing but also reading requires imagination. It forces us to step out of our own world because "reading in its most robust sense" is a "displacement of belief onto the terrain of the imagination" (Spivak, 2013, pp. 6–10). In "An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization" (2012), Spivak expresses "concern for preserving the dreams of postcoloniality in the face of globalization" (Spivak, 2013, p. 34), concern for the erasure of difference by capital and data, and concern that "we really don't know what to do with information" (Spivak, 2013, p. 1). That is why we need educational strategies and literacies that continue to provide the training of imagination required for intercultural dialogue in the information society. "Behind every 'ethical' use of the Internet, she adds, is 'good' education-familial, cultural, institutional—in our sense 'aesthetic'. Without this pre-set good education…dreams of digital democracy…are all self-serving dead ends" (Spivak, 2013 p. 27).

Literacy, the literary, and its cultural techniques (reading, writing, translating, publishing) contributed deeply to the self-knowledge of individuals and cultures but also to expanding their horizons and transcending their national or ethnic narratives. They enable the dialogue of cultures and the emergence of "places where s/he speaks, unheard" (Spivak, 2013, p. 27). "In the context of the beginning of the twenty-first century, to learn to de-transcendentalize religion and…nation into the imaginative sphere is an invaluable gift" whose particular function "is important in a general and continuing way" (Spivak, 2013, p. 10).

The African-European Narratives project is a proposal to address these challenges by reconnecting with the ethical and aesthetic power of stories and fostering its continuation in the media environment of the information society. A proposal for connecting a diversity of voices and cultures, regardless of geographical, ethnic, and linguistic borders, and fostering media practices' creative and collaborative potentialities. A proposal for knowing others' (different or even opposite) stories and extracting yet others from historical silences or unheard places (Risam, 2019). In this sense, storytelling is in itself a literacy and educational tool. B. Alexander speaks of "story literacy" as a "tool for generating meaning and context," "understanding complex subjects," and even "making sense of a cognitive domain" (Alexander, 2011, p. 215), to which we could also add: a tool for intercultural dialogue and for navigating postcoloniality and globalization.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Inclusive Media Education in the Diverse Classroom: A Participatory Action Research in Germany

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Abstract
Media literacy has become a key concept for understanding how different citizens develop the capacity to participate in the mediatized society. One key question here is how media literacy education can support people of diverse backgrounds to have equal chances of benefiting from the media. Furthermore, as many schools are characterized by superdiversity, especially in bigger cities (Crul et al., 2013), there is also a need for research on media education and diversity. This article presents the findings of the research project INCLUDED, a participatory action research about media education in a secondary school in Germany. The project aims to analyse the everyday media use of young people with diverse cultural backgrounds living in a socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhood and co-develop teaching modules on media literacy education integrating an intercultural perspective. The fieldwork of the project (January 2020–April 2021) included participatory observations (online and offline), teacher interviews, and focus groups with the students (13–15 years). The article will particularly focus on one teaching module that focused on TikTok and Instagram influencers. The students' presentations in the classroom demonstrated how the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students also shaped the content that they consumed on social media. Analysing this teaching module as an example, this article discusses the benefits and challenges of designing a more inclusive and participatory approach to media education in the context of culturally diverse schools as an alternative to culture-blindness and over-emphasis of cultural differences.

Keywords
diversity; inclusion; influencers; Instagram; media education; media literacy; migrants; social media; TikTok; youth

Issue
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1. Introduction

The integration of media education in schools has become a key topic with the increasing importance of media in our daily lives. Nevertheless, there are still major differences across countries and schools in relation to media education curriculum and there are only limited in-depth studies on how it is being practised in the everyday context of schools. Furthermore, as many schools are characterized by superdiversity today due to increasing migration and diversity worldwide, especially in bigger cities (Crul et al., 2013), there is need for research on understanding how this diversity should be addressed within media education. This article presents a case study on how media education can become more inclusive by adopting methods and approaches from the field of intercultural education.

The article is based on the participatory action research project INCLUDED (MSCA, University of Bremen, 2019–2023), which aims to analyse the everyday media use of young people with diverse cultural backgrounds in a socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhood and co-develop teaching modules on media literacy education from an intercultural perspective. The fieldwork of the project continued for over a year (January 2020–April 2021). The research design of the project included participatory observations (online and offline), interviews with the teachers and several rounds of focus

groups with the students (13–15 years), as well as development and carrying out of teaching content for intercultural media education together with the teachers of the school. Based on the analysis of the collected data, topics for pilot media education modules were designed and implemented in cooperation with one of the teachers in this school. This article focuses on the teaching module "social media influencers," which was chosen as a teaching topic because it emerged as one of the central topics for the students in the focus groups.

In this article, I first discuss how the interviewed students perceive and relate to social media influencers, especially those who are active on Instagram and TikTok. Then, I present the design and the implementation of the teaching module on influencers. In this module, the students were asked to prepare a presentation about their favourite social media influencer. The students' presentations and discussions in the classroom demonstrated how the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students also shaped the content that they consumed on social media and the presentations partly opened up a space to discuss these specific examples as well as the general dynamics of social media in relation to these examples. Based on this particular case study, I discuss the benefits and challenges of designing a more inclusive and participatory approach to media education in the context of culturally diverse schools. I argue that both an overemphasis of cultural differences leading to singling out and stigmatization of students and a culture-blind approach that leads to a disconnection between students' everyday lives and the school reality can be a problematic pedagogic approach in the context of the diverse classroom. Instead, more engaging project-based teaching methods that allow students to bring in their own perspectives and examples can be used to encourage them to raise their own voice.

2. A Bottom-Up Approach to Media Literacy

Democratic participation today is only possible if citizens are able to navigate the information landscape effectively and have the necessary skills to express themselves through (digital) media. Thus, media literacy has become a key skill for the practice of cultural citizenship within democratic societies in order to ensure that everyone has equal chances of participation (Klaus & Lünenborg, 2012). Thus, if and how media (literacy) education should be part of the school curriculum has become a central question in the field of communication and media studies in recent years. There are different approaches to defining media literacy and the requirements of media education (Friesem & Friesem, 2019; Koltay, 2011; Livingstone, 2004). One commonly cited definition of media literacy came out at the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy of the Aspen Institute (Aufderheide, 1992). Accordingly, a media literate person is a person who can "access, analyze, evaluate, and produce both print and electronic media" (Aufderheide, 1992). The report emphasizes the right to become media literate and also adds that "critical autonomy relationship to all media" (Aufderheide, 1992) is the fundamental objective of media literacy education. Citing Masterman (1985), Hobbs (2011) also argues that media literacy education should aim to develop the critical autonomy of the students referring to "self-confidence and critical maturity to be able to apply critical judgments to media texts which they will encounter in the future'' (p. 24). Hobbs (2011, p. 426) states that in order to develop such critical autonomy towards media, media education should be "emphatically student-centred and inquiry-oriented, helping students interrogate the process of making meaning through critical investigation using strategies of both close reading (also called deconstruction or decoding) and media production." Thus, media literacy education should not be about the transfer of knowledge and skills, but a dialogic process of reading and producing media that helps participants to develop a critical understanding of the contemporary media environments.

Although a guiding definition of the term media literacy is important for studying the phenomenon and developing policies to support media literacies in different contexts, I also believe that a more bottom-up approach to media literacy education is also necessary in order to understand the different media practices around media literacy in diverse contexts. As Bruinenberg et al. (2021) suggest media literacy can be studied as a set of situated media practices that are based on certain norms, conventions, and expectations of involved parts and these shape our understanding of "how we should live with media" (Couldry, 2012, as cited in Bruinenberg et al., 2021, p. 31). Media practices also include rituals and affects around media (Bruinenberg et al., 2021). Based on this definition, the practice of media literacy education should be not only about developing skills to effectively use different media technologies, but also to initiate a critical dialogue around these norms, conventions, expectations, rituals, and emotions that shape our way of appropriating different media technologies.

Such a dialogic and bottom-up approach to media literacy could help to address the different understandings of the concept among teachers and students with diverse backgrounds. One key critique to the mainstream discussions on media education in the academic literature is its Western-centric nature (Melki, 2018). Media literacy education needs to take cultural dimensions of media use and media education into consideration (Neag et al., 2022). Considering the role of culture and cultural differences in media education is important because media use itself is shaped by sociocultural contexts on the one hand and they influence cultures on the other hand (Kellner, 2001; Talib, 2018). Furthermore, many classrooms in big European cities are superdiverse consisting of young people, who themselves or whose parents or grandparents have migrated to a different country than the one that they were born in (Crul et al.,

2013). The media literacy literature has rather recently started to focus more on differences among the target groups of media education in relation to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and ability (Neag et al., 2022). Looking at these different dimensions, we also need a new framework that goes beyond single-axis approaches and acknowledges the intersecting axes of difference including nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, and socioeconomic class (Neag et al., 2022).

However, talking about culture and cultural differences more generally—and also in the context of media education more specifically—is not an easy task in the classroom context. Teachers in culturally diverse classrooms often oscillate between culture-blindness and the risk of (over-)culturalization (Ogay & Edelmann, 2016). Whereas culture-blindness refers to ignoring culture and cultural differences, culturalization can be understood as an overemphasis of cultural factors over others in classroom interactions (Ogay & Edelmann, 2016). Teachers often hesitate between praising and minimising—or even ignoring—culture and cultural differences (Ogay & Edelmann, 2016, p. 389). Adapting a participatory research approach, this article addresses the following research question:

> How can we develop a more inclusive and bottom-up approach to media literacy education in the context of culturally diverse classrooms without oscillating between culture-blindness and over-culturalisation?

3. Developing a More Inclusive Approach to Media Literacy Education

In this article, I argue that adopting a more student-oriented method for media education can enable a more inclusive approach. Inclusion in the context of media education can be realized when students with diverse cultural backgrounds have the open communication space in the classroom to openly express themselves, their culturally diverse media practices, and perspectives. Critical pedagogy enables such an approach and also addresses the power relations in the current media environments and the role of media in constructing our perception of reality (Kellner, 2001; Melki, 2018).

Criticizing the current state of media literacy education for marginalising the experiences of those, who live in non-Western contexts, Melki (2018) calls for "the repurposing, reframing and reinventing media literacy" (p. 8) and also turns to critical pedagogy for this purpose. Melki (2018) proposes the concept of media literacy of the oppressed referring to Henry Giroux's work on critical pedagogy and the pedagogy of the oppressed. Melki (2018, p. 7) defines this concept as follows:

> A media literacy of the oppressed reframes existing concepts and competencies, engages local communities in the reinvention of media literacy, integrates media literacy critical reading and writing/production as well as participatory activism, prioritizes problems of the oppressed communities, and introduces new concepts and issues that address these communities and enriches media literacy as a whole. It critiques and simultaneously borrows from the external. It roots itself in the local without being blind to indigenous problems. It struggles for freedom and social justice at the level of the local as well as the global.

Accordingly, Melki (2018) proposes that media literacy education should focus on the problems of communities in particular contexts. Through this, media literacy education could build upon existing and emerging knowledge, but should at the same time add new issues and enrich existing concepts and frameworks (Melki, 2018; Zezulkova & Neag, 2019). Such an approach could not only be beneficial for non-Western contexts, but also for minorities and marginalised populations in Western countries (Melki, 2018). According to Freire (2005, p. 54) pedagogy of the oppressed has two distinct stages:

> The pedagogy of the oppressed, as a humanist and libertarian pedagogy, has two distinct stages. In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation.

The critical pedagogy approach not only aims for an unveiling of existing power relations in the world and our perception of reality, but also a transformation of perceptions and practices in the end. This also requires a critical engagement with culture and media that are considered as forms of pedagogy within the context of critical pedagogy (Kellner, 2001, p. 224). The aim here is to teach students to become critical auto-ethnographers of their own digital lives (Markham, 2019).

Digital media generally, and social media more specifically, have become central pedagogical sources (in the broader sense) for young people teaching them about the state of the world. They also provide resources for meaning-making and identity construction. However, there is a critical and growing gap between what young people do and learn with digital media out of the school context and what they are learning in the school context (Bevort & Verniers, 2008, p. 89). Schools could play a much more important role here teaching students about the structures of the existing digital media environments, offering a more critical perspective, teaching them to be self-critical of their own practices, and to effectively use digital media technologies for cultural, social, democratic, and economic participation. Bevort and Verniers (2008) suggest that more applied research could be beneficial for this purpose helping us

to understand young people's needs better and develop adequate approaches to media education. Participatory action research could offer a plausible methodological approach for this purpose.

4. Methodology

This article is based on a qualitative research project that adopts a participatory action research approach. Participatory action research is chosen for this particular project because it not only generates detailed social analysis, but also commits itself to "transformational action to improve things" (Kemmis et al., 2013, p. 12) in cooperation with the people in the field (McIntyre, 2007). Participatory action research is especially used in educational research about gender inequalities and socially excluded groups (Kemmis et al., 2013). The fieldwork was conducted in a secondary school in Bremen, Germany, that is located in a culturally diverse and socioeconomically diverse neighbourhood. The pseudonym Oberschule Bremen will be used in this article to refer to this school. *Oberschule* is a specific type of secondary school in Germany, which enables students to take all three types of paths that are possible in the German education system (*Haupt-*, *Real-* and *Gymnasialschulabschluss*). The students in an Oberschule have the possibility to follow a vocational or an academic (*Gymnasial*) educational pathway after secondary school. The research design included participatory observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and focus groups with the students in the first part of the field research. In the second part of the field research, the researcher aimed to develop research-driven teaching content on media education in the context of diversity together with the teachers of the Oberschule Bremen.

The participants of the focus groups were chosen from the seventh and eighth graders of the Oberschule Bremen. Purposive sampling was used as the sampling method, meaning that a diverse group of students in relation to their gender, cultural background, school success, and socio-economic background was aimed during the selection of the participants. A total of 42 students participated in the focus groups and two to three rounds of focus groups were conducted with most of the students in September 2020 and February–April 2021. A total of 11 focus groups were conducted and the size of the focus groups varied between four and six participants.

The collected data was analysed and then discussed with the teachers of the school in order to identify topics that were chosen for the teaching modules on media education. The codes were developed partly based on existing literature, on which the focus group guidelines were based, but the majority of the codes were developed inductively through a process of open and axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The students' participation in the design of the teaching modules was indirect through the analysis of the discussions in the focus groups. Especially the topics that we identified as interesting or problematic for the interviewed students were chosen as the topics of the teaching modules on media education. I worked together with the class teacher Kai (all names of the research participants are replaced by pseudonyms in this article) to identify the topics of the teaching modules. The topics that were chosen as the teaching modules were also presented to the students in the class parliament (*Klassenrat*) that meets weekly to discuss matters of the class and their feedback was asked. Many of them indicated that they find the topics interesting and were willing to participate in the pilot program. The teaching topics included reflection of own media use; time management with digital media, data protection, influencers, netiquette, and "hate" on social media.

The pilot program was developed together by me and Kai, whose expertise lies in media, politics and society, and religion. The participants of the teaching module on media education were the students of Kai's classroom of eighth-graders. There is no compulsory teaching module on media education in Germany. The schools decide themselves if they integrate media education as an elective module in their school's curriculum. Media was one of the elective courses that were offered in the Oberschule Bremen. However, the course was selected only by a small group of students (eight) and the majority were male students (six). Furthermore, the media course focused only on technical media production skills and there was a need for a broader and more critical pedagogical approach to media education. In order to have a broader focus related to media environments and have a larger and more mixed group of students (18 participants), we integrated the teaching modules into the compulsory module of society and politics in the eighth-grade class of the teacher.

Schools in Germany have varying material sources related to (digital) media, which limits the integration of digital media in the education practice as well as the practice of media education. To improve the digital resources of schools, the German Ministry of Education and Research initiated the project DigitalPakt Schule in 2019 with a budget of five billion euros (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung [Federal Ministry of Education and Research], n.d.). These funds can be used by schools upon proposals in order to receive funds for equipment and projects related to the digitalisation of schools. The state of Bremen used these funds to distribute iPads to all students in Bremen's schools during the pandemic in 2021 and the students in Oberschule Bremen also received iPads from the state of Bremen in this context (see Bozdag, in press).

The application of the teaching modules was influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic. The school decided to ban visitors from the school in October 2021 due to the increasing number of Covid-19 cases in Germany. A total of six weeks was planned for the pilot teaching modules. The first four weeks of the program could be applied in the classroom context, the teacher facilitated

the modules, and the researcher could observe online via Zoom connection. Then, the school shifted to online education completely in the fifth week of the program, and the teaching module was carried out online. Despite these limitations, this case study offers important insights for future practices of inclusive media literacy education as discussed in the next sections.

5. Findings

5.1. Influencers in Young Students' Everyday Life

This article will focus on one specific topic that was discussed broadly by the students in the focus groups and that was included as one of the topics in the teaching modules, namely the social media influencers. Social media influencers are defined here as people who professionally engage with content production and self-branding mainly on social media platforms and have a large follower base. The focus groups were based on semi-structured discussion guidelines and the researcher aimed to leave room for bottom-up discussions about digital media during the focus groups. One of the topics that the students often raised and were very engaged with was social media influencers. Names like Firat el Vito, who is a German-Turkish influencer active on TikTok with ca. three million followers (https://www.tiktok.com/@firatelvito) and Instagram with ca. 659 thousand followers (https://www.instagram.com/firatelvito), were mentioned by several students in different focus groups. The JIM (Jugend Information Medien [Youth Information Media]) study, which is based on annual surveys on media use with young people (12–19 years) in Germany, demonstrates that respectively WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok are the most used applications among young people (Feierabend et al., 2021). Young people turn to social media generally and TikTok more specifically, not only for entertainment, but also for "information sharing, information seeking, cool and new trend, relaxing entertainment, companionship, and boredom/habitual pass time" (Croes & Bartels, 2021, p. 7). While using social media, young people are also partly frustrated with the content they see on social media—for example, hate speech or racist statements—and express the need to critically engage with such content (Nam, 2020). There is a need for developing critical dialogues around social media and influencers in the school context as these have become quite central in young people's lives, but are often absent from school curriculum (Nam, 2020).

TikTok is especially popular among the age group 12–15 and more popular among girls than boys (Feierabend et al., 2021). TikTok and Instagram also emerged as the most common and longest-used social media application in the focus groups, and was especially popular among the girls. One of the participants, Rojda, explained TikTok's popularity as follows:

> Rojda: Yes (laughs)…and…aeh…when there is a trend on TikTok for example a sentence or a word or something like that we say this word or sentence all the time in the school.
>
> Anika: For example "Bebesh."
>
> Rojda: Yes, and the boys are also hearing it and they also say it then, so it is. (Focus Group 8)

TikTok influencers like Firat el Vito provide cultural resources for everyday discussions among young people in the Oberschule Bremen. Based on the stories that these influencers share in their posts on social media platforms, they discuss gender roles, their expectations from friendship, and what it means to be in a relationship, among other topics. One example is from Focus Group 4, where Nazli and others are discussing Firat el Vito's posts about his girlfriend cheating on him with his best friend: "Yes, I find it really stupid, because he is her best friend. You don't cheat with him (your best friend). And then there were rumours and it was really unclear. They wanted to make each other look bad'' (Nazli).

Nazli's comments make it clear that the content of the Firat el Vito's posts and his life stories are a basis for discussing what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in a relationship or in a friendship (e.g., "cheating with your best friend"). But at the same time, there is an underlying discussion about the tactics and strategies that the influencers adopt while they share their stories. Young people also often have a tacit knowledge about the mechanisms through which attention economy functions on social media and, for example, question the authenticity of the stories that influencers share on social media.

Influencers like Firat el Vito are different from typical celebrities that appear on German mainstream media. Firat el Vito himself has a German-Turkish background and posts mainly in German language with some Turkish words and phrases. He also shares instances from his family life, for example, his relationship with his mother (a picture kissing her hand) or a picture of his siblings (see Figure 1). In this regard, Firat el Vito's TikTok representation diverges from the mainstream representations of Turkish people on German media, in which people with a migrant background are underrepresented and often represented through stereotypes. The lifestyle he presents on social media offers an alternative source of identification for young people with a Turkish migration background beyond these stereotypes. Firat el Vito's Instagram account is carefully curated and feeds his followers with a balanced picture of his love life following a storyline, his family life, and his sponsored posts (Figure 1).

The content that students follow on social media is not limited to lifestyle influencers, but also includes topics that are central to their own lives, such as the

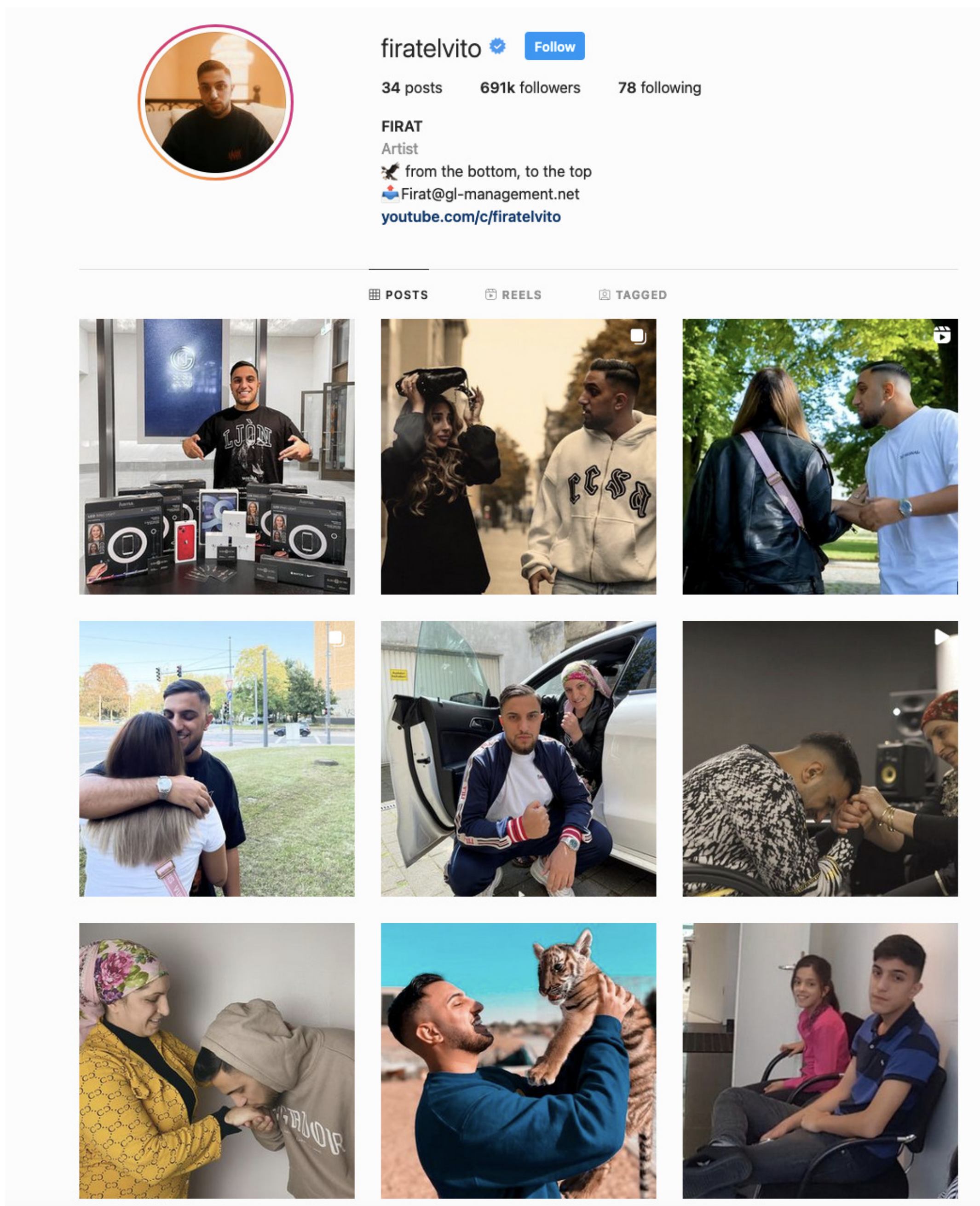

Figure 1. Screenshot: Instagram account of Firat el Vito (2021).

Abitur (the state exam that students take at the end of high school for university entrance in Germany). Nazli explains this as follows:

> Nazli: Aeh…not only people, who show their faces, but also for example let´s say people, who show school stuff and so on. How they do their things and so on. [People] who are doing the Abitur exam or are studying at the moment. I like to look at them. Because then I can imagine [how it is], when I do it and so on.

Nazli is looking for influencers, who share similar experiences like her and are preparing for the *Abitur* exam, in order to get insights about their experiences. But she also adds that you can find any kind of information on TikTok, for example, related to beauty, health, or legal matters:

> Nazli: Aeh, there are really some people there, for example, a lawyer, who is called Mr. Lawyer [Herr Anwalt], he calls himself so. And that is really a lawyer. And…aeh…he became famous because he has always received questions asked, so, for example, "Am I allowed to drink sixteen Energy [drinks]?" as an example. And [he] answered them and…
>
> Nevin: One minute law [*Eine Minute Jura*].

Besides legal advice, the students explained that they can find information about health-related issues, like the Covid-19 pandemic, or lifestyle advice on TikTok. In this regard, platforms like TikTok and Instagram have become central resources for them as a source of information and as a cultural platform that presents key resources for everyday negotiations about culture, gender, relationships, and identity building.

5.2. Teaching Module on Influencers

The topic of influencers was identified as one of the key topics that could be part of the teaching modules on media education based on the field notes during the participatory observations and the initial analysis of the focus groups. The topic was chosen also because it allows a multi-level critical discussion around digital media environments and issues related to media production, commercial interests, identity representations, and (para-)social interactions on social media. We decided to thematize the topic in a bottom-up manner allowing students to present their favourite influencers and what they find interesting about them. The aim was not only to help students develop media production skills by using their newly attained iPads, but also to initiate a critical dialogue around the topic of influencers. For this purpose, we designed a presentation assignment, in which the students were expected to use the iPads that they received due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic (Bozdag, in press). They were asked to prepare a brochure and present their favourite influencer on one of the social media platforms including TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, or Twitter. After the assignment was introduced, they could work on their assignments in class in a two-hour block and ask questions to the teacher. After this block, they were expected to finish their assignments within a week on their own. The students were given some initial guiding questions for their presentations:

- Why did you choose this particular influencer? What is it that makes this person particularly great?
- Which special competences and skills does this person have?
- Can everybody be so successful?
- Do we know how much money he earns or what kind of a life he has?
- Which risks and negative aspects could his success have for this person?
- What does this person do professionally in five years?

The questions were thought as a guideline for students to self-reflect and think about the influencers that they follow, and also to think about the dynamics of the platforms in which these influencers are active.

One of the interesting discussions on influencers took place as the teacher presented the topic and the presentation assignment. The teacher introduced the concept of the influencer as follows: "An influencer is someone, who posts things on social media platforms and is a successful person." Then one of the students asked the following question about "being successful":

> S1: What does it mean to be successful?
>
> T: So that you know him/her and I know him.
>
> S3: Do you know Knossi?
>
> T: Of course, I know Knossi.
>
> S4: Firat el Vito? [giggles] Do you know [him]?
>
> T: [smiles] Again?
>
> S4: Firat el Vito.
>
> T: I don't know him.
>
> [Students laugh]
>
> T: Now this is a great opportunity that I also learn a bit of something new [smiles].

As the teacher argues that a successful person is a person that everybody knows including him and the students, the students start challenging this by asking the other students several names that are famous as influencers and that they follow. One of these influencers is Firat el Vito, who was mentioned quite often in the focus groups, and appears to be a quite well-known influencer among the students in the classroom. As the teacher admitted not knowing him, the students started laughing and the teacher eloquently replied that this assignment might be an opportunity for him as well to also learn something from the students. However, this moment of recognition did not turn into a discussion about Firat el Vito or what makes him special in the eyes of the students, or why the teacher might not know him although he is quite familiar among the students. In this sense, this moment of openness did not lead to a big transformation in their perception of influencers although it had the potential for opening up a discussion about the order of visibility and power in the (German) mediascape and on social media platforms.

After the introduction, the students worked on their assignments in class and kept asking questions about who an influencer could be. As it can also be seen in the exchange between the students and the teacher above, the term "influencer" is not necessarily a commonly used term among the students although it was a taken-for-granted term for the involved teacher and me as the researcher. This discrepancy shows that the terminology between the students and the teachers referring to digital media environments might diverge from

each other. This confusion in terminology has also led to some confusion in the choice of the people that students decide to present. For example, some of the students chose to present rather classical celebrities, for example, German TV celebrities such as Knossi, international football players like Messi, or pop singers such as Dua Lipa, who are famous outside of social media as well, but also have a social media appearance. Others chose influencers from different cultural contexts including influencers from Turkey, Germany, or the US. The topics also varied from football, pop music, and humour to lifestyle. Two examples of the brochures that the students prepared can be seen in Figures 2 and 3. The majority of the male students chose males and the female students chose females to present as their famous influencers (and celebrities). There was only one exception to this trend in the classroom, a black girl who presented a black male singer in her assignment. Students related to the influencers that they presented concerning multi-layered aspects of their identities including age,

Figure 2. Brochure (Markiplier, YouTuber).

Figure 3. Brochure (Addison Rae, TikToker).

gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and migration background. As I argued in earlier sections of the article, an intersectional approach is needed to understand these connections as a single-axis approach to identity and its influences on digital media use would miss these multi-layered dimensions.

Before presenting their brochures in the classroom, the students were asked to upload their presentations in the e-learning platform itslearning, which is a widely used learning platform in schools in Bremen. Two examples of the first pages of the students' brochures that were prepared and uploaded by the students of Oberschule Bremen are presented in Figures 2 and 3. As it can be seen in these examples, the students have put together visuals and general information about the influencers in their brochures, for example, they explained what kind of content they produce. The first example is Markiplier (Figure 2), who is an internationally famous YouTuber. The student wrote that he is well-known for "flipping out" and because he is "funny and cool." He added that he makes a lot of jokes as well especially when he plays games, specifically horror games. The student also wrote on the brochure that everybody can become as successful as him and that he earns 18 million dollars from YouTube and his shop. He added that Markplier (https://www.youtube.com/c/markiplier) has a girlfriend and pets.

The second example is Addison Rae (https://www.tiktok.com/@addisonre), who is one of the influencers with the highest number of followers on TikTok that focuses on dance, music, and cosmetics. Two different female students chose her as their favourite influencer in their brochures. The student, who prepared the brochure in Figure 3 has described Addison Rae as a famous TikToker, who is 20 years old and has over 68 million followers. She added that Addison makes dance videos on TikTok, most of which have more than one million likes. She described Addison as talented and beautiful, and adds that she has a nice figure. The student added that people can become successful quickly on TikTok if they produce videos that other people like. But she also indicated that Addison Rae earns around five million dollars and others, who also try as hard to be successful with their TikTok videos, do not even earn anything that compares to what Addison earns. The student also explained that Addison's fame has a negative side for her as well, because she receives so much "hate." Hate on social media was a central topic that the students discussed in the focus groups as well. Many found "hate," mostly referring to negative and offensive comments on social media, very disturbing and raised concerns about being the target of hate themselves.

During class, when students were going to present their brochures, several students had to stay at home and attended the class online, via Zoom, because they had Covid-19, or had contact with people with Covid-19 and had to self-quarantine. As class began, the teacher briefly recaptured the discussions from the week before and started opening the presentations of the students on the smart board one by one. The students were not asked to do long presentations about their brochures. Instead, they could introduce the brochures and their favourite influencer with a few sentences. After the short presentations, other students were invited to ask questions. However, during class, it was mostly the teacher asking questions and steering the discussions. His questions mostly focused on the professional lives of the influencers, asking for example how they earn their money and if they have a particular talent. This led to a discussion about the economic structures and power relations that shaped the platform dynamics and the influencers' appearances on these platforms. Some of these questions were also implicitly leading to make the students question if being an influencer is as attractive as it seems. This has partly started an engaging discussion about the professional character of the influencers' activities, what kind of a "product" or "service" they provide to earn money, and if this will still be relevant in a period of five or 10 years from that point onwards.

Overall, the students' comments about the influencers on their brochures and in the classroom remained at a descriptive level, especially in comparison to what they have revealed and discussed in the focus groups about different influencers like Firat el Vito. Questions like why the students personally liked the people that they presented or what they get from following them were not raised. This was also partly due to the hybrid setting in the classroom, which hindered the effective interaction among the students, the teacher, and the researcher. Nevertheless, the participatory observations before the implementation of the teaching modules also show that the students have a tacit understanding of what can be discussed in the classroom context and what does not belong to the school context. These topics that are rather excluded from the school context but seem to be central and related to students' everyday lives include not only social media content, but also issues related to culture, cultural differences, ethnicity, race, and gender. In this regard, the students recognize and internalize the dynamics and the tacit rules of the overall school culture. And these rules also determine the boundaries of classroom discussions about media content and media use.

6. Conclusion

This article started with a discussion about the concept of media literacy arguing for a bottom-up approach to media literacy defining it as a set of media practices that are based on norms, conventions, expectations, rituals, and emotions that define the ways we deal with media in our everyday lives (Bruinenberg et al., 2021). Based on this definition, media literacy education should not be about the transfer of knowledge about the media, but about a critical dialogue around the media in order to help students develop critical autonomy in their engagement with the media environments (Aufderheide, 1992;

Hobbs, 2011). Through a participatory action search in a secondary school in Germany, I discussed the possibilities of practicing such an approach to media literacy education in the context of diverse schools. One of the main aims of the presented project was to develop a more inclusive teaching approach to media education that would open up a space for young people in culturally diverse societies to express their experiences with media from different cultural contexts.

Furthermore, I argued that such an inclusive approach can be possible through the adoption of critical pedagogy and student-centred approaches. This can enable teachers to go beyond culture-blindness or (over-)culturalization in their teaching practices. A pedagogical approach focusing on the needs of young people in specific local contexts has the potential to open up a space for discussing the influences of culture and other factors such as age, socioeconomic background, gender, race, and ethnicity that influence media use.

With this approach to media education, I focused on the exemplary topic of influencers in this article. Firstly, I presented findings from the field research demonstrating the relevance of influencers on platforms like Instagram and TikTok in the everyday lives of young people with diverse backgrounds. Secondly, I critically evaluated the implementation process of the teaching module on Influencers in the classroom context discussing the potential of adopting a more student-centred approach for discussing media-related topics in culturally diverse classrooms.

The teaching module on influencers was designed around a presentation assignment in which the students were asked to present their favourite influencers and explain how they relate to them. The students chose a diverse range of influencers from different cultural contexts including those from the country of origin, those with a migration background, and others who became worldwide celebrities. On the one hand, doing this assignment, students experimented with using the digital tools on their iPads to produce media content themselves with the support of their teacher. On the other hand, they were also invited to reflect on the phenomenon of influencers and their own relationship with them.

The discussions during the introduction of the assignment in the classroom focused on the definition of influencers. These discussions were quite interesting as they revealed the discrepancy between the students' and the teacher's perspective of influencers and their knowledge about the people who are famous on these platforms. This was a learning moment for the teacher himself, who also openly told the students about this. Such an in-class discussion about how students themselves use and perceive digital media (content) has the potential to bridge the gap between school topics and topics that are related to social media and central for students in their everyday lives. Following a bottom-up approach and allowing the students to bring in their own examples has the potential for creating new ground in the classroom and transforming both teachers' and students' perspectives. The in-class discussions following the presentations on students' favourite influencers mainly focused on the commercial interests of the influencers and how they do advertisements for brands for a living. However, there was little discussion about issues related to gender and cultural background as discussed in the next paragraph.

Students' choices of the influencers that they presented reflected the diversity of their own backgrounds and interests as they varied from people with a migration background in Germany, internationally famous influencers, to football players and television stars. Despite this diversity of people and topics that were presented in the students' brochures, the discussions that followed the brief presentation of the brochures, unfortunately, did not address this diversity. This was partly due to the context of the study, which was carried out in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. During the discussions about influencers, almost half of the students were participating online only. However, the participatory observations in this particular hour and also at other times in the school also show that students implicitly perceive certain topics as topics to be discussed outside of the classroom context. These topics include social media content and also topics related to gender, race, or cultural background.

Participatory action research has a great potential for analysing and addressing the needs of particular local communities especially when it comes to underrepresented and under-served communities like young people in culturally diverse and socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The presented research also attempted to understand how young people in such a context in Bremen, Germany, related to digital media and how schools could address their needs and interests through media education. There were limitations in the implementation of the teaching modules as addressed focusing on one particular topic above. However, during the evaluation session of the course, the students expressed that they were happy to have talked about a topic that was quite interesting and relevant to them.

Overall, a key take-away from the presented case is recognizing that it is not very easy to overcome the dominant school cultures through singular teaching programs, even when these projects are designed with the aim of being participatory, student-centred, critical, and innovative. Hence, developing a more inclusive media education framework requires more than focusing on media-related courses in the school context. For this purpose, we also need to address the more general question about how schools can create a more open school culture and address cultural differences without falling into cultural blindness and over-culturalization.

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Conflict of Interests

No conflicts of interests to declare.

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Article

Aspiring to Dutchness: Media Literacy, Integration, and Communication with Eritrean Status Holders

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Abstract
Based on 13 interviews with Eritrean status holders and professionals in Amsterdam this article explores how paying attention to media skills and media literacies may help gain a better understanding of what matters in exchanges between professionals and legal refugees in the mandatory Dutch integration process. Media literacy needs to be decolonised in order to do so. Starting as an inquiry into how professionals and their clients have different ideas of what constitutes "inclusive communication," analysis of the interviews provides insight into how there is a need to (a) renegotiate citizenship away from the equation of neoliberal values with good citizenship and recognising needs and ambitions outside a neoliberal framework, (b) rethink components of formal and informal communication, and (c) reconceptualise media literacies beyond Western-oriented definitions. We propose that professionals and status holders need to understand how and when they (can) trust media and sources; how what we might call "open-mindedness to the media literacy of others" is a dialogic performative skill that is linked to contexts of time and place. It requires self-reflective approach to integration, and the identities of being a professional and an Eritrean stakeholder. Co-designing such media literacy training will bring reflexivity rather than the more generic term "competence" within the heart of both media literacy and inclusive communication.

Keywords
citizenship; critical media literacy; Eritrean status holders; inclusive communication; integration; reflexivity; street-level bureaucrats

Issue
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1. Introduction

Starting from the dual perspectives of a media researcher and a volunteer worker, our research was inspired by the question of how communication with newcomers may become more inclusive. It led to a critical revaluation of the role and possible uses of media literacy training. Van Kommer drew from her experiences as a volunteer moderating a "language café" for (Eritrean) "status holders": refugees with (temporary) residency permits aspiring to become Dutch citizens. Status holders are obliged to do integration courses and find a job or start education as soon as possible. While it is the wish of status holders to gain citizenship, "integration" is a troublesome concept, inundated with inequalities and pressure. Hermes is interested in cultural citizenship and inclusive communication. Discussing the media we use with others enables us to reflect on the norms, hopes, dreams and fears we share (or don't share; Hermes, 2005, 2020). Professionals often ask her how they can ensure more inclusive communication with clients and citizens. She uses long interviews and participatory design methods to allow for such reflection.

Inclusion and inclusive communication have evolved into buzzwords in the past decade, especially amongst public professionals (Bouchallikht & Papaikonomou,

2021; Challouki, 2021) which requires a cautious approach. After multiculturalism and diversity, inclusion is used to voice the wish to "leave no one out." Despite the good intentions of officials, inclusion risks becoming, what Ahmed called a "non-performative": "the speech acts that commit [organisations] to equality…are non-performatives. They 'work' precisely by not bringing about the effects that they name" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 105). In an earlier project, we discovered that the wish to "include everybody" founders on the deeply embedded professional dependence on well-defined "target groups" and "clarity in your 'message.'" Rather than define more securely or be even clearer, this suggests that reflecting on exclusion might be more productive. It offers a route to co-ownership of processes in the public and the civic domain, and of co-designing practices that allow for both shared and private identities. To belong and have the right to be different, as Rosaldo (1994) put it.

In terms of allowing "integration" to become a beneficial process for status holders, Dutch society, public servants, and other professionals involved, such a view of inclusion and inclusive communication has a high level of importance. Media literacy matters here, as media are an important force in addressing questions of homemaking and belonging through representation (Morley, 2001), and aid the establishment and recognition of uniqueness through shaping identity (Buckingham, 2003). Amongst young refugees, active engagement with media production and discussion of media practices among peers may help them to recognise power and reassert their identity, in relation to the white, Western mainstream (Leurs et al., 2018).

Our starting point was to question how ideas of what constitutes "inclusive communication" might differ between the two groups we were interested in: Eritrean status holders and professionals involved with their housing, health, employment or (additional) education, and their eventual citizenship exams. Van Kommer's experience as a volunteer suggested that the two groups had very different relationships to communicating inclusively. Whether they had entirely different definitions, or merely differences of opinion about how to do so, was difficult to say. By interviewing the two groups, we hoped to gain further insight into understanding inclusive communication. Media use and media literacy became key in doing so. First: some background on the Eritrean status holder group in the Netherlands.

Eritrean status holders constitute the second largest group of refugees in the Netherlands. Their integration into Dutch society is far from seamless (e.g., difficulty navigating Dutch bureaucracy, failing citizenship exams, low employment levels, and limited social networks). They struggle with the highly digitised nature of Dutch society and its expectancy of self-reliance (e.g., van der Bleeker, 2019; Voorn, 2015). The first Eritrean refugee group arrived in the Netherlands between 1980–1998, following the independence war against Ethiopia. The second group arrived between 1998–2010, fleeing the subsequent border conflict with Ethiopia. Most of these refugees sympathise with the current Eritrean regime. They supported an independent Eritrea and aim to foster loyalty to Eritrea in the diaspora. The most recent refugee group, 2010–present, has lived under the current regime and fled its authoritarian, militarised, oppressive, and abusive rule. The groups distrust and fear each other, resulting in isolation and a lack of cultural and material means to settle (Ferrier et al., 2017; van Reisen & Smit, 2018).

In addition, over the course of the last two decades, integration policies in the Netherlands have become increasingly formalised. Challenging language and digital skills tests have become obligatory. The current integration policy perceives integration as a personal condition that determines the worthiness of individuals to belong to society. This individualisation of integration poses Dutchness as a fixed and pre-established entity that individuals must conform to in order to deserve to belong (de Waal, 2017). Current integration policy is increasingly neoliberal and strongly emphasises self-reliance. Status holders are expected to make their own way through the Dutch (integration) system. This requires a certain level of media literacy as this system is highly digitised and, as will be discussed below, "correct" use of media is expected as a part of "successful" integration. Current integration policies do not include media literacy training. Professionals in the field consider this (at the most) as an afterthought. However, Bruinenberg et al. (2018) research explores the potential of media use and media making for social integration.

2. Theory

Inclusive communication is a "wicked problem" (Camillus, 2008). In this case, the group of stakeholders is large and diverse and has to deal with complex problems. We see three relevant facets for our project. The first is communicating by "sending." Communication professionals have been trained to work towards clarity, targets and sometimes efficiency or cost-effectivity (Lee et al., 2021). Governments and public organisations have to meet new public management standards which include that public means have to be used carefully and sparingly (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019). Officials have also lost status and authority over the past half century (Fraser, 2003). The mandate to communicate is no longer uniquely theirs and they need to rebalance their interaction with citizens and citizens-to-be (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019). Much of the work of connecting has become the responsibility of individual professionals.

Secondly, from the perspective of citizens, what are seen as "authorities" in the Netherlands are not considered trustworthy institutions. The literature documents institutionalised forms of exclusion and racism (Çankaya, 2020; Wekker, 2016). Therefore, reservations, comments, and complaints from citizens are important signals. They indicate the necessity of new forms

of self-reflective professionalism. When encountering these, professionals are faced with potentially perverse effects of existing deeply culturalist forms of diversity policy that tends to highlight differences (Ghorashi, 2017; Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013). Professional training has long based the importance of understanding differences on respect for cultural uniqueness (Hofstede, 1980; Pinto, 2007). According to Goubin (2015), this is risky. Such a mode of thinking easily reverts to myths fed by prejudice and essentialism. Training professionals in communication limits them to adopting the mode or "sender," rather than "partner" in interaction. Additionally, training in multicultural communication, feeds notions of uniqueness and difference that become an obstacle to self-reflective engagement and interaction.

A third facet that hinders professionals is that it is unclear how we can best "do" inclusion. Recent research suggests that "hard" and essentialised identities are a major obstacle while respect for unique selves (rather than group traits) is a must (Shore et al., 2011; Winters, 2014). Does respect equal conditional or unconditional acceptance, does it need an agonistic attitude, as Mouffe (2000) suggests or heated debate (Mindell, 1995, 2002)? Political philosophers Le Dantec and DiSalvo (2013) see "infrastructuring," the (co)designing of new routes and connections, as a better way of reinventing public space and interaction. Doing this correctly, for them, depends on moving away from "identity" to "ways of doing." Inclusion is embedded in processes, they argue, it is not an object or a fixed entity. Additionally, in "civic dialogue," it is crucial to understand what objects and images are deeply meaningful for others in the dialogue (Marres, 2007, p. 774). When we understand how others participate in dialogue as "frame" or "identity" driven, it is easy to dismiss their importance. Recognising strong feelings, on the other hand, helps uncover tensions and obstacles, crucially important in interaction with status holders. Allowing others to become partners in discussion will reshape shared discourse and unite professionals and status holders into what Warner (2002) calls "publics." However temporary, the identity of a public allows media and communication scholars to study the discourse that is built collectively (if not always in collaboration or unity). This points forward to the importance of media literacy, a crucial skill for members of a public that needs the wider media sphere as a civic environment to feed them and in which to test their experiences and assumptions about what is going on.

To understand media literacy, we use the most recent European framework for digital competency: Digcomp 2.2 (Vuorikari et al., 2022). We understand media literacy to be part of digital competency, underlining the deep entanglement of media and data. This is in line with our material in which professionals aim for status holders to be(come) competent in both regards. Digcomp 2.2 further adds to our discussion that media literacy is situated in the interconnection between citizenship and digital competences (Vuorikari et al., 2022, p. 4). Assessing the great many frameworks for defining media literacy (e.g., Livingstone, 2011; see also Potter, 2013), we understand it to mean the competency to critically engage with media, data, and information in relation to taking up the responsibility of being a citizen. Competencies are built on the combination of knowledge, skills, and attitude, three components that we will see return in our interview material. The Digcomp definition is as follows:

> Digital competence involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), safety (including digital well-being and competences related to cybersecurity), intellectual property related questions, problem solving and critical thinking. (Vuorikari et al., 2022, p. 3)

While useful for contextualising media literacy in a broader frame, this definition is fully utopian when considering the interview material. Mainly because it does not make clear who is to set the standards or assess confidence, critical use, or responsibility.

3. Methodology

Given our broad interest in inclusive communication, for this case study 13 interviews were conducted, seven with Eritrean status holders and six with professionals. The interviews were conducted by Van Kommer and focused on interviewees' definitions of successful integration, their media habits, their expectations, and knowledge of the other group's media use, and how they felt about their mutual relationship. Interviewees were recruited using snowball sampling, starting from personal contacts. One of the interviewees made use of the offer to have an interpreter present. The interviews, obviously, had different salience for the researchers and the interviewees. While the interviewees recognised the obligations that come from being in a network and perhaps hoped to benefit from it, Van Kommer sought a way to deepen both her personal and professional commitment to a more just society. For Hermes, working with Van Kommer allowed her to deepen her understanding of how the call for more inclusion is so often overly naive. Good intentions will not result in a more just, accommodating, or equal society. We both count status holders and professionals among our friends and believe in transparent merging of our professional and political engagement.

All the interviewed status holders, four men and three women, were refugees who came to the Netherlands between 2010 and the present. Some of them are personal friends. Their average age was 22, ranging from 20 to 34. The majority lived in integration

housing projects in Amsterdam. All participants were single and, except for one participant, did not have children at the time of interviewing. The majority was working or enrolled in education (vocational training level), including language education.

The professionals that were interviewed worked for public organisations involved with the Eritrean demographic in the Amsterdam metropolitan area. Here too, some are considered friends. They were approached to represent different key elements of integration: "housing and social integration," "education and employment," "health," and "language." They are "street level bureaucrats," frontline staff working within public agencies (Maynard-Moody & Portillo, 2010, p. 4). They mediate between policy directives and the life worlds of status holders, a demanding role (Lipsky, 1980).

Interviews with status holders were conducted in their homes, bar one, giving them the opportunity to share (media) objects and everyday rituals. Answers were often illustrated by media texts and practices. A good way of building rapport and insight, a media list was developed to prompt conversation. It included Dutch media like NPO (public service broadcaster) and nu.nl (online news platform), media aimed at status holders like the Helpdesk Nieuwkomers CAS Facebook page, and websites of various foundations like Ykaelo (which supports refugees in the Netherlands), media to support language learning like "woorden" (a dictionary app), Eritrean state media (EriTEL), and Eritrean diaspora media like DasnaTV YouTube channel. Throughout the interviews, this list was expanded.

Interviews were recorded with consent from the interviewees and transcribed afterwards. As a majority of interviewees were not native speakers, interview notes were of crucial importance to determine meaning and to contextualise tone, attitude, and emotion as expressed during the interview. Analytically, grounded theory was used (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This is a recursive approach, in which data collection and analysis happen simultaneously and repeatedly influence each other (Bryman, 2012, p. 387). It allowed us to understand distinct patterns of meaning making, even across this small set of interviews. This was validated by the research literature on integration in the Netherlands and the Eritrean status holder group in particular. It helped contextualise knowledge and first impressions of both interviewee groups and their relationship.

The analysis also drew on Potter and Wetherell's insight that how people speak about things, varies according to the function they want their words to have. Wetherell and Potter's interest is in shared cultural knowledge which can be recognised as what they call "interpretive repertoires." They are defined as:

> The building blocks speakers use for constructing versions of actions, cognitive processes and other phenomena. Any particular repertoire is constituted out of a restricted range of terms used in a specific stylistic and grammatical fashion. Commonly these terms are derived from one or more key metaphors and the presence of a repertoire will often be signalled by certain tropes or figures of speech. (Wetherell & Potter, 1988, p. 172)

Following Strauss and Corbin (1990), open codes were used to indicate potentially interesting moments in the interviews. These were re-examined and grouped to form themes (axial codes) that functioned as sensitising concepts to develop selective codes. They are presented in the mind map see Figure 1. The mind map indicates three main interpretive repertoires, which correspond with three main areas of (mutual) exclusion in communication processes between the two groups. These were: (a) the neoliberal repertoire, reflected in professional frustrations about (lack of) motivation and in the status holders' expectations of the professionals who are their contact person; (b) the communication repertoire, reflected in frustrations about the nature of communication (which both parties experience); and (c) the colonial repertoire, reflected in frustrations with the difficulty to reach the Eritrean group for the professionals and misassessing the power and status of professionals on the part of the status holders. In Figure 1, the selective codes are plotted as a Venn diagram that shows the three repertoires, the overlapping areas point to three areas of exclusion and misunderstanding. Assumptions about and expectations of media literacy appear to be the key to a mutually held "us versus them" perspective and lack of socio-cultural confirmation at the heart of this model.

4. Findings

4.1. The Neoliberal Repertoire

One of the main frustrations of the professionals was the perceived lack of motivation from Eritrean status holders to complete their integration, pass citizenship exams, establish meaningful connections, and adapt to Dutch society. This frustration was informed by what appears to be an overemphasis on personal motivation as a means of asserting worthiness and assumptions of what it means to be motivated. This emphasis on personal motivation is deeply embedded in the Dutch integration process which in recent years has become increasingly contractual in nature, emphasising the responsibility of the individual against a decreased responsibility of the state (de Waal, 2017). Dana, a participation officer: "[a]t the end of the day Dutch society expects that they can do certain things by themselves. At least ask for help independently." The expectation of individual responsibility is presented here as a core component of a communitarian ideal of Dutch society. The focus is on the community, an "us" who share common morals and values and commitment of individual citizens to endorse and defend these morals and values (van Houdt, et al., 2011, p. 411). "The housing project works, because here status holders

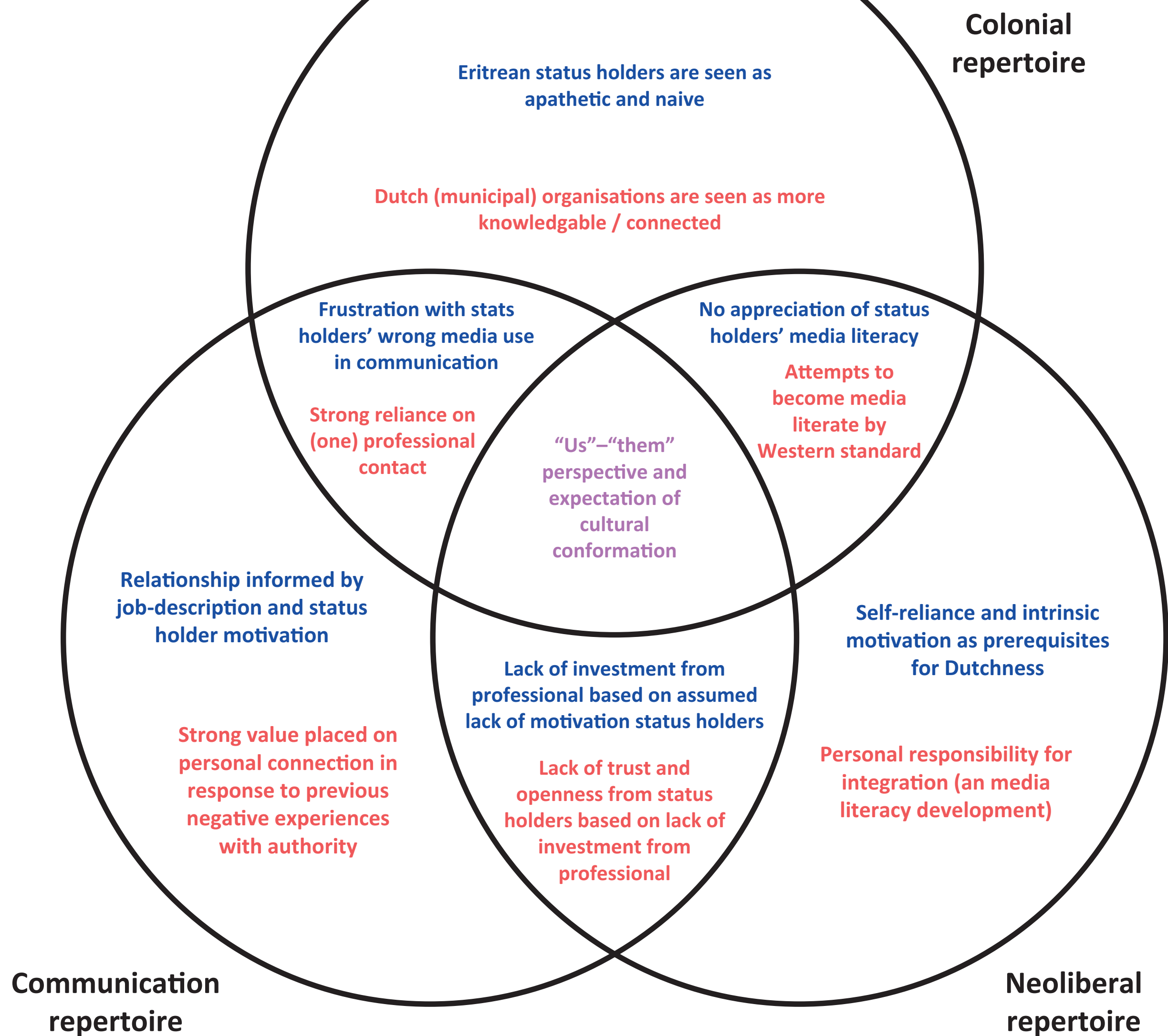

Figure 1. Venn diagram illustrating the overlap and interaction of the neoliberal, the communication, and the colonial repertoire.

are confronted with Dutch culture. It's extra motivation to adapt to Dutch norms, values and rules," says Tom, community builder at an integration housing project. Core components of this sacralised community are then linked to neoliberal values of personal entrepreneurship and equated with Dutchness. Van Houdt et al. confirm that ideal Dutch citizenship is increasingly phrased in terms of individual responsibilities, active contribution, and self-reliance (2011, pp. 415–416). At its exclusive communitarian core, strangely, is the neoliberal ideal citizen as an individual who is autonomous, free, rational, and self-regulating (van Houdt et al., 2011, p. 411).

According to interviewees, it is exactly this "intrinsic motivation" that is lacking among Eritrean status holders which places them at a distance from Dutch society. Dana explained that "we have been raised with this idea that you will work to become your best self or achieve the most. That is part of our society. With the Eritrean group…that is just not where they come from." The colonial repertoire will further clarify how the cultural difference between "the Eritrean group" and Dutch society is significant. The official "approach" meanwhile, reflects the perceived need to address this lack in motivation:

> We have a specific approach for the Eritrean group with a variety of tailor-made projects. These include mind-set training….An important question is the concept of freedom and connected to that we ask them "What do you want?" (Bianca, project manager integration at the municipality)

Asking this question assumes that Eritrean status holders have not developed an adequate idea of what they want or desire and do not (yet) meet the standards of "Dutchness." Being a Dutch citizen is strongly tied to being motivated, which in turn is heavily coloured by neoliberal ideals of self-improvement and self-reliance, and individual goals and desires.

Status holders echoed these neoliberal values and relied on the same repertoire when discussing their integration. In contrast to the professionals, however, they did express a variety of goals and desires, including the desire for bigger social networks (particularly with Dutch social contacts), increased Dutch language skills, more control over their own situation, and better digital/media literacy skills:

> In Eritrea my life was very social….if you have a problem people help you out, there is always somebody around….Here I have to do everything by myself. I have no Dutch friends yet, so I feel alone. (Dawit, retail student)

> [Eritrean] people don't have time to focus on themselves. They are preoccupied with communal goals, like helping their family. (Yonas, key figure in the Eritrean community)

Professionals mostly failed to identify motivation as motivation, because it was expressed through an unfamiliar frame while status holders did not always express themselves straightforwardly. Only one (Senait) verbally expressed the need for increased control over her personal situation. Others expressed this indirectly: "before I go to [Dynamo social work's office hours] I try to translate and comprehend the letter I have received. That way I understand what we are talking about when I ask for help" (Betiel, home care student). Rather than a passive approach, this indicates a desire for gaining control over her own situation and acquiring the skills to address issues that arise. The professionals however, mostly experienced status holders as relying on their services without actively investing in their own situation. Here the neoliberal and communication repertoires overlap as assumptions about motivation and correct forms of communicating come together.

4.2. Communication Repertoire

The frustrations expressed by professionals reflect their assumption about what constitutes meaningful communication. Expectations of each other's responsibilities in the communication process differed significantly. These differences are central to the communication repertoire.

As "street level bureaucrats," "public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work" (Lipsky, 1980, p. 3), the professionals navigate (new) policies and the real-world contexts of status holders. Previous research indicated that street-level bureaucrats in the Dutch integration process strictly adhered to rules set by authorities, which seems to be a direct result of the bureaucratic burden placed upon them. They are, e.g., required to meticulously document their interactions with status holders. Professionals indicated annoyance and dissatisfaction with this system and the limitations it places on their ability to help their clients (Belabas & Gerrits, 2017, p. 140). In general, all professionals expressed that they felt their responsibility went beyond the assistance they were able to offer:

> Status holders are only a small part of the benefit recipients, and the policy is not to deviate for special needs of a particular group. We would really like to be attentive to the language gap, but that is not how things are done. (Bianca)

To compensate for frustration with "how things are done," street-level bureaucrats (re)negotiate the limits of their own and status holders' responsibility. When the perceived motivation of clients is high, professionals are likely to pursue additional possibilities or "bend the rules" to accommodate them (Belabas & Gerrits, 2017, p. 143). What is defined and recognised as motivation thus becomes crucial for achieving meaningful communication.

When motivation is interpreted incorrectly, as in Betiel's case, status holders are wrongfully perceived as passive, unmotivated and uneducated on bureaucratic norms of communication. However, their "incorrect" forms of communication are not the result of a lack of motivation or knowledge, but of conscious choices that follow from what for them constitutes meaningful communication. Professionals expressed frustration with the status holders' tendency to present questions to them that were not within their field of influence. However, this was not due to a lack of understanding of the system. The status holders' selection of one bureaucratic contact generally reflected either a wish for personal attention from a specific professional or a previous positive experience with them.

Senait, a single mother of four, stated that her contact did not feel trustworthy: "I do not know who to ask these questions. Who provides guidance for me? Who has the time or energy to explain things? I need somebody who gives me the proper attention." She was waiting for somebody she could personally connect with to ask her questions. The colonial repertoire below illustrates that the emphasis on personal connection is reflective of status holders' methods for source verification, which are based on their previous experiences with authorities. Additionally, Senait was anxious about the language barrier: "I don't know if my message has come across and I am afraid the other person will feel negatively towards me or the things I do."

Personal attention and interest from street-level bureaucrats was crucial in overcoming such anxieties, as

illustrated by Asmeret (hospitality and care student). She explains her choice of bureaucratic contact: "[My language coach] always helps me. I also have a client manager, but I don't really ask her anything. I usually ask my language coach, because we have a better connection. I feel that she looks out for me." The fact that the language coach "looks out for her" makes Asmeret feel comfortable. She sees the coach as a trustworthy contact. The language coach was not interviewed but may well at times be somewhat overburdened and not in a position to do more than give advice.

Another important way in which relationships to professionals become meaningful to status holders is through positive previous experiences:

> My client manager asked me if I wanted to do some volunteering and I enjoyed the job he got me....Later I told him I want to work with older people and he organised a job for me in home care. (Betiel)

After her previous positive interaction, Betiel felt she could ask her client manager for work, as he had been helpful before. Previous positive interactions make status holders assume knowledgeability and connectivity on behalf of the professional.

While the above examples illustrate clear intent and motivation on behalf of status holders, professionals mostly misinterpret these interactions. Their strong emphasis on (perceived) motivation, turns the requirements for meaningful communication for both parties into unattainable prerequisites for the other. Status holders required a personal connection to feel secure and empowered enough to address their own situation. The professionals required the distance signified by status holders having their own goals and ambitions. The status holders' strong reliance on one contact and their reserved attitude towards other institutional contacts were interpreted by professionals as lack of independence, insight, and motivation. Their conscious strategies for communication and source (negatively) affected how professionals negotiated their responsibility towards them. The colonial repertoire discusses how the failure to recognise the conscious strategies of status holders leads to professionals reading them as apathetic and naive.

4.3. The Colonial Repertoire (and Choices in Using Media)

Status holders' media use and approach to information and communication are embedded in their experience with media in the context of a highly unreliable political regime with high levels of censorship. They are cautious towards government sources and develop specific strategies for source verification. Generally, status holders had a tendency to value information from personal contacts as more trustworthy than information found via search engines or from authoritative sources such as government websites. As Eyob, a retail student, said: "your network, your friends and family, are the best source." Other interviewees also consciously used the one-person strategy observed above in interaction with street-level bureaucrats when verifying information:

> I follow one person. He is trustworthy. In the past I was more gullible, but a lot of people lie. With this guy I know he speaks the truth....When I read something online and I am not sure if it is correct, I check his videos. (Meron, supermarket worker)

Interviewees also used social media strategically. Dawit blocked messages from politically active friends on his newsfeed. Tesfay (Dutch language student) used Instagram to find new people with shared interests: "When they do a live, I feel like I can write in the comments and communicate with them. I can learn from them too."

Others used media to overcome language obstacles. Although Google Translate has no Tigrinya translations, most interviewees found other ways to use it:

> When I don't know how to spell a word, I use the audio input function on Google Translate. I say the word and Google writes it for me. (Betiel)

> I translate from Dutch to English (using Google Translate) and then from English to Tigrinya (using Microsoft Translate). (Dawit)

Interviewees also had strategies for communicating over unstable and changing media landscapes, like Eyob: "I use different media to talk to my family, depending on where they live. In Eritrea we can only call, but my brother and sister live in Sudan, so we use Messenger." These choices showed clear awareness of media affordances. "Imo uses less data when you call, so it is cheaper. That's why I use that instead of Messenger" (Dawit). Some also expressed that they had gained new media literacy skills through their school environment, which taught them to use video calling software, job market platforms and online learning spaces. Those who mentioned this also actively reached out to their teachers for support: "I could log in by myself, but I didn't understand how to start or enter a meeting, so I asked my teacher for help through WhatsApp" (Dawit).

Professionals failed to recognise these as communicative media literacy skills. They relied strongly on their Western definition of media literacy. If, however, media literacies are understood as cultural constructions that reflect the norms, conventions and expectations of various actors that shape how we "should" live with media (Bruinenberg et al., 2021, p. 31), a different picture emerges. It suggests that normative assumptions of media literacy are likely to reflect cultural assumptions about what qualifies as valuable information, trustworthiness or credibility, and which media

environments are worth engaging with. Gaining an understanding of deeper entangled layers of attitude, knowledge, and skills in engaged discussion, could result in collective reflexivity.

Discussing media literacy, professionals tended towards two instrumental definitions. Firstly, the ability to understand and navigate digital devices and secondly, the skills for creating and interpreting media, including the ability to assess the trustworthiness of sources and navigate platforms or webpages to satisfactory levels. The anxieties of the professionals focussed primarily on the latter:

> Rumours often spread easily. People hear a story from others, or they pick up something in the media, they create their own version of the story….They have difficulty assessing the trustworthiness of information or determining what is important. (Jeroen, creator and moderator of the GGD's Eritrean-focussed Facebook page)

His anxiety was echoed by professionals, who all had strategies to disseminate alternative information to prevent the uptake of fake news. Beyond the assumption that status holders were unable to verify sources themselves, this reflected an assumption that reliability was a quality that came with being a professional. In other words, they tried to correct for an assumed lack of media literacy by following the logic of that exact media literacy.

The patronising nature of the responses from professionals assumed that status holders are naive and lack the competency to detect fake news. This assumption followed a colonial logic that Hall described as a particular discourse and a mode of power. "The West," he argues, is a historical, not a geographical construct. By "western" we mean:

> The type of society…that is developed, industrialised, urbanised, capitalist, secular, and modern….They were the result of a specific set of historical processes—economic, political, social, and cultural. Nowadays, any society which shares these characteristics, wherever it exists on a geographical map, can be said to belong to 'the West.' The meaning of this term is therefore virtually identical to that of the word 'modern.'" (Hall, 1992, p. 186)

Therefore, any non-Western country from which refugees come to the Netherlands (including Eritrea) is automatically relegated to the category of the Rest, as "less" in all ways that count.

The professionals felt informed by what to them are meaningful status markers. In the context of integration, prominent markers are those that pertain to Dutchness or a cultural sense of citizenship. Despite the Netherlands' long history with migration and discussion of decolonisation, to be a migrant is understood as deviating from Dutchness, which produces discomfort and is to be eliminated as fast as possible, as is illustrated in the neoliberal repertoire. Wekker (2016) linked Dutchness to Whiteness and Christianity. This makes Eritrean migrants with non-Dutch markers—based on race and non-Christian religions—illegitimate (Wekker, 2016, p. 7).

Competency is also embedded in this system of status. Competence is a neoliberal pipedream according to McMillan Cottom (2019, p. 78) and even more structurally unattainable for those who have the "wrong" status markers than the more privileged. The opinion of the professionals seemed to be that status holders were incompetent when it came to media literacy, but they did not show any urgency to help them improve this competence. Bianca said that media literacy simply was not a priority at this point, because the focus was on "building cultural bridges." Similarly, Dana expressed that she thought "media [could] be useful, but maybe at a later stage." Suggesting that competent media use was conditional upon achieving Dutchness, which, in colonial logic is not likely to ever happen unless under exceptional circumstances that involve defending the (Dutch) national honour in sports or culture.

Beyond anxieties surrounding status holders' competence, professionals expressed frustration with reaching the group. The interviews indicate an observable difference in media behaviours and media platforms used. Status holders showed awareness of these differences and tried to bridge them. Meron used various direct messaging apps. He explained: "[in the Netherlands] you just have to have WhatsApp." He only used it in group chats and contact with Dutch (official) contacts. Professionals showed some awareness of Eritrean media behaviours, but this was mostly expressed through frustrations about Eritrean's inability to engage with "correct" media:

> Their main way of communicating is WhatsApp….They do not read the things that are posted on the Socie-app, so when I see things that are important there, I forward them to my [hallway] WhatsApp group, so they get this information too. (Tom)

Tom tried to cater to the status holders' media behaviour while clearly feeling that the Socie-app is the "correct" one to use. This again illustrates an "us" versus "them" attitude and the expectation of adaptation that accompanies it. Explicitly labelling status holders' media behaviours as "incorrect" further ignores the good reasons they might have for these behaviours or the mechanisms of exclusion these may indicate.

5. Discussion: Co-Designing Media Literacy as a Route to Citizenship

If professionals want to act on their wish to communicate inclusively, that is, to actively invite and engage Eritrean status holders to "co-own" meeting and working with them and to co-own "how to be Dutch," they face

the major hurdle of three interrelated repertoires that hold them captive. Eritreans are seen as lacking motivation (the neoliberal repertoire), overly dependent on their bureaucratic and professional contacts (the communication repertoire) and opening themselves up to misinformation by naively relying on informal news networks (the colonial repertoire). Surprisingly, the status holders held similar views. They too pictured themselves as in need of help, in need of adapting to Dutch culture in order to "integrate," and as (socially) isolated. Their quotes showed frustration with the (lack of) offered support and guidance and how they felt irritated, anxious, and frustrated. In their media experience they further faced a variety of exclusionary mechanisms, such as the strong reliance on written communication that emphasised language barriers and (il)literacy or the primary use of computer-based media sources such as webpages and email that were not accessible to many without a computer or computer navigation skills.

The dynamic of the three repertoires produces an intricate constellation of beliefs about the self and others, Dutchness, and meaningful communication that results in a vicious circle of miscommunication. By addressing the professionals' question of how to turn these interaction patterns into inclusive communication, we want to try and sidestep the framework of efficiency and expediency that puts pressure on street-level bureaucrats. Could "integration" also be understood as a reciprocal process of lifelong learning? Could such a process, secondly, be fed and energised by discussion of media (whether to do with news or entertainment, or the attractions and downsides to platforms)? When professionals and status holders start to understand how and when the other party trusts media and sources, "open-mindedness to the media literacy of others" can be built as a dialogic performative skill that is linked to contexts of time and place. We recognise that media literacy extends beyond trust and source verification, but these were the main points that surfaced in our discussions of media literacy with the Eritrean group and involved professionals. Building such a skill requires a self-reflective approach to the integration process, and to the identities of being a professional and being an Eritrean stakeholder. Co-designing a mode of working together will move understanding media literacy from "competence" to reflexivity and bring reflexivity into the heart of both media literacy and inclusive communication.

Aiming for reflexivity will also, ultimately, bring about a more level playing field that allows for difference. Currently, such reflexivity is hindered by the colonial repertoire that suggests status holders lack the will and ability to act wisely. Only by stepping outside the colonial and neoliberal repertoires and their assumption of the ideal citizen as independent and autonomous, will professionals be able to find a route to helping their clients find the power to act. Making room for diversity and achieving inclusion will not be easy. It needs to be a constantly reflective process in which a difficult balance is maintained between valuing the particular behaviours and motivations of Eritrean status holders as important pieces of information in the communication process. At the same time, it must avoid essentialising Eritrean status holders by highlighting their difference and uniqueness.

Shaping participatory co-design of media literacy programmes starts with recognising Eritrean status holders as equal and worthy contributors in shaping the communication process. For professionals this means that they have to hand over status and authority, as well as their current toolbox to achieve their organisations' goals. An important element is to recognise and value existing media behaviours of the status holders, understanding their previous engagement with media in a different media landscape, and challenging one's own expectations and assumptions regarding "correct" media literacy. Doing so consists of talking about news and entertainment, platforms, channels, and forms of communication in order to inform, discuss, learn, share, and bond. To move beyond understanding into designing a programme requires identifying interests beyond the basic needs of newcomers and the panic they may feel when confronted with unfamiliar surroundings. It requires challenging assumptions as outlined in the colonial repertoire. In the interviews with the status holders, we noticed how talk of media provided an easy connection in which the status holders felt (more) confident and secure. Such open discussion provides a gateway towards media, information, and data literacy, and to shared understanding of what that means rather than one-sided assumptions, rules and norms.

Inclusivity demands that spaces of commonality and difference are identified and negotiated rather than imposed or accepted without understanding or support. Although such foundational citizenship exercises are implied in most definitions of media literacy, these fail to define how to reach this common ground and do not recognise media literacy's situated nature as a cultural construct. Rather than thinking of media literacy as a static skill that has to be taught or practised "correctly," media literacy as a cultural construct allows for it to be a space where attitudes, knowledge and skills can mutually emerge and be shaped. This is to suggest that we rethink media literacy for an inclusive society as world-building or (virtual) placemaking:

> Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximise shared value. (Project for Public Spaces, 2004)

Of course, unlike diversity, inclusion cannot be mandated and legislated (Winters, 2014, p. 206). It depends on

voluntary engagement, on all parties' ability, will, and power to act. Using media texts and experiences should make such engagement easier even though power imbalances will remain a major challenge. Focusing on how one *uses* media helps avoid the pitfalls of taste that can turn media talk into an arena of distinction and exclusion. It should, eventually, allow for openness to disagreeing on content while building democratic procedure, as participatory design researchers Björgvinsson et al. (2012, pp. 129–131) suggest. They found that it is possible to encourage passionate engagement from very different social positions in projects with immigrant families in Sweden. Such engagement builds skills and empowerment for all involved and delivers insight into the "wider systems of socio-material relation" that include the repertoires and ways of making sense of the world that we found (Björgvinsson et al., 2012, p. 130). This may seem like circular logic, in that we need media literacy to break out of a neo-liberal/colonial logic, which that very logic will make hard to do. However, adopting the principles of participatory co-design as a laboratory setting of sorts will allow all participants the safety of their convictions while also allowing them to test new connections and creating Dutchness as a shared material-ideological space.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Taking a Dialogical Approach to Guiding Gaming Practices in a Non-Family Context

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Abstract
As the inclusion of youths in decision-making around their media use is increasingly normalized in the family context in the Global North, one could ask how media literacy support can be adjusted for youths in vulnerable situations, situations where their family cannot be involved in regulating their media use, such as gaming. Drawing on interviews conducted in 2021 with 13 unaccompanied refugee youths (16–25 years old) and 10 social actors working in eight organizations, this study investigates the gaming habits of such youths in Norway and the ways in which relevant social actors are involved in guiding their gaming practices. This study shows that social actors' views on gaming vary according to their level of involvement in the youths' housing arrangements. Whilst those working directly with such arrangements are involved in direct or indirect rule-setting for gaming practices, others struggle to find their role within this context. The youths, however, emphasize the importance of gaming in building relationships with other unaccompanied refugees, learning about the culture of socialization, and mitigating trauma. Moreover, there is a lack of a dialogical approach to welfare services' regulation of these youths' gaming practices. Employing such an approach could not only give these youths a voice but also expand gaming's democratization ability beyond the family context.

Keywords
active meditation; digital care labor; gaming practices; refugee youths; social actors; video games

Issue
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1. Introduction

The point of departure for youth media literacy education should be the pre-existing usage and media experience patterns among youth, as Leurs et al. (2018) argued. Several recent studies have shown that, among children and young people, gaming has become a popular daily activity (Børsum, 2012). Moreover, scholars have further argued that "media literacy programs should seriously engage with the deeper cultural significance of media shifts," such as the ways in which youths make sense of gaming and game cultures (Squire et al., 2005, p. 15). Digital games are interactive multimodal texts that "combine written and spoken language, images, graphics, and symbols with sound" (Steinkuehler, 2010, p. 93), interactive multimodal texts which create learning arenas for new literacies (Gee, 2003). Although gaming represents valuable social capital and an important developmental arena for children's social skills (Dralega & Corneliussen, 2018b), gaming is also controversial, as gaming can negatively impact family life, health, and school performance (Gregersen, 2018).

As a consequence of gaming practices in family contexts, much of the media literacy support available is geared toward helping parents instill good gaming practices in their children (i.e., Norwegian Media Authority, 2021). In the Global North, active mediation that includes youths in decision-making around gaming practices is both normalized as an ideal parenting practice (Azam, 2022; Clark, 2013) and argued to have a democratizing effect on family life (Clark & Brites, 2018; Seddighi et al., 2022). As such, research on the gaming practices of youths without families in Norway can contribute to our understanding of the role of welfare

services in gaming mediation and thus expand the democratizing effects of a dialogical approach beyond the family context. This study investigates the gaming habits of unaccompanied refugee youths in Norway as well as how social actors that provide support for this group guide them toward good gaming practices.

In 2015, due to the so-called refugee crisis, the number of asylum seekers in Norway increased to 31,145 (Directorate of Immigration, 2015b), of which 5,480 were unaccompanied minors (Directorate of Immigration, 2015a). In the years leading up to this present study in 2021, the number sharply decreased, with 2,305 asylum seekers arriving in 2019 and 1,386 in 2020 (Directorate of Immigration, 2020b), of which only 89 were unaccompanied minors in 2020 (Directorate of Immigration, 2020a). However, due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, new refugee flows, with an overrepresentation of children and adolescents, are being seen across Europe and Norway in 2022 (Norwegian Institute of Public Health, 2022).

Refugee youths are not a homogeneous group; they have different needs, challenges, and resources. They come from different countries with great variation in their characteristics (Sirin et al., 2018). For instance, in terms of literacy, while 47.9% of young people between the ages of 15 and 25 in South Sudan can read and write (The United Nations Association of Norway, 2020b), that figure in Syria is almost double at 92.5% (The United Nations Association of Norway, 2020a). Moreover, there is a large variation in the extent to which war destroyed basic infrastructure, such as schools, and thus how long young people may have been out of school before arriving in their new country (Warriner et al., 2020). Despite these variations, youths with refugee backgrounds have several experiences in common. These youths are in vulnerable situations as they are going through psychological, social, and cultural changes without a close caregiver (Lidén et al., 2013). They have often lost one or more family members, been forced to leave their loved ones, or experienced physical violence. For example, research on Syrian child refugees in Turkey showed that 79% had lost family members and 66% had closely witnessed physical violence (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). Post-traumatic stress disorder is common among this group of adolescents, and the fact that some flee without a caregiver can exacerbate the condition (Sirin et al., 2018).

This article introduces data collected in Norway in 2021 from interviews with 13 unaccompanied refugee youths and 10 social actors working closely with them. Since most unaccompanied asylum seekers are young men, the scope of research is limited to this population. The youths interviewed were between 16 and 25 years old and had come from Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, and Palestine. All the interviewees, both youths and social actors, were recruited from high schools, adult education centers, and child welfare organizations.

This article is structured as follows: First, a contextualization of the study is presented, followed by an introduction to the methods of inquiry, after which the analysis is presented in three main sections focusing on "social actors' guidance for good gaming practices," "youths' perception of their own gaming practices," and the "cultural and environmental gaming backgrounds." In Section 4.1, I present how social actors identify youths' poor gaming habits and guide them toward good practices. In Section 4.2, I introduce how these youths narrate their own gaming practices as beneficial, such as building friendships and mitigating trauma. In Section 4.3, I discuss how gaming practices that youths understand as beneficial can vary according to their social and cultural backgrounds. The gaming environment might also influence their gaming practices, which should be taken into consideration when creating good gaming practice guidance for them. The article ends with a discussion and conclusion that considers the empirical findings in relation to earlier research.

2. Contextualization of the Study

A child and media survey by the Norwegian Media Authority (Norwegian Media Authority, 2020) showed that 86% of children and young people between the ages of 9 and 18 play computer games. Moreover, the "EU Kids" study showed that online gaming is one of the most common daily activities among children (Smahel et al., 2020); for example, 43% of children in Norway between the ages of 9 and 16 play online games daily (Smahel et al., 2020, p. 26), and immigrant youths are no exception (Dralega & Corneliussen, 2018a). Indeed, research on digital media use among immigrant youths has highlighted not only how this group navigates identity through such cross-national platforms (Anguiano, 2011) but also how they use these mediums to maintain family ties across borders by creating a feeling of togetherness that transcends borders (Diminescu, 2008; Leurs, 2014). Further research also posits that gaming practices among youths with immigrant or refugee backgrounds contribute to building friendships in local communities and strengthening networks at school (Dralega & Corneliussen, 2018a; Karam, 2018).

As gaming has become a popular everyday activity among young people, research often looks at their video gaming habits within the family context (Aarsand & Aronsson, 2009; Ask, 2011; Dralega et al., 2019), "which is a particular and central context in Western sociality in that it is considered by most as existentially crucial and hence highly moral" (Helle-Valle & Storm-Mathisen, 2008, p. 62). Time spent gaming is argued to cause conflict with family and school obligations (Gregersen, 2018; Linderoth & Bennerstedt, 2007), making gaming highly controversial (The Ministry of Culture, 2018). As digital gaming has become a large, profitable industry with the technology to offer access via multiple platforms (including PCs, consoles, tablets, and mobile phones), many games now provide a world that continues even after the player logs out. For instance, violence in digital games is

one of the most persistent sources of controversy in the family and the scientific communities, with moral panics frequently arising around this issue in multiple Western countries (Elson & Ferguson, 2013; Markey & Ferguson, 2017). Many fear the harm virtual violence might cause the players and the real-life aggression that could ensue (Anderson & Dill, 2000).

These studies show both how gaming can become a site of conflict and how young people and their families negotiate the sociocultural rules and values determining good gaming practices (Aarsand, 2018; Seddighi et al., 2018). Parents can engage in regulation and rule setting using indirect strategies, such as limiting time use on gaming by introducing other activities such as sports, or direct strategies, such as shutting off routers after a certain time (Smette et al., 2016). Helle-Valle and Storm-Mathisen (2008) argue that when parents are not involved in children's gaming, its positive aspects go unrecognized. This impacts how gaming is regulated in the family (Dralega et al., 2019). However, active mediation—i.e., practices that include youths in decision making around their media use in the family context (Clark, 2013), understood as a process of the democratization of the family—has become increasingly idealized and normalized as positive parental mediation in the Global North (Clark, 2013). Research on the regulation of gaming in the context of immigrant families highlights various mechanisms ranging from "dictatorial (helicopter) parenting to conflictual, to self-regulation (non-intervention), and finally to dialogical and participatory regulation" (Dralega et al., 2019, p. 239). Dralega et al. (2019) argue that parental mediation varies both by the family situation and parents' knowledge of and interest in video games.

Adjusting media literacy support to youths in vulnerable situations requires an acknowledgment of the ways in which under-researched youths perceive their own gaming practices. For instance, a recent pilot study on digital media use among youths with mental vulnerabilities showed that digital media—which can be gamified or amplified by algorithms designed to capture users' attention—may increase marginalization and mental vulnerabilities (Stoilova et al., 2021). Furthermore, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on youths raised questions about their well-being and ways of coping with such unusual and uncertain circumstances. Research on youth gaming practices during the pandemic shows that gaming practice patterns changed during this time (Barr & Copeland-Stewart, 2022). For instance, the number of games played in multiplayer mode increased, indicating the growing desire to socialize. The study also showed that gaming has helped to relieve stress and combat loneliness during this time, findings which align with research on the impact of gaming on youths with mental illnesses (Pine et al., 2020) and studies on gaming's usefulness in reducing stress and anxiety (Pallavicini et al., 2021). However, the effects strongly depend on the game's specific characteristics; not all video games have such effects (Pallavicini et al., 2021).

These experiences of gaming should be included in social actors' guidance for good gaming practices. As such, this study gives voice to the gaming experiences of unaccompanied refugee youths in order to inspire the development of dialogical approaches to guiding good gaming practices in relevant welfare services.

3. Methodology

This article introduces data collected in Norway in 2021 from interviews with 13 unaccompanied refugee youths and 10 social actors working closely with them. The interviewed youths were all young men between the ages of 16 and 24, and both youth and social actor interviewees were recruited from high schools, adult education centers, and child welfare organizations. The youths were either living in co-housing arrangements overseen by child welfare services or studying at high schools or adult education centers. The interviews lasted from 40 minutes to one hour.

This study was approved by the Norwegian Center for Research Data. The names of all informants have been anonymized, and the research process followed the ethical guidelines for research with and for children and young people, as prescribed by the National Research Ethics Guidelines for Social Sciences and Humanities (Den nasjonale forskningsetiske komité, 2021) and the International Ethical Guidance for Research Involving Children (Ethical Research Involving Children, 2020). These guidelines establish the right to informed consent adapted to age for children and youth.

3.1. Interviews with Youths

Through semi-structured interviews, this study sought to understand what video games mean to youths in the context of their everyday routines. These interviews included questions about their housing arrangements and everyday routines, the video games they play, any conflicts they experienced due to gaming, and the media literacy support they received as a guide to good practice. The youths were given the option of participating in either individual or group interviews. As a result, there were two group interviews held with three to four participants each and six individual interviews. Those who chose to be interviewed in a group were either classmates or roommates and were younger than those who agreed to individual interviews. In one case, a contact person from child welfare services was also present in an individual interview, at the young adolescent interviewee's request. All interviews were conducted face-to-face.

Thirteen youths from Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, and Palestine participated in this study. They ranged in age from 16 to 24 years, with an average of 19. At the time of the interview, each had lived in Norway between two to six years, with an average of three. Most attended school full-time, and a few combined

school and work. Many of these youths had also lived as refugees for one to two years before arriving in Norway.

3.2. Interviews With Social Actors

Ten social actors were interviewed for this study, all of whom worked closely with unaccompanied refugee youths in Norway, but in different roles: five worked in co-housing arrangements for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers; two worked as school advisors for minority pupils; two worked at child welfare organizations; one was a teacher at an adult education center. In the interviews, social actors were asked how their specific institution worked with this group of youths, how video games could become a topic of discussion amongst themselves and the youths, and how their institution supported and guided youths to combat problematic gaming habits. Only one of these interviews was conducted face-to-face; the others were all held online.

3.3. Reference Group and the Co-Researcher

For this study, I used a reference group consisting of three social workers: an advisor for minority pupils, a social worker at child welfare services, and a teacher at an adult education center in Norway. The study also had a co-researcher, a young man who had come to Norway as an asylum seeker when he was a minor. Both the reference group and co-researcher provided consultation during the recruitment process and in the preparation of interview guides.

3.4. Language Considerations

Limited knowledge of the Norwegian language and a low level of trust in such studies made the recruitment process challenging. Indeed, many of the young participants did not want their interviews recorded, and thus notes taken in the interview are the only record of these conversations. This had implications for how the study is presented here, as I had access to fewer direct quotes. As I am fluent in Dari, several interviews were conducted in this language and resulted in richer content than those in Norwegian. I translated the Dari interviews first into Norwegian and then into English.

4. Analysis

This study views active mediation centered around a dialogical approach to the regulation of gaming as an ideal guide to good gaming practice among youths without close caregivers. As such, this research investigates both the gaming practices of unaccompanied refugee youths and how social actors working with these youths provide good gaming guidance. The analysis here is divided into three sections: the first focuses on social actors' reflections on their engagement with guiding good gaming practices; the second focuses on youths' practices through the lens of their positive reflections on gaming practices; the third is also focused on youths' practices, but through the lens of how their social and cultural backgrounds could influence gaming practices.

4.1. Social Actors' Guidance for Good Gaming Practices

The social actors working at child welfare services, who were involved in these youths' housing arrangements, explained how they set rules and guided the youths toward good gaming practices. Due to a lack of official routines or guidance, these individuals often reflected on their own familial gaming habits and roles as mothers and fathers when supporting unaccompanied refugee youths. Using phrases such as "I have a son that plays games," "this is what I do at home," and "this is a game that my son used to play," the social actors reflected on their role in guiding good gaming practices. The social actors described the indirect strategies (Smette et al., 2016) they used to regulate gaming habits, such as offering help with homework, which they saw as a key way to help reduce the time youths spend on gaming.

Sara is a social worker at a child welfare service house for unaccompanied refugee youths. She explained that gaming at night is a challenging practice, as it can cause difficulties related to school performance: "How will these youths wake up and concentrate at school if they are going to play all night? It becomes a problem if they have had too little sleep because of playing games."

Indeed, for most interviewees, good gaming practices were measured by how much time the youths spent gaming. Sara explained further: "They play very, very much. If we talk about video games, it's about wanting to set boundaries. Some of these youths want to play all the time. So sometimes we say, 'Oh my God, you need to slow down!'"

Here, Sara gives an example of a direct rule-making strategy for shutting down gaming activities after several hours of gaming. Whether or not these social workers identify a gaming practice as needing to be challenged relates to the type of gaming device used. While the social actors often understood that a situation where several roommates play PlayStation together was good practice, they saw playing on mobiles as open to challenge. The social workers expressed their frustrations and did not know how to guide the youths who played in this way. Using a mobile gives youths the liberty to play anywhere at any time—including in the bedrooms and at night. These gaming practices are likely seen as negative because social workers primarily use indirect and direct strategies of regulation rather than a dialogical approach to setting gaming rules. As Roger, a social worker at the child welfare service, says: "Some time ago, we had huge problems with some guys who used to play all the time. They had their phones with them in the living room, and they used to play in the bedroom at night."

Moreover, child welfare services' gaming practices are not relevant for youths who come to Norway after

the age of 18 or as unaccompanied minor refugees who now live alone. Unlike social actors working in child welfare services, high school teachers and advisors are not usually involved in regulating gaming habits.

Oda is one of the interviewed advisors for minority pupils (*minoritetsrådgiver* in Norwegian) in high schools. Advisors for minority pupils work for the Directorate of Integration and Diversity, and from high schools with a high number of pupils of immigrant background. Such advisors work closely with themes that the Directorate identifies as relevant to ethnic minority pupils—such as "negative social control, forced marriage, and honor-related violence" (Directorate of Integration and Diversity, n.d.). As Oda explained, they also help immigrant youths know their rights and access the Norwegian welfare system, e.g., applications for student grants. Oda admitted that she had not talked about video games with the youth, although she thought many of the pupils likely played extensively:

> I know a lot of these youths play a lot. There are many who play FIFA at night, and no one is there to say, "Now you have to go to bed." It is demanding. There are many students who have a lot of absences.

The advisors did not mention any attempts at indirect strategies for regulating gaming practices, although they believed that poor school attendance and performance could result from poor gaming practices. Here again, time spent gaming is seen as a potential reason for low school performance. Furthermore, Oda conflated questionable gaming practices with what she described as this group of youths' characteristics:

> This group is overrepresented among those who remain in high school for a longer period of time. This is due to language challenges. They take the first year of high school over two years. They follow all the subjects in the first year, but they only get a grade in half the subjects. The next year, they will take exams in the remaining subjects. So, in the second year, they have a lot of downtime.

In contrast to Oda, Janne (another advisor for minority pupils) saw trauma as the source of these youths' frequent sleep disorders, but still conflated their gaming practices:

> Sleep is often a big problem for these youth. This is often due to trauma or nightmares and things they have experienced that are not so good. Many of them say that they spend time on the mobile, whether it's playing or talking to friends elsewhere who are awake. So, I know that many of these youths play all night, and it quickly becomes a kind of strategy to get rid of the pain that comes at night.

The social actors not working in child welfare services or housing arrangements understood the need to support youths to establish good gaming practices. However, they also saw a limit in their "mandate" in this regard. Frida, a teacher at an adult education center, explained how often she reaches the "limits" of her mandate:

> I am a teacher, and I have a different role than a teacher from their home country. There, they have learned to show respect for teachers. Maybe there are many things they would not tell me. Maybe there could have been other support, someone in a different role as a social worker or advisor at the adult education center who could have helped them.

Here, Frida pinpointed how teachers in the youths' countries of origin are much more authoritative than in Norway. Thus, being accustomed to an authoritative teacher, these youths would likely have difficulties expressing their challenges to their Norwegian teachers, which prevents teachers in adult education centers from actively mediating their gaming. On her part, Frida reflected on this challenge as a limit to her mandate as a teacher.

For Oda, on the other hand, as an advisor for minorities at high schools, the limit to her involvement was not drawn by her mandate. In her work, gaming only becomes a topic of discussion when it creates conflict in the family or private sphere:

> I have some pupils who told me that they wanted to move away from home as they are not allowed to do what they want—which is to play games all night. Then, teach the pupils that stopping playing games at half past 10 is completely reasonable for most people. It becomes natural to talk about such things. Then we can invite parents to a meeting.

Oda's reflection shows that the limit of engagement in mediation and rule-setting is not necessarily related to the limits of one's mandate, but whether a questionable gaming practice can become a topic of dialogue between youths and advisors in high school. In Oda's example, parents make questionable gaming practices into a topic of discussion outside the family context.

4.2. Youths' Perception of Their Own Gaming Practices

Most of the youths interviewed had not played video games before coming to Norway. They learned about gaming either in asylum reception centers or the co-housing arrangements offered by child welfare services. These young men were immediately introduced to the socialization culture of gaming in Norway upon their arrival (Dralega & Corneliussen, 2018b), and David (a 20-year-old from South Sudan who now lives alone) described their need to learn gaming:

> I used to play football a lot when I lived in an asylum reception center, but the other boys were on PlayStation a lot. I had no experience with games. I just looked at them. Imagine that there are four people, and three of you are doing something together, but the fourth person cannot. I thought, I must learn to play.

Further, in an attempt to become “good enough,” the youths spend a lot of time gaming with other youths of similar backgrounds. As David explained: “In the beginning, I used to lose the games every time I played. I would just cheer on the boys [he laughs]. Sometimes, the guys let me play PlayStation. But now I’ve gotten better at FIFA.”

The young men want to meet the expectation of being “good enough” so they can mingle with others playing video games. Indeed, both those who learned to play before coming to Norway and those who learned in Norway described the need to socialize with fellow unaccompanied refugees and build relationships through gaming. As Ali (a 21-year-old living alone who played video games before coming to Norway) explained:

> We used to play video games [in the asylum reception centers], but not many could play. Many had not seen video games before. I taught them to play. The only video game we played was football. It’s fun to play with others. I needed to play with someone.

The young men who had lived in Norway for some time explained how gaming is an arena that offers the opportunity to mingle with other youths of similar backgrounds over an extended period, as limited friendship circles and loneliness are prevalent among this group (Andersson et al., 2021). They explained that, due to regulations related to the resettlement of unaccompanied refugee youths, their housing situation often changed, and they frequently had to move quite suddenly. Thus, gaming became important to maintaining friendships despite moving often. Additionally, a few of the youths from Syria kept in touch with family members and acquaintances who had resettled in Europe through gaming. In all these cases, the youths used gaming to stay in touch with other young people who spoke the same mother tongue:

> I have extra good contact with friends who speak my mother tongue. The other friends are also good friends, but I do not want to say anything about my weaknesses to them. You can only talk about your weaknesses to those you know well, right? For example, when I’m bored at home or when I’m not feeling well, I can go to them, or they can come to me. And for example, if a friend cannot come to me, I will suggest that we could play online. (David, 20-year-old, living alone)

As this study’s recruitment of unaccompanied refugee youths was carried out through educational institutions and child welfare services, the youths I contacted lived either in co-housing arrangements or alone. Those in co-housing arrangements had regular dinner and leisure activities routines, but for young people living alone, everyday routines were much more flexible. This was best exemplified in David’s interview. As he lived alone, he played video games much more when he was bored and had nothing to do at home. He could play for five hours after school and have dinner while playing. However, such behavior is not unique to gaming. David could also have the same routine with other activities when bored; for example, he described sometimes hanging out at the gym for five hours or watching football for over 10 hours on the weekends.

Several youths mentioned days when it was difficult to sleep at night or get up early in the morning. Although these young men were often silent about their feelings, they did explain that it was difficult to follow daily routines on such days. David, for instance, spoke of difficult days by saying, “no one is always fine.” Hasan (an 18-year-old from Afghanistan living in a child welfare co-housing arrangement) commented ironically, on the other hand, “We are fine. How else could we be?” Here, Hasan hinted at challenges he faced without mentioning them directly, and several other youths explained how exhausting it is to hear of their family’s struggles in their home countries. As post-traumatic stress disorder is widespread among this group (Svendsen et al., 2018), it would not be surprising for these youths to play much more on difficult days: “When I play, I don’t have to think about life. Everything is fine as long as I’m playing, especially when I’m playing with friends. You do not have to think about a lot of different things (Ali, 21-year-old, living alone).”

4.3. Cultural and Environmental Gaming Backgrounds

The interviewed youths mainly played using PlayStation gaming consoles or mobile phones. For those who used gaming consoles, FIFA was a popular game, while for those using mobile phones, PlayerUnknown’s Battlegrounds (hereafter PUBG) was very popular. According to the youths, PlayStation and FIFA are often available in child welfare co-housing arrangements and, as such, are free for young people to play, in contrast to many mobile phone games.

Those who played only on PlayStation believed they had better control over the amount of time and money they spent compared to playing on a mobile phone:

> I once uploaded a billiard app on my mobile. Then, 1,000 NOK was deducted from my account. I only get 4,000 NOK a month, and losing 1,000 NOK all at once is a lot. I deleted the app right away. Since then, I have not played on my mobile phone. (David, 21-year-old, living alone)

However, the youths who live alone explained that a game console was too expensive for them to purchase after moving out of child welfare co-housing arrangements, and thus these youths often played on mobile phones. While cheaper access to games is a factor for many using mobile phones, the interviews also show a likely link between the youths' cultural background and their device of choice. Youths who played on mobile phones more often than PlayStations tended to come from countries in the Middle East and Central Asia (such as Afghanistan, Palestine, and Syria), while those who more frequently used PlayStation often came from South Sudan.

As gaming becomes an important arena for these youths to socialize with others of similar backgrounds, their mother tongue plays an important role in navigating the game landscape and device of choice. Several youths from Afghanistan explained that they had been introduced to new games through friends who also spoke Dari or Pashtu. This was most visible when talking about PUBG, which was popular among young interviewees from Afghanistan, Palestine, and Syria. Additionally, however, these youths also play PUBG online with players from Turkey, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and several countries with Arabic as their official language. For some, these countries remind them of their journey from their home country to Norway, where they learned different languages and met people from different countries. As Irfan said, he does not know the other players on PUBG, but he can catch up with what is happening in Turkey or Pakistan while playing with players from those countries and refresh the languages he learned as a refugee.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Active meditation—i.e., when parents use a dialogical approach to give youths the opportunity to make decisions concerning their media use—is seen as an idealized and normalized parenting practice in the Global North (Clark, 2013). This has highlighted a democratization of family life critical to youths' civic engagement (Clark & Brites, 2018; Seddighi et al., 2022). In line with this, this study sees active mediation centered around a dialogical approach to the regulation of gaming as the ideal guidance for good gaming practice among youths without close caregivers. Although active mediation is normalized in the family context, this research shows that social actors working in child welfare co-housing arrangements often instead use both direct and indirect strategies in their regulation of gaming practices (Smette et al., 2016), such as offering help with homework, planning outdoor activities, or introducing rules shutting off internet access. Because of this practice, the youths' gaming environment, such as a shared gaming console in the living room, influences their gaming practices. In other words, when gaming is a collective activity among roommates in child welfare co-housing arrangements, gaming practices are regulated directly or indirectly by social workers, and it is thus easier for youths to deal with the time and money spent on gaming.

Although teachers and advisors for minority pupils pointed to limitations in their mandate that prevents them from regulating gaming practices, the interviews also highlighted that previous experience with a culture of authoritative teachers might prevent pupils from having a dialogue about gaming. However, while a dialogue about gaming and good practice is seen as irrelevant for teachers and advisors, such a dialogue could, in fact, create an opportunity for both social actors and youths to expand the democratic values of mediation of gaming in a non-family context.

Like siblings in families whose parents are unsure how to guide their children's digital media use (Mascheroni et al., 2016), this research demonstrates that roommates in asylum reception centers or co-housing arrangements assist each other in navigating the gaming landscape. However, the responsibility for media literacy support should not fall solely on the youths themselves (Neag, 2020). Indeed, this study has shown that social actors working with unaccompanied refugee youths in child welfare services employ gaming knowledge gleaned from their own family contexts, but at the same time, there is also a lack of routine or guidance around good gaming practices to direct the social actors working with these youths.

While research on gaming among youths with immigrant backgrounds shows that video gaming can both strengthen social connections to local communities (Karam, 2018) and help in the learning of the Norwegian language (Dralega & Corneliussen, 2018a), the young men interviewed for this study did not necessarily stress the importance of learning Norwegian or meeting Norwegian friends through computer games. Rather, gaming helped them establish social connections with youths with similar experiences who speak the same mother tongue. Unlike Leurs's case study (2019), which found that online communication is used to strengthen family bonds across borders, the youths in this present study played games to establish or strengthen social ties with fellow unaccompanied refugee youths. Similar to the findings of research on game-based socialization, this study found that gaming might reduce feelings of loneliness (Kaye et al., 2017) that many of these youths often face (Andersson et al., 2021).

The challengeable gaming practices described by social actors working in child welfare services referred to the gaming practices of the youths who spend a great deal of time gaming, play late into the night, or make it a solitary activity by playing on a mobile phone or alone in their room. But, the youths need to play games to mitigate trauma and learn gaming as a socialization space. This practice contrasts with what is often understood as good gaming practice. Young people indulging in gaming might be using this as a way to cope with traumatic experiences, but as Pallavicini et al. (2021) explain, the

effects of gaming strongly depend on the game's specific characteristics; not all games are the same. A dialogical approach to providing guidance on good gaming practices could create opportunities for youth and social actors to learn from each other about how gaming can help reduce stress or trauma and how the practice should be handled. A dialogical approach will cultivate the voices of these youths, helping us to both learn what gaming means to them and support their articulation of difficult life situations and feelings, as well as make valuable skills—such as language—visible in their environment. More importantly, by taking a dialogical approach to good gaming support, social actors will learn more about gaming and contribute to expanding this approach's democratization forces beyond the family context.

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Conflict of Interests

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Article

Transforming Disinformation on Minorities Into a Pedagogical Resource: Towards a Critical Intercultural News Literacy

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Abstract
Intercultural competence and diversity awareness are relevant to handling "fake news" related to minorities and migrants, thus preventing "othering" and stereotyping of vulnerable populations. Teachers and schools can play a central role in preventing the spread of far-right ideologies and the dissemination of false information and hate discourse. For that, bringing together intercultural competence and news literacy, conceptualised as "critical intercultural news literacy," is needed to navigate disinformation related to minorities and their connection to polarising themes. In this article, we focus on false or misleading information published on online platforms that brings together two salient topics: the Covid-19 pandemic and minorities. We discuss the issues of concern around the transformation of such material into a didactic resource for the school context and we question whether such practice can (paradoxically) lead to reinforcing or reproducing its undesirable content, i.e., to the othering of school populations that are targeted by false or manipulative information. This leads us to discuss potential problems associated with the pedagogical use of false information by teachers and, in resonance with the theme of this thematic issue, we claim that inclusive media education should also be an education for diversity and inclusion, through the development of critical intercultural news literacy.

Keywords
critical intercultural news literacy; disinformation; intercultural competence; media literacy; news literacy

Issue
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1. Introduction

Scapegoating ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural minorities is not a new phenomenon, but it is regularly boosted in times of crisis, controversial debates, and, recently, the pandemic. The hypervisibility of minorities in such contexts leads to an outpouring of nationalistic discourses, swollen by hate discourse, flaming strategies, and disinformation. As we argue in this article, within the school context, the complexity of disinformation production and consumption urges a new approach that combines intercultural competence and news literacy. Disinformation is defined as false or misleading information created with the intention to cause harm. Differently from misinformation, when there is no intention to cause harm, disinformation is conceived and spread in order to confuse its receptors; also, differently from mal-information, i.e., blunt hate speech, disinformation is written and diagrammed to imitate a news or opinion piece and is often spread by public figures and shared through social networking sites and related channels (Culloty & Suiter, 2020; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Because disinformation is not always quickly and clearly identifiable, this article will argue that handling disinformation requires developing critical thinking skills which furthermore should be geared toward the type of media platforms where such content spreads.

"Fake news" is not a consensual term to refer to information disorders, but it is appealing as a subject for the classroom. From an academic perspective, most

studies examine "how fake news is characterised, created, circulated, and countered" (Tandoc, 2021, p. 110), focusing on their degree of facticity and intentionality (main intentionalities being economical and ideological; Tandoc, 2021, p. 111). From a pedagogical perspective, not many scholars have dealt with this phenomenon. In our perspective, "fake news" should become a pedagogical subject and object, because of "the essentiality of empowering citizens with necessary knowledge and skills to be able to differentiate between fake and real news and to understand the significance of such differentiation and its implications" (Tejedor et al., 2020, p. 18; see also Franco Migues, 2020). "Fake news" is content that provides false or misleading information that impersonates or looks like a journalistic fact, mainly spreading through social media (Himma-Kadakas, 2017). Or, according to Tandoc (2021, p. 111), "falsehoods packaged to look like news to deceive people." Taking into account students' consumption habits of information and social media (Melo-Pfeifer & Dedecek Gertz, in press), several pedagogical arguments can be made to include "fake news" as a subject (theme) and as an object (a document) in the classroom:

- They are part of students' daily lives, engaging and provoking emotional responses;
- If "fake news" mimic journalistic practices and "look like news," the strategies to mimic those practices can be analysed and deconstructed;
- Students are exposed to racist and hateful discourses and are manipulated by the use of their preferred media outlets: Research has shown that online media tends to portray immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers more often as threats than print media does (Blumell et al., 2020).

We have begun to tackle the issue of "information disorder" (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017) in a previous study carried out in Germany (Melo-Pfeifer & Dedecek Gertz, in press), based on secondary students' answers to a questionnaire about whether and how they would like to learn about this phenomenon. In our results, 45% of the students said that "fake news" articles would be one of the best resources for learning about disinformation. In the context of the project CoMMITTEd (Covid, Migrants, and Minorities in Teacher Education: A Fake News Observatory to Promote Critical Thinking and Digital Literacy in Times of Crisis), the team was already able to reconstruct how migrants are portrayed in misleading information about the origins and spreading of the pandemic. However, the notion of bringing examples of "fake news" into the classroom, if analysed under the lens of media and intercultural education, might seem paradoxical: How could "fake news" be transformed into pedagogical resources to foster students' news literacy and intercultural competence, without at the same time increasing the risks of their content being amplified? The question can also be asked as follows: How to make students aware of the processes of othering and scapegoating migrants and minorities without reproducing and reinforcing the content of those documents without contributing further to the stereotyping of victims of disinformation? This is a pressing question as disinformation coupled with hate discourse and negative stereotyping of minorities and migrants is becoming increasingly frequent.

One of the problems that have been acknowledged in dealing with false or misleading information, alongside their definition and even the identification of misleading content, is that there is no easy way to debunk or make people aware of its false content. Jones et al. (2021, p. 183) refer to this issue as the "backfire effect": "pointing out to people that something they have accepted as true is actually false is likely to make them believe it even more." They claim that "fact-checking fake news stories is rarely an effective way to debunk them. Rather, it usually just serves to spread the fake news even more widely and harden the beliefs of those who have accepted it as true" (Jones et al., 2021, p. 183; see also Schwarz & Jalbert, 2021). That position is shared by other researchers in the field: Wodak (2021, p. xii) contends that "parallel worlds and truth now exist alongside each other; unequivocal fact checks find little resonance among viewers and readers." Additionally:

> While a piece of fake news can be categorized as a form of disinformation—intentionally created with the main purpose of deceiving others either for profit or for propaganda—based on the intention behind its production, its subsequent spread through social media users might be unintentional. (Tandoc, 2021, p. 112)

Hence, the spread of false information is based on beliefs that are not quickly formed, but rather a collection of formative experiences through socialisation. As we argue in this article, schools have a central role in these socialisation processes, and thus they can also serve as an early-stage tool to halt the spread of false information.

We are faced with a paradox between students' willingness to learn about disinformation through analysis of "fake news," and the "backfire effect," whereby discussing such materials can lead to spreading or entrenching disinformation. We discuss paths and issues surrounding the transformation of "fake news" into pedagogical resources by developing critical intercultural news literacy, an approach that we see as combining the ability to deconstruct othering strategies, recognising "news" as a discursive ensemble (Schwarzenegger & Wagner, 2018), and actively engaging with sources and facts. We first discuss how disinformation targets vulnerable populations, making them victims of stereotyping and dehumanising discursive and multimodal processes, and the consequent need to develop a context-sensitive media literacy programme in schools (Section 2). Then, we give an overview of different pedagogical proposals

intending to foster intercultural learning and diversity awareness in school settings (Section 3). Other methodologies and resources (such as the discussion of intercultural "critical incidents," the analysis of literary excerpts dealing with stereotyping processes, or even the images present in textbooks) also present the danger of leaving stereotypes uncovered or, even more problematically, creating new stereotypes and/or substituting some stereotypes with others (Melo-Pfeifer, in press). We, therefore, argue that intercultural awareness could be a solution to the paradox of the "backfire effect" in the classroom.

Another issue reported by some literature refers to a distinction between disinformation labelled as "news," implying a factual dimension, and other resources perceived as fictional or pedagogical resources, "created" for the school context: "The news format functions as a heuristic that affects online readers' credibility assessments" (Tandoc, 2021, p. 112). This can influence students' perception while working with those documents, making them, consciously or unconsciously, more reluctant to challenge the content of "news." Our proposal challenges this distinction (and its corollary) by proposing turning "fake news" into pedagogical resources and bringing them to be discussed in the classroom. We argue that the same critical discussions and the same kind of analysis aiming at deconstructing and critically challenging stereotyping processes of the other are not just possible, but increasingly necessary. Such work, we claim, can be based on careful linguistic, discursive, and multimodal analysis of the "news" artefact, among other strategies that make "fake news" specific as a source. Bearing this in mind, we present and discuss the pedagogical implications of the use of "fake news" in the classroom, in particular for working on disinformation (Section 4). Ultimately, we argue that it is possible and desirable to anticipate the most pressing pitfalls of bringing "fake news" into the classroom that could hinder the pedagogical gains and the potential added value of working with "fake news" as ways to gain resilience against manipulation (Culloty et al., 2021).

2. Disinformation About Migrant Others and Media Literacy

Migrants have been used in discourses circulating in the media as scapegoats for different social problems, from lack of housing in urban centres to dropping international school rankings and "lack of social cohesion." This is not new but has reached wider proportions through the capillarity of digital communication: If previously hate speech and disinformation about migrants circulated "marginalised on fringe far-right websites—where people had to actively seek them out—[they] now reach a wider audience on popular social media platforms" (Culloty & Suiter, 2020, p. 315). Such racist narratives based on nationalist and nativist perspectives also extrapolate culturalist discourses based on stereotypes. In addition, they can merge with alleged health concerns, as seen in disinformation spread about Covid-19 associated with Chinese and Muslim migrants (Cabañes, 2022; Culloty et al., 2021). A recurring theme accuses immigrants of defying isolation measures to reinforce the nativist narrative that migrants do not belong in the nation (Culloty & Suiter, 2021, p. 222).

If disinformation circulates widely in the media, a pedagogical perspective that addresses othering and racist discourses about migrants must account for that. From a pedagogical perspective, it would thus be important to develop "media literacy" in the curriculum and in subject contents. We understand media literacy to be the ability to be critical and self-determined towards one's own media consumption and to have a diverse media repertoire (Trültzsch-Wijnen, 2020, Chapter 2). Such ability requires a continuum of different aspects to be developed (cultural, cognitive, emotional, moral, and aesthetic), hence it is not a dichotomous measure (Potter, 2016, p. 27). Apart from these abilities, media literacy is influenced by a socioeconomic variable. In order to have access to a diverse media repertoire, families and individuals must have financial possibilities to do so, as such diversification implies paying for subscriptions, buying books and magazines, going to the cinema, etc. Furthermore, individuals still need free time to consume such diversified content, which is more attainable the less time one spends, e.g., commuting and in paid or unpaid work. A final material aspect that influences media literacy is formal educational attainment, as higher formal education levels are associated with higher levels of self-awareness and critical thinking in general (Paus-Hasebrink et al., 2019, Chapter 2). Still, as "fake news" have an affective component, there are psychological aspects that go beyond socioeconomic classes, making all individuals more or less prone to fall for such forms of disinformation (Armitage & Vaccari, 2021). Media literacy thus has a multidimensional continuum of (self-)awareness, abilities, and attitudes, combined with material conditions of access to a diverse media repertoire.

As an empirical application of media literacy, news pieces themselves can be embedded in pedagogical practices. In that sense, we work with the concept of "news literacy." Concretely, we define it as "the ability to use critical thinking skills to judge the reliability and credibility of news reports from all media: print, TV, radio or the web" (Center for News Literacy, 2016; Tully, 2021). While media literacy encompasses broader aspects relating to culture, cognition, emotion, morals, and aesthetics (Potter, 2016), news literacy is grounded in the application of such competencies to analyse news pieces circulating across media platforms and outlets.

In this article, we focus on the cultural contexts of media literacy, specifically how teachers can work with "fake news" to foster pupils' awareness of othering and stereotyping. Such an approach does not relate to a purely functional aspect (e.g., operating ICTs) but

rather to the ability to critically evaluate the content and be aware of the conditions of media production (Buckingham, 2006; Neag et al., in press). If racist and anti-immigration discourses circulate on social networking sites and if people have access to such content already at an early age, schools should also be involved in developing curricula adapted to this situation. Our survey of German secondary school students (Melo-Pfeifer & Dedecek Gertz, in press) shows that such an adaptation could be successful, as students want to learn more about disinformation; they want to do so with their teachers (i.e., teachers are seen as more trustworthy than peers or family) and they want to use real examples as pedagogical resources. As reports show that even students at the university level have difficulties in identifying information disorders (Sakamoto, 2020), addressing the issue early enough and from a context-sensitive perspective seems like a relevant measure in the context of increasing digitalisation.

3. Disinformation as Pedagogical Resource for Intercultural Learning and Diversity Awareness?

In this section, we argue that schools can foster awareness of the circulation of disinformation about migrants and migration through the development of intercultural competence. In this section, we first define intercultural learning, reviewing the most common approaches to foster it in the school context and refer to some of the problems reported in the literature regarding the use of authentic documents to support it. We finish with some arguments on why working pedagogically with examples of "fake news" that circulate on digital platforms could be a powerful resource to enhance intercultural learning.

We understand intercultural learning to be the process of developing intercultural competence, i.e., the ability to cope with what might be perceived as different cultures and different group affiliations. Such processes develop students' self-awareness and can occur in all contexts of our daily life, from work to playful activities and schooling. In educational settings, intercultural learning refers to the introduction "of students to other worlds and the experience of otherness" (Byram, 1997, p. 3). Intercultural learning is thus related to critical thinking and the ability to decentre and show empathy and politeness, which can occur through different languages and other semiotic resources, such as mimicry, gaze, postures, etc. This means that intercultural learning can occur across the curriculum, in school subjects such as foreign languages, politics, history, geography, religion, etc. Interestingly, in our survey (Melo-Pfeifer & Dedecek Gertz, in press), these are also the subject areas students in Germany identified as suitable to learn more about fake news, a parallel we will return to.

The outcome of intercultural learning is the development of intercultural competence, a competence that encompasses "the acknowledgment of complexity, the recognition of a plurality of perspectives and the promotion of an 'ecology of knowledges' " (Guilherme, 2017, p. 347). Byram (1997) defined intercultural competence around the development of five dimensions (or *savoirs*): knowledge of self and other and of how the interaction unfolds across cultures (*savoirs*), attitudes of relativizing self and valuing other (*savoir être*), skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovering and/or interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*), and finally, the political education and critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*).

Intercultural competence has become established as a transversal outcome to be acquired, namely in the field of foreign language education. Despite the complexity and multi-layered nature of intercultural competence, at least in the domain of foreign language learning, the focus has remained on the acquisition of declarative knowledge (*savoir*) about a supposed target culture. Although knowledge is essential for intercultural competence (namely knowledge of one's own multiple affiliations, awareness that knowledge might be conscious or unconscious and taken for granted), we claim that it is not enough to build supportive intercultural communication and competence. Further attempts have been made targeting the other dimensions of intercultural competence as well, such as the comparison of multiple norms and traditions or the comparison of perspectives and points of view, potentially leading to a change of perspectives and to the comprehension of the impact of one's socialisation process on attitudes and reasonings.

To foster the development of these intercultural dimensions, work with authentic texts and documents from the so-called target language has been seen as offering promising results (Byram et al., 2001; Matos & Melo-Pfeifer, 2020). Literary fiction, more specifically, has been advocated as a tool to foster intercultural learning, as it potentially leads to identification with characters that go through other socialisation processes and inhabit other cultural milieus, with their thoughts and emotions, thus increasing empathy towards otherness (Bredella, 2017). Also in the field of intercultural education, discussions around intercultural critical incidents have gained track in pedagogy and intercultural learning (Knapp, 2019; Tran et al., 2019). Critical incidents as a teaching method consist of "examples of situational clashes—situations where unexpected behaviour occurs" (Tran et al., 2019, p. 621) that are presented to students as a starting point for discussion. The basic idea of this method is that problems and clashes happen during intercultural encounters and that we can analyse, interpret, and even reconstruct the features leading to those clashes, learning from them. Through the discussion of intercultural critical incidents, the focus is placed on analysis and interpretation of the (at least) two sides of the incident, trying to put oneself in different shoes and grasp the same situation from multiple perspectives: the student's own, and two potential other perspectives.

By engaging with authentic texts, students also develop the ability to interpret documents and clashes,

developing the ability to understand frames of knowledge, specific behaviours, expectations, allusions, and connotations associated with particular linguistic, discursive, pragmatic, multimodal, or contextual features. As Byram (1997, p. 37) puts it, if students can compare documents from several cultural milieus, they "will discover both common ground, easily translated concepts and connotations, and lacunae…or dysfunctions, including mutually contradictory meaning." Such an ability is important in the field of media literacy as well, since reading and interpreting information and news is also dependent on the critical regard of the reader and their own awareness of personal knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and biases (Schwarz & Jalbert, 2021, on how people evaluate true, in general, and "compatibility" with one owns beliefs, as a more particular criterion).

The two mentioned methodologies to enhance intercultural competence and diversity awareness at school (work with literary texts and intercultural critical incidents) are both dialogical and largely dependent on classroom interaction. Despite the apparent safety of classroom-dependent dialogical activities, these methodologies do not come without danger, as we already announced in the introduction: Through contact with these critical incidents, in the form of documents or situations which might be more or less fictional, a great deal of attention should be placed on the dialogical processes leading to uncovering stereotypes, relativizing one's own perspective, challenging assumptions, perspectives, and knowledge taken for granted. The temptation of substituting one perspective for another, without uncovering underlying ideologies and principles, can lead to students feeling disoriented. It can also inadvertently lead to linguistic and cultural profiling and subsequent discrimination (Baugh, 2017), i.e., to the subjective evaluation of "foreignness" in discriminatory ways, based on (new) stereotypes. Another problem that might occur is the transmission of the idea that deconstruction of stereotypes all depends on students' subjectivities, and that it is not possible to distinguish fact from fiction, objectivity from subjectivity, between accuracy and lack thereof. These are the same problems the research points out when referring to the paradox of discussing "fake news" to uncover fake content.

4. Critical Intercultural News Literacy: Pedagogical Consideration for Teachers

Schools have an important role in educating to cope with "fake news" and develop resilience toward information disorders. Culloty et al. (2021, p. 2), referring to ways to counter exposition to disinformation, name three areas of countermeasures:

> Technological approaches that aim to automate the evaluation of online content and behaviour; audience approaches that aim to upskill the public and build resilience to manipulation; and regulatory and policy approaches that aim to increase transparency and accountability in the digital environment.

We consider that the school and formal education are scenarios where audience approaches can take place. Following our discussion in the previous sections, we now describe how we envisage pedagogical work with "fake news" at school.

Using "fake news" as a critical thematic subject and as a resource, namely those "fake news" that take vulnerable and migrant populations as a target, can have two potential gains in the classroom: developing students' intercultural competence and their media literacy. Taking one or the other lenses of analysis, both intercultural learning and media literacy aim at fostering abilities of critical and multimodal discourse analysis, critical thinking, and argumentative skills—all transversal competencies—which are best achieved in the school context through dialogic pedagogical approaches, integrating students' personal experiences in the learning process (Franco Migues, 2020). Responsive pedagogical approaches to fake news (Franco Migues, 2020) may then lead to a responsible news experience (Tejedor et al., 2020, p. 20), i.e., being able to reflect on one's own consumption of (fake) news patterns and on their consequences for society. Our proposal (Figure 1) is to merge both strands into a "critical intercultural news literacy" (following Cooke, 2021), a pedagogical perspective that bridges the gap between information and its consumption, providing "additional worlds of context that facilitate new perspectives and increased understanding. It takes a little extra legwork and openness to be uncomfortable with said context, but the rewards of amplified insight far surpass that discomfort" (Cooke, 2021, p. 495).

This perspective is challenging both for students and teachers. It requires, from an intercultural perspective, the ability to reflect on one's own knowledge, beliefs, and skills to relate to other languages and cultures. From a news literacy perspective, it implies reflecting on one's own patterns of news consumption (sources, frequency, themes) and the ability to deal with, compare, and contrast multiple sources of information. As in any modelling of the concept of "literacy" (Breuer et al., 2021), critical intercultural news literacy would imply three dimensions: an attitudinal dimension, related to the willingness to engage with such discourses and challenge discourses that scapegoat minorities; a knowledge dimension, related to acquiring trustful information, from diverse sources, on the events being reported; and an actional dimension, related to the ability to analyse "fake news" as a discourse and dismantle them through constructing valid counter-discourses.

From the merging of both approaches, it is possible to ask critical questions that address not only the *how* but also the *why* beyond the "fake," placing the questioning in broader narratives of exclusion and inequality. Such an approach recognises that deconstructing the

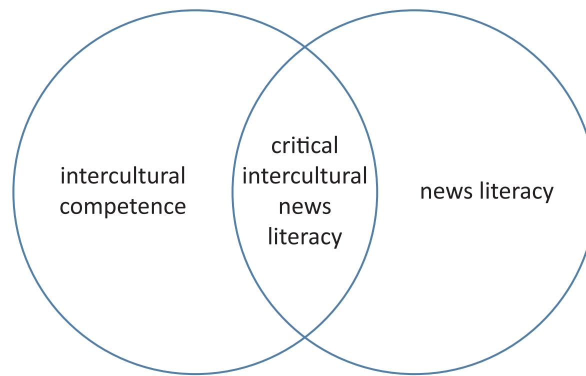

Figure 1. A pedagogical perspective on the use of "fake news" in the classroom.

discursive mechanisms of a "fake news" piece is important but not enough to understand the reasons beyond the targeting of specific minorities in a given context: while the *how* makes the identification of "fake news" easier (and might prevent their sharing), it is not enough to explain the systematic misleading treatment of minorities by some media outlets. But, if an actional dimension is indeed needed to dismantle gaslighting discourses targeting minorities, knowledge of history (and the history of the relationship between minorities and majorities), politics, and religious issues, for example, is important to see a "fake news" piece from different lenses and through different scales: Analysing the materiality of disinformation allows a microanalysis of a specific discourse (at a micro level); analysing its historicity brings the conditions of its production, circulation (and acceptance) to the forefront (at a macro level). In pedagogical terms, it would imply a double discussion in the classroom: First, "how do you know this piece of information is false or misleading?" and, second, "why do you think someone would write this piece of false or misleading information about these people?" While both moments are clearly interrelated, the first is rather descriptive and the second rather interpretative.

In the case of "fake news" about migrants and minorities, for example, we could ask from an intercultural perspective which groups are being misrepresented or reduced to some (identity) traits and which linguistic and multimedia features are being used to achieve it (how is a difference being created?). We can double-check our own interpretation by analysing our own beliefs, asking if we have sufficient knowledge to interpret the piece of information correctly and how our own socialisation processes influence our interpretation, thus analysing our own bias and making it transparent in the discussion.

From a news literacy angle, we can discuss the structural presentation of the so-called "news" (for example, around the common wh-questions), the trustworthiness of the source, the ideologies and agendas of the media outlet, and the very way it is written: Is the supposed information being recounted objectively, i.e., without adjectives and adverbs tending to present migrants and minorities from a biased perspective? Is an ethos of "us against them" being created and presented in a stark manner? Do the "news" pieces transmit facts or are they intending to trigger an emotional reaction from the audience?

From a critical intercultural news literacy perspective, teachers and students could analyse patterns of representation of migrants and minorities in "news," comparing the portraits of different minorities, nationalities, origins, etc., and relating them to broader national and international historical narratives and strategies of minority profiling (portraying them systematically from a denigrated and dehumanising viewpoint). It could be eye-opening to discover that powerholders in different countries construct different narratives around the same groups:

> At the country level, identity narratives were most prevalent in Germany, Netherlands, and Slovakia while security narratives dominated in Hungary, Poland, Estonia, and Austria. Identity and security narratives also subverted discussions of humanitarianism. For example, in France, the humanitarian narrative was undermined by those questioning whether refugees were genuinely in need of assistance while in Spain, the humanitarian narrative was subverted by concerns that left-wing politicians would prioritise the needs of migrants over Spaniards. Consequently, those advocating humanitarianism were characterised as a threat to the welfare of European countries (Bakamo Social, 2018). Within the national security narrative, anti-immigrant attitudes and disinformation are entangled in broader arguments about multiculturalism and the supposed decline of national identity. (Culloty & Suiter, 2021, p. 225)

From this critical stance, students and teachers can ask why this happens (why is the difference being created?), what makes minorities and migrants so prone to being victims of "fake news" and who is gaining from the others' suffering: This is a discussion that creates discomfort and outrage instead of leaving students and teachers in the comfort zone of comparing "us" and the "others" as if this comparison was neutral and

anodyne. Such comparisons can inadvertently embolden solid affiliations that foster nativist ideologies ("me as a German, a Portuguese, etc.," for example), instead of the recognition of multiple and dynamic affiliations. Guilherme (2017, p. 347), in a similar stance, called such an ethos "intercultural responsibility," "a social, relational, civic and ethical component of…IC [intercultural competence] with a commitment to social justice and an active involvement in matters of individual dignity and collective interest.''

5. Conclusion

In this article, we proposed a pedagogical use for "fake news," stressing how it can foster both intercultural competence and news literacy. Against the "backfire effect" argument and the danger of normalisation of malevolent discourses and bias against minorities, we defend the pedagogical use of "fake news" as a specific situated discourse that can be deconstructed. We assert the need to develop a critical intercultural news literacy that would lead students and teachers to challenge and criticise the mechanisms skewing the presentation of otherness in "fake news" and thus build up resilience against disinformation. Intercultural education and the development of intercultural competence or news literacy per se are valuable. However, for dealing with "fake news" on migrants and minorities in the classroom, the nature of the documents, their ideological underpinnings, and the broader narratives they are addressing must be brought explicitly into the interaction in an interconnected, ecological way. We, therefore, claim that "fake news" can renew and foster the treatment of both intercultural competence and news literacy at school, both across the curriculum and in specific school subjects (such as foreign languages, history, geography, or religion).

The presented approach was named critical intercultural news literacy, bringing together aspects of intercultural competence and news literacy. While we agree that "there is no magic bullet to counter anti-immigrant disinformation" (Culloty & Suiter, 2020, p. 323), we see the school as a scenario coordinating top-down and bottom-up approaches to cope with the problem, countering the lack of public policy to restrain racist and discriminatory speech about migration and migrants. Coping with anti-immigration discourses "requires a 'whole of society' approach that engages top-down approaches to regulating and monitoring the information and security environments as well as bottom-up approaches to everyday media practices at organisational and individual levels" (Culloty & Suiter, 2020, p. 323). The school can be seen as a hinging space because it is regulated by states and their educational policies (at a macro level) and can take students' and teachers' beliefs and everyday media practices as starting points for classroom discussions (at a micro-level). Macro and micro levels can mutually inform each other: The macro-level could collaborate with schools on monitoring the consumption of "fake news" by students and teachers and on helping design secure information environments at school; on the micro-level, individuals' habits and experiences could be turned into grassroots to address the dangers and harmfulness of negative discourses against minorities and migrants. Together, these approaches could foster students' and teachers' emotional response to fake news analysis, raising critical awareness of manipulation and othering processes, minority profiling, and one's personal vulnerabilities to become a direct victim of "fake news" (whether as a believer or a direct subject). These approaches would also stress the need to stay vigilant against recurrent narratives that tend to be exacerbated during crises and against mainstream media itself, as it might accentuate racist discourses either by fuelling them or by doing nothing against them. As put forward by Tejedor et al. (2020, p. 23):

> Citizens need to reconnect with feelings linked to universal values such as solidarity, justice, respect, freedom and equality, which potentially reinforces the sense of responsibility. The individual news experience needs to be reflected on through awareness of how personal experience (news behaviour, commenting, sharing, etc.) affects others and the values that individual actions promote.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Joining and Gaining Knowledge From Digital Literacy Courses: How Perceptions of Internet and Technology Outweigh Socio-Demographic Factors

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Abstract
Many government-sponsored policies and programs have been implemented in recent years to reduce digital inequality, but research on the effectiveness of such programs is severely lacking. We examine the short-term effects of participation in Lehava, the largest such program in Israel. Participants in our study completed a survey before and after taking introductory computer and internet classes. The findings demonstrate that motivations for participating in the program (measured before taking the course), as well as knowledge gains (i.e., differences between levels of familiarity with concepts before and after taking the course), were predicted almost exclusively by participants' perceptions of technology and the internet, and not by socio-demographic or other variables. We conclude by discussing the *significance of perceptions* over and above socio-demographic considerations for bridging digital inequality gaps.

Keywords
digital divide; digital inequality; digital literacy; Israel; Lehava; media literacy; perceptions about technology; perceptions about the internet

Issue
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1. Literature Review

1.1. Digital Inequality: Background and Significance

Social inequality based on factors such as age, gender, education, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and religious status has been around since the dawn of history and has implications for access to resources, the ability to use them, and the economic, cultural, social, and political capital of individuals and groups. The massive infiltration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) into many spheres of our lives has illuminated a new phenomenon: *digital inequality* between individuals and groups based on access to technology, capabilities, attitudes towards technology, and usage (Robinson et al., 2015; van Dijk, 2012).

The study of digital inequality is important due to the multitude of contexts in which internet use may benefit users (Scheerder et al., 2017). Research from the past two decades demonstrates that internet use may lead to dramatic results in a variety of contexts, including social and political participation (Kang & Gearhart, 2010), employment (DiMaggio & Bonikowsky, 2008), consumerism (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and many more. Thus, van Dijk (2012) proposes a four-part model of digital inequality: user motivation, material access to technology, user skills, and actual usage (DiMaggio et al., 2004; Helsper, 2012; Scheerder et al., 2017). The lack of accessibility and informed usage capabilities can lead to the exclusion of groups and individuals from key arenas of social discourse and prevent them from accumulating resources and developing capabilities (van Dijk,

2005), resulting in exclusion in many contexts (i.e., multiple deprivations; Castells, 2002).

The study of digital inequality originally focused on internet access and the existence of internet infrastructure, computing equipment, network connection speed, etc. In time, the emphasis shifted from access to variables related to abilities and skills, attitudes, purposes and character of use, and more (Hilbert, 2011; Lev-On & Lissitsa, 2018; Lissitsa & Lev-On, 2014; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007; Steinfeld et al., 2021; van Dijk, 2005, 2006). People's motivation for using technology has become a central element of digital inequality. This motivation depends on personal, psychological, cultural, and social aspects. Personal explanations for low user motivation include fear of technology—feeling discomfort, stress, or anxiety when encountering a computer—alongside personality characteristics such as anxiety or introversion.

Members of social groups vary in their attitudes towards technology according to their place in society. For example, members of vulnerable minorities may develop negative attitudes towards technology as a reflection of a weakened social status. Limited access to technology might lead to anxiety, fear, and distrust in ICTs and, in turn, lead to avoidance. The cultural perspective suggests that employment prestige and attitudes towards ICT will be positively correlated with access and diversity of ICT use. Mesch et al. (2013), for example, found that despite differences in education level and income between Israeli Arabs and Jews, the main inequality in digital access between the groups is linked to changes in employment prestige and attitude toward technology, stemming mainly from a deprived social standing.

1.2. Socio-Demographic and Other Variables Associated With Digital Inequality

This article examines whether socio-demographic or cultural variables influence the motivations to join courses aiming at bridging the digital divide and the knowledge gained from participating in such classes.

Digital inequality research focuses on factors that may explain the differences in internet access and use. Such factors include age, gender, education and socio-economic status, ethnicity, and religiosity (Scheerder et al., 2017). Below is a brief overview of the studies relating to these variables. Next, we review the socio-demographic and cultural variables known from the literature as having an impact on digital literacy and skills.

One of the most influential predictors of access to and usage of the internet and digital technologies is age. In general, older people are less keen on integrating digital technologies into everyday life (Hargittai & Dobransky, 2017; Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008; Haight et al., 2014). As age increases, the volume of internet use tends to decrease (Helsper et al., 2009).

Early studies have claimed that women use the internet less than men (Ono & Zavodny, 2003), but recent research suggests that in terms of internet access, digital inequality between women and men has disappeared (Blank & Groselj, 2014; Hargittai & Shafer, 2006). Still, digital inequality has not disappeared in reference to usage and technological literacy (Robinson et al., 2015). The main explanation for gender-based digital inequality is typically that men are encouraged more than women from childhood to adopt digital toys and become involved in digital games and classes. This process peaks in adulthood, when eventually men take more technology-oriented positions compared to women (van Dijk, 2012).

Early studies have found that education and socio-economic status are important predictors of differences in internet access. Over the years, as internet usage has become almost universal, these variables have lost their power in predicting gaps in internet access. However, studies show that they are still important in explaining differences regarding online usage patterns (Witte & Mannon, 2010). Educated people are more likely to use the internet to increase their human capital, resulting in improved employment, financial and health-service options (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008), compared to less educated people, who do not similarly take advantage of their access and skills to support their educational and economic needs (Helsper & Galacz, 2009).

1.3. Digital Inequality in Israel: Arabs and Ultra-Orthodox Communities

Israeli society is composed of deeply divided enclaves, communities secluded by choice (Douglas, 1985): mainly Arab (e.g., Erdreich, 2016; Lev-On & Lissitsa, 2015) and Haredi (ultra-Orthodox; e.g., Hakak & Rapoport, 2012; Lev-On et al., 2020; Sharabi & Kay, 2021).

While Arab and Jewish populations enjoy roughly the same level of internet accessibility (Ganayem, 2018), the uneven character of the utilization of online tools is evident. For example, whereas as few as 30% of Jews do not take advantage of online opportunities such as shopping and making online payments, such behavior in Arab populations is commonplace, exhibited by more than 70% of internet users. There are diverse origins for such differences in technology use and adoption. Firstly, the commonness of "blue-collar" employment among the Arab population means less exposure to technology. Secondly, the lack of ability, skills, and general exposure in regards to the internet may be the cause of overall negative attitudes and lack of motivation toward technological education among minorities (Mesch & Talmud, 2011).

Another expression of digital inequality is manifest in the patterns of internet usage among the ultra-Orthodox community, a phenomenon which is uniquely Israeli. Ultra-Orthodox communities are self-segregated by choice from the general Israeli society in an attempt to maintain their close communities and unique lifestyle. The internet presents a challenge and an adversary to ultra-Orthodox self-isolation. Internet usage caused a

general outcry among community rabbis during its early years, with them forbidding all contact with the new medium. However, over time, different approaches and compromises have been made, allowing for a lift of internet sanctions and bans under certain circumstances—for employment purposes, for instance (Lev-On et al., 2020).

In any case, the ultra-Orthodox community appears to have increased its internet usage following changes in society, as well as technological and economic developments (Cohen, 2013). Changes in the economic makeup of the ultra-Orthodox community were key factors in their technological evolution. Employment characteristics changed, and more ultra-Orthodox businesses, institutions, and organizations began to depend on the internet for their overall operation (Kahaner et al., 2017). Despite these occupational changes, in 2015–2016, the percentage of ultra-Orthodox Jews who used the internet was equal to only half of the general population: a 43% user rate compared to the 86% non-ultra-Orthodox user rate.

Both minority groups, ultra-Orthodox and Arabs alike, share another interesting similarity in regards to gender roles and the status of women. Both societies hold patriarchal values; however, the practical role of women in their families differs. Despite the inferior position of women in ultra-Orthodox societies in all religious and intellectual aspects, they are often the main providers of the household. This is to allow the men to pursue the full-time study of the Torah and dedicate themselves to the study of religious texts as a "primary vocation" (Stadler, 2009). The higher integration rates of women in the workplace among the ultra-Orthodox results in greater practical and technological knowledge among women as opposed to men, as they receive much higher and more frequent exposure to technology in their fields. The percentage of ultra-Orthodox women receiving training as software programmers and gaining employment in Israel's high-tech industry is on the rise (Lev-On & Neriya-Ben Shahar, 2011; Neriya-Ben Shahar & Lev-On, 2011). Ultra-Orthodox women receive occupational training in computer basics and software programming via the Haredi seminaries and colleges they attend, while Haredi employment centers are populated by young ultra-Orthodox women in gender-segregated working environments (Raz & Tzruya, 2018).

In Arab society, despite a decrease in the digital gap between men and women, the digital space is subject to social and political pressures, and women's use of it is subject to standards set by society. For women, it is important to maintain privacy in the virtual space since they are subject to strict control and supervision from their families and society. Moreover, the supervision of Arab women on the internet is not just a matter of family and society—It is also a matter of power relations (Abu-Kishk, 2020).

The examples above demonstrate that digital inequality is indeed associated with socio-demographic differences. Still, cultural differences are central in shaping perceptions and attitudes, as well as actual use patterns. However, cultural factors related to digital inequality, and their role in affecting technology attitudes and use in comparison to socio-demographic factors, have hardly been studied. Research has rarely attempted to differentiate between sociodemographic and cultural variables in the context of technology use, and certainly not in the context of motivations to join internet and computer literacy courses aiming at filling that gap. This study aims to address this void in the scholarship.

2. Research Environment: The Lehava Program

Reducing digital inequality is a global objective by which organizations hope to empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of disadvantaged populations. In Israel, too, there are several public, private, and third-sector programs aimed at reducing digital inequality. The Lehava program (for reducing the digital divide in Israeli Society) was established in 2001 as the government's flagship program to increase the digital literacy of disadvantaged populations.

The Ministry of Finance established the program in 2001, and the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Space later took over responsibility for it (Fisher & Bandes-Jacob, 2003). The program aimed to benefit citizens with low digital literacy, low socioeconomic status, and limited access to advanced information technologies. The program includes courses and activities which, as of 2018, operate in 30 centers nationwide. Of these, 19 centers are dedicated to the general varied population, while four centers are situated in ultra-Orthodox cities, and seven are situated in Arab cities. The centers operating in minority cities are typically composed of the corresponding minority population. The general population comprised 61% of the 63,000 participants in the various 2016 Lehava activities, while the participants of the ultra-Orthodox centers comprised 22% and the Arab centers 17%. Foundational introductory computer and internet classes in 2016 were taken by about half of all program participants (Ministry of Science, Technology and Space, 2017). The course is spread over 18 1.5-hour sessions and covers issues such as familiarity with the computer, keyboard, and mouse, smart and secure web browsing, searching for information online, personal information management, using email, Israeli e-government websites, and social media. The common denominator, across centers and populations, was the majority of participants being women.

Two previous studies have assessed the impact of Lehava (Fisher & Bandes-Jacob, 2003; Zilka, 2012). Both studies used questionnaires measuring participants' internet skills and information about and attitudes towards the internet. Pre- and post-course questionnaires were completed, and interviews were conducted with participants and instructors. In Fisher and Bandes-Jacob's (2003) study, half of the participants who came to the centers mainly to improve their online

skills and become familiar with computers for personal needs significantly improved their skills (according to self-reports). Zilka (2012) found that 40% felt they improved their skills, while 85% reported greater confidence in working with computers. Still, these and other studies did not compare social-economic and cultural variables as predictors of joining computer and internet literacy classes. They also did not compare these variables as predictors of differences in knowledge gained from these classes in order to understand the role of social-economic and cultural variables in the study of digital inequalities and literacy. As such, this is the key contribution of the current study.

3. Research Questions

Based on these previous studies, our research questions are the following:

- What predicts motivations to join computer and internet literacy classes?
- What predicts the differences in knowledge gained from these classes?

Following the literature review and to contribute to the research gap in distinguishing between socio-demographic and cultural variables, we examine whether the questions above are a function of sociodemographic variables or of cultural factors manifested in attitudes and perceptions.

4. Method

4.1. Pre-Course Data Collection

The research planning and data collection were carried out in close cooperation with the Ministry of Science and Technology and with Lehava center managers. We received a list of Lehava centers and their managers from the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Space, which oversees the program. This was done in order to collect data about participants in the introductory computer and internet classes

Data were collected from the introductory computer and internet classes since they are the most elementary, fundamental, and popular of all Lehava classes. As stated, there are 30 Lehava centers across Israel, mainly in the geographic periphery, but not all of them had introductory classes during the data collection period. Ultimately, data was collected from 12 Lehava centers in which such classes were opened during the data collection period and while maintaining geographic representation, of which seven are centers for the Jewish population (including the ultra-Orthodox) and five for the Arab population.

We decided to arrive in person at the centers and distribute the paper questionnaires by researchers who speak Hebrew and Arabic as a first language, according to the population attending the center. The decision to distribute the questionnaires in person was made after the researchers realized that the presence of members of the research team was needed to ensure that participants actually completed the surveys. These required some 20 minutes and could often be quite challenging for participants to finish in an online format. Many of the participants were older people with low digital literacy and fairly poor technical orientation, some lacking basic computer skills. Hence, it was decided that the questionnaires would be distributed on paper and not in a digital format.

4.2. Post-Course Data Collection

To examine the short-term impact of participation in the course, members of the research team returned to the centers at the end of the course to collect data once again.

Of the 179 participants who completed the pre-course questionnaire, 70 participants completed the corresponding post-course questionnaire. Among those who completed both questionnaires, 39 belonged to the Arab population, 23 to the general Jewish population, and eight to the ultra-Orthodox community. Note that both pre- and post-class data collection was finalized shortly before the outbreak of Covid-19.

4.3. Research Tool

In addition to the theoretical background, some variables known in the literature to impact digital inequalities have been identified. The questionnaires contained questions about the topics below.

The motivations for joining the course (self-development) were measured using a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*to a great extent*). Motivations included improving computer literacy, familiarity with new technologies, learning how to use different computer programs, improving the ability to use the internet, social connections, entertainment, and leisure. These motivations were identified in a pilot study (see Lev-On et al., 2020).

The variable Perceptions of Technology (Blank & Reisdorf, 2012) was composed of the following statements: “It is easy for me to do things without technology”; “with technology I can do things much better”; “I do not believe in technology”; “technology makes me nervous”; “it’s very hard for me to catch up on technology”; and “I’m very open to new technologies.” The options ranged from 1 (*sympathy for technology*) to 5 (*hostility towards technology*).

The variable Perceptions of the Internet (Tsai et al., 2001) was composed of the following statements: “I get bored with using the internet”; “I am afraid to use the internet in case I look stupid”; “when I use the internet I am afraid I am going to do some damage”; “the internet makes me feel uncomfortable”; and “when I use the internet, I am not sure what I am doing.” The options

ranged from 1 (*liking the internet*) to 5 (*reluctance to use the internet*).

The variable Activities on the Internet (an updated version of Hargittai, 2004) was composed of 20 statements relating to internet activities, such as searching for information, paying bills, investing in stocks, viewing photos, and using social media. Each option had a scale ranging between 1 (*never use*) and 6 (*use multiple times a day*).

The variable Familiarity With Concepts About Computers and the Internet (an updated version of Hargittai, 2005) was composed of statements about the levels of familiarity with nine concepts, such as favorites, blogs, PDFs, etc. Each concept was introduced on a scale between 1 (*I do not know the concept*) and 5 (*I am very familiar with the concept*).

The variable Self-Efficacy in Computer Usage (Compeau & Higgins, 1995) was composed of five statements about one's perceived ability to use the computer to perform tasks. Each option was introduced on a scale between 1 (*total lack of confidence*) and 10 (*great deal of confidence*).

The variable Self-Efficacy in Internet Usage (Wu & Tsai, 2011) was composed of 20 statements about participants' sense of confidence in their ability to perform certain actions on the internet, such as downloading images, printing content, searching for information, etc. Each option was presented on a scale between 1 (*total lack of confidence*) and 7 (*a great deal of confidence*).

Questions About Locus of Control (Valecha & Ostrom, 1974) concerns a sense of control over life, believing that luck, the environment, or some external factors control one's life, versus believing that one controls events in their life. The variable was introduced to our research since studies demonstrated associations between locus of control and computer literacy (Kay, 1990; Wingreen & Blanton, 2001). Research explains this connection by suggesting that users who have a high degree of computer literacy feel that they have more control over computers (computer locus of control). With the increasing centrality of the internet in various aspects of life, it is suggested that a high degree of internet literacy is associated with a higher degree of general locus of control, as users believe that by successfully using the internet, they have greater control over events in their life. In the questionnaire, each option was on a scale between 1 (*very little*) and 7 (*to a very large extent*). The original variable consisted of five statements, but the fourth statement ("what happens to me has nothing to do with my actions") decreased the reliability of the variable and was removed.

We also asked about participants' gender, age, family status, native language, country of origin, occupation, income level, education level, area of residence, and religious affiliation.

The questionnaire was translated from English into both Hebrew and Arabic. The questionnaire in Hebrew was disseminated at the centers intended for the Jewish population, while the questionnaire in Arabic was disseminated at the centers serving Arabic speakers.

5. Findings

5.1. Descriptive Findings

Pre-course data were collected from 179 participants: 76 participants took the classes in centers for the general Jewish population, 25 in centers for the ultra-Orthodox Jews, and 78 in centers for Arabs.

More than 80% of the participants were women, among both the Jewish and Arab populations. Participants' age ranged between 20 and 70, with the average age of participants among the Jewish population about 50, compared to about 40 among the Arab population. Just under half of the respondents (45%) reported they are unemployed, in addition to 19% who were retired. Most respondents (79%) stated that their income was lower-than-average. The average number of years of education was slightly lower than 12. Over half of respondents reported using the internet at least once a day before classes started.

The main motivations for joining the course were familiarity with new technologies (62%), improving computer literacy (62%), learning how to use computer programs (61%), and improving the ability to use the internet (59%)—i.e., cognitive motivations related to knowledge about technology, computers, and the internet.

Below in Table 1, we present the statistical details of the independent study variables (taken from the pre-course measurement).

The study population perceived both technology and the internet as challenging. Regarding Perceptions of Technology, on a scale of 1 (*sympathy for technology*) and 5 (*hostility towards technology*), responses averaged 3.03. Regarding Perceptions of the Internet, on a scale of 1 (*liking the internet*) and 5 (*hostility towards the internet*), respondents were on the liking side with an average of 2.27. In general, participants seemed to shy away from technology more than from the internet. The prevalent activities participants performed on the internet were searching for news from Israel and from around the world, and information on health, weather, and self-help (average = 2.7, *SD* = 1.2, α = 0.94). The values of the other independent variables appear in the table.

5.2. Predicting the Motivations to Join the Classes

Next, to answer the research questions, we performed four logistic regressions to predict the main motivations for joining the courses: familiarity with new technologies, improving computer literacy, learning how to use computer programs, and improving the ability to use the internet. For the logistic regressions, the various motivations for joining the course were recoded as dichotomous variables (1–4 were coded as

Table 1. Statistical details of independent study variables.

Independent variable	Statistical details
Perceptions of Technology	mean = 3.03 (scale of 1 to 5), *SD* = 0.86, *α* = 0.67
Perceptions of the Internet	mean = 2.27 (scale of 1 to 5), *SD* = 1.04, *α* = 0.78
Familiarity With Concepts for Computer and Internet	mean = 1.99 (scale of 1 to 5), *SD* = 1.22, *α* = 0.93
Self-Efficacy in Computer Usage	mean = 4.87 (scale of 1 to 10), *SD* = 2.63, *α* = 0.91
Self-Efficacy in Internet Usage	mean = 3.68 (scale of 1 to 7), *SD* = 1.94, *α* = 0.94
Locus of Control	mean = 4.53 (scale of 1 to 7), *SD* = 1.37, *α* = 0.66).

lack of motivation, 5–7 were coded as existence of motivation) due to the uneven distribution of answers. All the regressions examined the impact of Locus of Control, Internet Activities, Perceptions of Technology, Perceptions of the Internet, Self-Efficacy in Computer Usage, and demographic variables—age, gender, education, income, and religious affiliation (ultra-Orthodox or not)—on the dependent variables.

5.2.1. Predicting the Motivation to Join the Course to Become Familiar With New Technologies

A logistic regression was performed to examine the impact of the independent variables on the motivation to join the course to become familiar with new technologies and was found to be statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = 14.83$, $p < 0.001$). The model predicted 47% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance of the motivation to join the course to become familiar with new technologies (see Table 2).

The findings demonstrate that Perceptions of the Internet can increase the chances of joining the course based on the motivation to become familiar with new technologies 0.157 times. The other independent variables had no significant effect on the dependent variable.

5.2.2. Predicting the Motivation to Join the Course to Improve Computer Literacy

A logistic regression was performed to examine the impact of the independent variables on joining the course based on the motivation of improving computer literacy. The model was statistically significant ($\chi^2(2) = 11.510$, $p < 0.001$). The model predicted 43.2% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance of the motivation to join the course for improving computer literacy (see Table 3).

The findings show that perceptions of computers can increase the chances of joining the course for improving computer literacy 24.079 times, and Perceptions of the Internet can increase it 0.039 times. The other independent variables had no significant effect on the dependent variable.

5.2.3. Predicting the Motivation to Join the Course to Learn How to Use Computer Programs

A logistic regression was performed to examine the impact of the independent variables on joining the course based on the motivation to learn to use computer software. The model was statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = 6.022$, $p < 0.05$) and predicted 20.3% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance of the motivation to join the course to learn how to use computer programs (see Table 4).

The findings demonstrate that Perceptions of the Internet can increase the chances of joining the course for learning to use computer programs 0.37 times. The other independent variables had no significant effect on the dependent variable.

5.2.4. Predicting the Motivation to Join the Course to Improve the Ability to Use the Internet

A logistic regression was performed to examine the impact of the independent variables on joining the course to improve the ability to use the internet.

Table 2. Logistic regression results for predicting the motivation to join the course to become familiar with new technologies.

Independent variable	*B*	*SE*	Wald	Exp(B)
Perceptions of the Internet	−1.854	0.6320	8.595**	0.157

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3. Logistic regression results for predicting the motivation to join the course for improving computer literacy.

Independent variable	*B*	*SE*	Wald	Exp(B)
Perceptions of Technology	3.181	1.628	3.817*	24.076
Perceptions of the Internet	−3.241	1.411	5.274*	0.0390

Note: * $p < 0.05$.

Table 4. Logistic regression results for predicting the motivation to join the course to learn how to use computer programs.

Independent variable	*B*	*SE*	Wald	Exp(B)
Perceptions of the Internet	−0.995	1.525	12.628*	0.370

Note: * $p < 0.05$.

The model was statistically significant ($\chi^2(2) = 18.545$, $p < 0.001$) and predicted 41.6% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance of the motivation to join the course to improve the ability to use the internet (see Table 5).

The findings demonstrate that Perceptions of the Internet can increase the chances of joining the course to improve the ability to use the internet 3.64 times, and Activities on the Internet could increase the chances 0.469 times. The other independent variables had no significant effect on the dependent variable.

5.3. Predicting the Differences Between Familiarity With Concepts Before and After the Courses

To predict the differences between Familiarity With Concepts About Computers and the Internet, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted in steps. The variables entered into the regression model are Locus of Control, Internet Activities, Perceptions of Technology and of the Internet, and demographic variables—gender, age, income, education, and religious affiliation (ultra-Orthodox or not).

We found that differences between familiarity with the concepts can be explained by Perceptions of Technology, followed by Locus of Control ($F_{(2,21)} = 7.598$, $p < 0.01$). The predictive variables explain 36.5% of the variance of the variable differences between Familiarity With Concepts. The other variables had no significant effect on the dependent variable (see Table 6).

6. Discussion and Conclusions

Activities in many spheres of our lives have migrated to the internet. Digital inequalities, such as differences in internet access, capabilities, attitudes, and type of usage, affect the ability of individuals and groups to perform daily tasks online quickly and efficiently and get the most out of it to suit their needs.

Digital inequality and the factors that predict it are the subjects of much research, but research that deals with the effectiveness of programs to reduce it is almost non-existent. The current study contributes to filling the research gap in the field of evaluating programs to reduce digital inequality, focusing on socio-economic vs. cultural variables through a study of Lehava, the most extensive program in Israel dedicated to this aim. Data was collected in the introductory computer and internet classes, attended by about half of all project participants.

Examination of the variables that predict the motivation to *join a course* demonstrates the centrality of cultural variables, notably perceptions *regarding the internet* that the participants had at the beginning of class. Such perceptions do not develop during the course but largely come from the social and cultural contexts of the learners' environment prior to taking the course. Arguably, vulnerable minorities might have negative attitudes towards technology as a reflection of a weakened social status, which may be the cause for these perceptions. Such trajectories, however, require further study to substantiate.

The main *motivations* for joining the course were familiarity with new technologies, improving computer literacy, learning how to use different computer programs, and improving the ability to use the internet. All are cognitive motivations related to knowledge about technology, computers, and the internet.

This study adds to our knowledge in the field of digital inequalities and digital literacy by demonstrating that perceptions regarding the internet were the only predictor of all the motivations for joining the program. Our finding indicates the importance of perceptions regarding the internet in the context of the courses. Knowledge

Table 5. Logistic regression results for predicting the motivation to join the course to improve the ability to use the internet.

Independent variable	*B*	*SE*	Wald	Exp(B)
Perceptions of the Internet	1.292	0.571	5.110*	3.640
Activities on the Internet	−0.757	0.3950	3.674*	0.469

Note: * $p < 0.05$.

Table 6. Multiple regression in steps to predict differences in Familiarity With Concepts About Computers and the Internet.

Independent variable	*B*	*SE*	*β*	R^2
Perceptions of Technology	1.258	0.367	0.591**	0.247
Locus of Control	−0.637	0.283	−0.379*	0.365

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

gains (differences between levels of familiarity with concepts after and before the class) were also predicted mainly by participants' perceptions of technology and the internet. The findings demonstrate that cultural factors are central in studying motivations to join computer and internet literacy programs and the gains from them. Note the lack of predictive power of gender.

The results of this study contribute to our understanding of digital inequality and the programs aiming at reducing it. Such understating can inform the design and content of future computer and internet literacy programs and the character of their publication and participant recruitment, which should probably focus more on cultural rather than socio-economic factors.

The study demonstrates that although socio-demographic variables receive the most scholarly attention, it is rather the cultural aspects—attitudes, perceptions, and views of technology—that are most influential in predicting motivation as well as actual learning and success in the course.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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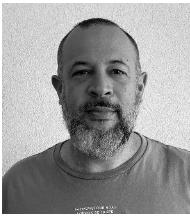

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Article

When Everyone Wins: Dialogue, Play, and Black History for Critical Games Education

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Abstract
In this article, we reflect on the process and outcomes of using dialogue, play, and a focus on Black women's history to support critical media literacy in game design education. Over three years we developed a dialogue-based introductory undergraduate course in the game design program at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute intended to deepen engagement by students in game design practice. We specifically focused on critical approaches to explore the history and culture of games, utilizing dialogic pedagogy to develop transformative learning environments rooted in social justice education, and helped students develop skills for intercultural dialogue and communicating "across difference." The dialogue experience created a powerful learning environment that resulted in higher quality and more critical student game design work. This was evident in the 2019 iteration of the course, which included two sections of students and in which we had a semester-long group project on the history of Harriet Tubman, culminating in a selection of student games being shown at a local gallery in an exhibition celebrating Tubman's legacy. The Tubman project was liberatory not only for students, but also instructors, as we learned together how to navigate discomfort and gain a more critical understanding of the material realities of white supremacy in games, self, and each other. This article shares details from the design and methodology of our course, outcomes as evidenced by student work, survey responses, and instructor observations, and concludes with reflections on areas for further research and opportunities for other educators to incorporate new methods in design education.

Keywords
Black history; critical media literacy; dialogue; games; pedagogy; play

Issue
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1. Introduction

In this article, we reflect on the process and outcomes of using dialogue, multipartial facilitation, and engagement with historical material, specifically Harriet Tubman's story, to deepen critical and anti-racist pedagogy in game design education. In terms of media literacy, our approach was three-fold: increase student awareness of their own and others' subject positions in relation to media and society; support student skill development in game analysis as a "reading" media skill; and support student skill development in game design as a media "writing" ability. To work toward these goals, we collaborated for over three years together at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, where we developed a dialogue-based introductory undergraduate course in the game simulation arts and sciences program: The course was called History and Culture of Games (Rouse & Corron, 2020). What initially began as a dialogue workshop series sprinkled throughout the course, grew into a fully co-facilitated class rooted and immersed in dialogic pedagogy. The class experiences shared in this article are from our final experience co-facilitating the class together. Throughout our collaboration, we specifically

focused on critical approaches to explore the history and culture of games, utilizing dialogic pedagogy based on intergroup dialogue to develop transformative learning environments rooted in social justice education, and helped students develop skills for intercultural dialogue and communicating "across difference" (Zúñiga, 2003). Through the application of the four stages of intergroup dialogue, students learned dialogue skills while building a brave classroom space (Arao & Clemens, 2013) where they could share and design vulnerably and take risks in learning about social identities and dialoguing about issues of power, privilege, and oppression as they related to games and the practice of game design.

Intergroup dialogue is a communication practice characterized by sustained face-to-face facilitated conversations between individuals who share two or more different social identities (Zúñiga, 2003). Through personal storytelling, active listening, and affirmative inquiry, dialogue seeks to build an understanding of one's own and others' perspectives on issues, and an appreciation of life experiences that created those perspectives (Nagda & Maxwell, 2011). Intergroup dialogue engages both cognitive and emotional learning with a focus on experiential learning activities to encourage participants to reflect deeply about themselves and those who share different social identities, about the realities of dominant narratives and the cycles of socialization they have been a part of their whole lives, and tools to enact change towards social justice. Dialogue participants also often make close bonds with one another given the unique classroom community that is created through the four stages of dialogue, and the vulnerability and mutual trust that is built into the space. Many participants share that intergroup dialogue experiences are life-changing and transformational, both in terms of developing self-awareness and more meaningful connection with other people.

Dialogue facilitators aim to utilize multipartial facilitation and power balancing facilitation techniques (Fisher & Petryk, 2017) to build awareness of how dominant narratives are operating within dialogue while inviting participants to share counter-narratives that do not fit within the dominant narratives to build understanding across the group of a variety of lived experiences. The goal of multipartial facilitation is to elevate and make space for these counter-narratives, often shared by those who hold marginalized identities and push against the dominant narrative while not refuting those who believe the dominant narrative or whose experiences fit within the dominant narrative (Fisher & Petryk, 2017). By validating lived experiences and utilizing multipartial facilitation versus other facilitation techniques, such as neutral or advocacy facilitation, dialogue participants remain open to sharing their own experiences and understanding experiences that are different from their own; that further complicate and question the dominant narratives they may have come to believe. Our dialogic pedagogy approach is different from some more conventional lecture- and assignment-based approaches, as ours is process-based and framed as part of a life-long learning (or un-learning) process that has an end goal far beyond the outcomes of any single academic course. The ultimate goal of dialogic pedagogy is transformational, as opposed to informational. The single course we offered was intended as the catalyst of a transformational process, opening ourselves and students to understanding across differences. Therefore, as we reflect on our dialogue experience in this course and what it means to have been successful, we find many different definitions and versions of success, since our students were all in various stages of this transformational learning process and had different, unique, and meaningful learning moments where they created a greater understanding of themselves, others, and the dominant narratives they critically explored within games. As David Bohm characterizes the process of dialogue:

> In a dialogue, however, nobody is trying to win. Everybody wins if anybody wins. There is a different sort of spirit to it. In a dialogue, there is no attempt to gain points, or to make your particular view prevail. Rather, whenever any mistake is discovered on the part of anybody, everybody gains. It's a situation called win-win, whereas the other game is a win-lose—if I win, you lose. But a dialogue is something more of a common participation in which we are not playing a game against each other, but with each other. In a dialogue, everybody wins. (Bohm, 2004, p. 7).

Because dialogue seeks to engage the student as a whole person, in a manner that values the inherent diversity across individuals, it follows that every student's experience and outcomes in the course will be diverse as well. Even the process of producing artifacts we might deem less conventionally successful in a course represents a kind of success within the dialogic frame, where any learning is understood as valuable if it meets the individual student and classroom community where they are authentic. In our final in-class dialogue reflecting together on the process of the course, as students thanked each other and shared their perception of an increased feeling of classroom community through dialogue, one student who had struggled with engagement during the course offered his gratitude about "learning patience with others and himself, big emotions, and self-awareness.'' This final reflection exemplifies Bohm's radical perspective that "everybody wins when anyone wins" (Bohm, 2004, p. 7).

In this specific iteration of the course, the figure of Harriet Tubman served as a powerful catalyst in terms of expanding the bounds of what a game could be and how a player could exist in relation to a game, pushing beyond the notion of games as "just for fun" into critical engagement and even discomfort. In parallel with smaller design assignments and in-class gameplay with

reflective dialogues, students participated in a semester-long small group project, designing games focused on Harriet Tubman's life and legacy. Centering the course around the figure of Harriet Tubman emerged organically from a long-term collaboration with a colleague at a neighboring university, Professor Janell Hobson, who is a cultural theorist and historian, and a Tubman expert. The move to center Black history and Black female experience in a game design course is not a common practice. While the field of Black games studies is growing considerably, with important contributions from scholars such as DePass (2018), Gray (2020), and Grace (2021), Black designers have also written astute critiques of design pedagogy as too often subjecting students of color to violent erasures (Jones, 2022), and have noted the radical potentials of having design students examine their own identities critically as a way to build the capacity to envision equality (Gaiter, 2022).

We open with an excerpt of our observations during an in-class dialogue session, from one of the two course sections, from the twenty-third of the twenty-nine course meetings in the semester. We have anonymized this student dialogue to maintain student privacy, but have shared basic information about core aspects of students' social identities such as race and gender. These components of intersectional identity (and others) were brought into the class and highlighted in earlier dialogues and activities by the students themselves, and therefore formed an ongoing and important context to the dialogue as the semester continued. In addition, part of the work of multipartial facilitation of dialogue is to attend to who is speaking, as much as to what is said, and to try to disrupt power imbalances that may emerge which reflect dominant power structures (ie., which often function to silence women, people of color, queer people, disabled people). This disruption is created by stepping back from dialogue to reflect, as a group, on the process of the dialogue—evaluate it—and by facilitators working to support students' development of skills in either making or taking space, to work toward more equitable dialogue. Because of this, facilitators need to be mindful of the intersectional identities held by the dialogue participants. In this example dialogue, nineteen students, mostly first-semester freshmen in a game design program, sat in a classroom, gathered around a large square configuration of tables, facing each other. Two instructors provided an opening prompt for the dialogue, but then mostly listened, recording observations in notebooks, striving to observe both the students and themselves without judgment and at the same time maintain responsibility for holding the space for the students' dialogue together. The prompt for this session was: What have you learned from games about your social identity? A record of this session follows:

> After some silence, a white male student points out that "identities are shifting in different play communities. Our identity is not always the same." Another white male student observes that "games are a socialization tool because we rarely play alone." A Black female student brings up the idea of what players choose to share versus not share, referencing Anita Sarkeesian's experience in GamerGate (Sarkeesian & Cross, 2015), the impulse to share less after experiencing harassment, such as not using the microphone in multiplayer games. A second female student, who is white, shares that she is "not into multiplayer partly due to the misogyny" and that when she passes for male online, she does not correct this misapprehension, explaining that "the default is male," not only in character creators but also on Discord, and [that] "the energy of explaining who you really are is just too much." An Asian male student observes that even having a default is all part of a gender binary worldview. A third female student, who is also white, explains she is not surprised by any of this, she says she feels desensitized because misogyny is just the norm. A white nonbinary student says: "The platform you're given in games isn't for you to speak, it is for you to continue to be harassed." The white female student who shared her experiences passing as male chimes in again, asking: "Who carries the burden of change?" [She] references chapters by J. T. Lee and Shaana Bryant in Tanya DePass's collection, which touches on this issue, highlighting the struggles of those in the game industry who, due to their social identities, must work to succeed "despite everything." In particular, she brings up Bryant's call to allies, to "please don't let that [racist microaggressions and harassment] stand" and stop giving the benefit of the doubt to the offender. The dialogue ends with a Hispanic male student bringing up the difficulty of changing the game, even in the case of the card game activity we had played in our own classroom.

As instructors committed to a dialogue-based pedagogy, with the larger aim of guiding students toward more critical literacies regarding games and game culture, we experienced this dialogue as a clear success (this type of clear success is not always the outcome in a dialogue-based pedagogy; as we will share below, success comes in many forms in dialogue, and some may be more difficult to recognize). In this example, students displayed their ability to listen and share "across difference." Students acknowledged their intersectional entanglement with games, society, and each other, and displayed a willingness to ask difficult questions—not as a means to an end or a singular answer, but as a way to open up complexity within the game as a medium and examine this together. As opposed to more instrumentalized forms of pedagogy, our assessment and outcomes are not focused on the evaluation of something our students produce as an end in itself (a research paper, a project, etc.). Instead, we are observing for evidence of deep connections within the group, between the students, and between students and the complexity of the subject.

In this course we combined both dialogic pedagogy and more traditional design pedagogy methods to work across personal experience, theory, and practice, to build an integrative critical literacy for students, inclusive of their own social identities. Evidence of this critical literacy, to the differing degrees it was achieved, was seen in student dialogues, written analyses of games, and the quality of the games students designed for the course. By literacy, then, we refer not only to the ability to critically and carefully "read" and interpret games, but also the ability to "write" in the medium of the game with a critical perspective that moves beyond replication of dominant games artifacts, and includes a reflexive understanding of the self in relation to others in the mediascape of today's culture and society. In developing complex design tasks for our students that have no single "right answer" or "best practice" to rely on, we aim to support students in developing critical literacies that are up to the task of navigating real-world complexity. Our approach is in line with prior research on feminist and critical approaches to teaching media literacies, as discussed by Lund et al. (2019) and Bali (2019). Like Lund et al. (2019, p. 56), who also make a compelling case for the need for digital literacy pedagogies to foster student agency and engage with complexity by providing students with "open-ended tasks and fuzzy problems which lend themselves to collaborative inquiry," we too presented students with complex design assignments to be developed via iteration collaboratively. As with Bali, we worked to first support students' self-awareness of the complexity of their own intersectional social identities and then support awareness of the self in relation to others. Like Bali, we too utilized a dialogic pedagogy to achieve this foundational step. Bali, however, used a web-based intercultural dialogue program (Soliya Connect) while we worked with an in-person intergroup dialogue practice, paired with related experiential learning activities, often in the form of games.

2. Course Structure and Experiential Learning Strategies

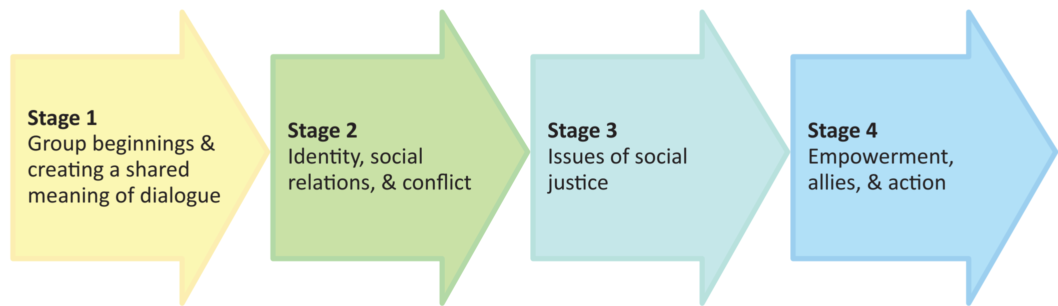
While our class was not fully structured as a true intergroup dialogue, we utilized dialogic pedagogy in our course structure and facilitation, with an emphasis on experiential learning activities that were often rooted in games. In Figure 1 we illustrate the four stages of dialogue and the experiential learning activities, as well as the games-related activities we engaged in throughout each stage. Dialogue is sequenced, and the different stages and activities built on each other as we developed our classroom community and expanded our understanding of dialogue, social identities, and social justice in relation to games. The deep engagement in the first two stages, in particular, created a sense of mutual trust that led to the ability for students to share their own experiences vulnerably in dialogues that occurred in later stages in the semester.

We opened the course by acknowledging how our structure, approach, and aims differ from other dominant pedagogical methods, sharing with the students that we seek a deeper engagement with the complexity of games in culture via the communication mode of dialogue. We were also certain that the course and the material would invite students into the classroom in a more personal way than other courses might commonly do. To begin the larger journey with a small initial step, we invited students to share their earliest game memories. We did not specify if this should be a digital or analog game, only that the memory should be from childhood or earlier youth. We combined this first interaction of sharing from personal experience as valuable knowledge with learning each other's names, and the process of creating a community agreement about what qualities of communication were desired by the group. These qualities were written on a large sheet of paper that was brought back into the class during each dialogue session and revisited for revision if needed. In reflecting on sharing these early game memories, we examined this very personal "data set" for insights about connections and distinctions between each students' early experiences of games, play, game culture, and games in culture.

We utilized class sessions at the beginning of the course to create a shared meaning of dialogue and learn specific dialogue skills, as well as explore social identities, reflect on our own salient social identities, and work towards understanding identities from those who are different from us. Engaging in experiential learning activities on these topics during Stages 1 and 2 in the first six weeks of the course helped foster a classroom community built on trust, and helped students develop dialogic communication skills, such as active listening and affirming inquiry that they could use throughout our semester during in-class dialogues.

As we approached Stage 3 of the intergroup dialogue model, we specifically focused on understanding privilege and oppression, and embedded power structures within games. Using power balancing multipartial facilitation (Fisher & Petryk, 2017), we co-facilitated class dialogues throughout the second part of the course where students could explore a variety of identity-based topics in games, and share vulnerably and authentically their own lived experiences in relation to the dialogue. We specifically explored the *Cycle of Socialization* (Harro, 2018) and the socialized knowledge we developed about our own identities from games. We also had many dialogues about the dominant narratives present in games, such as colonialism, militarism, racism, and sexism, and critically reflected on those narratives—who they served, who was missing from them, and how they perpetuated systems of marginalization.

We closed the course experience on Stage 4, thinking about future commitments to further social justice within games and processing impacts and takeaways from our community dialogue experience. Dialogues in this later stage focused on the inherent power of being



Description of Stage	Establishing a foundation for dialogue through community building, laying the foundation of collective trust such that the classroom is constructed as a welcoming space where all are invited to bring their whole selves in, and exploring dialogic communication tools and skills.	Building an understanding of social identities, individuals' salient social identities, and sharing across different social identities. Begin to explore histories of marginalization and conflict related to different identity groups, and examine dominant narratives in games that uphold systems of power, privilege, and oppression	Further exploration of privilege and oppression —reflection on lived experiences and connections to games. Critical investigation of embedded power systems within games and games' participation in cycles of socialization and systems of maginalization.	Reflection and ownership of inherent power as a game designer and developer. Community commitments to addressing systemic inequality in games. Community closing with sharing of main takeaways and impacts participants had on one another.
Activities	Community Agreements, Dialogue Visualization, Debate vs Discussion vs. Dialogue, Commitments to Risk-Taking in Learning, Active Listening & LARA	Social Identity Terminology, Social Identity Profiles, Cycle of Socialization, Social Identity Timelines	Hot Topics Dialogues on Issues of Identity & Games	Spheres of Influence, Closing Dialogue — Impacts & Takeaways
Games	Learning Edges	Sim City	Barnga & the Power of Rules	Memoir Games

Figure 1. The four stages of dialogue as implemented in our courses.

a game designer, what it means to tell someone else's story, and critically reflecting on the current dominant narratives and harmful exclusionary norms in the professional field of game development. We aimed to empower students to enact future change in their spheres of influence, and think about how they could apply their takeaways from the course to future experiences in the games field. In our closing dialogue, we asked students to share their biggest takeaways and meaningful learning moments of the course, as well as an individual who had the greatest impact on them through dialogue. These closing reflections featured immense gratitude shared between those in the classroom community and were deeply reflective.

Throughout the course curriculum and application of the four stages of intergroup dialogue, we utilized experiential learning activities, some of which were rooted in games. These activities further intermeshed dialogue and course content related to the history and culture of games. In the first week of the course, we did a "learning edges" activity that asks students to reflect on their level of comfort related to different social identity-based scenarios, and physically place themselves on a spectrum of comfort zone—learning edge—danger zone. This was a physical activity, reminiscent of playground games like Red Rover, in which students moved their bodies to different areas on a spectrum according to their comfort with a specific prompt. The activity was done in silence, however, students were able to observe where their peers were moving to and sometimes altered their responses based on others' movements. We processed this activity in-depth, thinking about indicators of discomfort, the reasons why individuals may have had different responses, when and why individuals changed their responses, etc. This activity is a foundational part of Stage 1 of dialogue, where we are laying the foundation of learning through discomfort and recognizing our individual learning edges. Here we introduce students to the practice of reflecting critically on the play process, not only the outcomes of the game.

As we progressed to explore social identity and difference, we did an activity called "Sim City," a simulation in which students build and create a city. Beforehand, students have been split into four different groups (usually identified by some type of fruit), and the facilitators take on different city administrative roles, such as mayor, city council, and police officers. The city space was laid out ahead of time with tape on the floor, with

some groups having much larger spaces to work with than others, and others situated adjacent to a jail and a trash dump. While students initially treated the activity as a creative design task, making buildings and city infrastructure with craft supplies similar to the world-building assignments they worked on in other game design courses, they quickly found out that the purpose of the simulation was to emulate systems of marginalization, as each group was given different amounts of resources and treated very differently throughout the simulation. Processing the "Sim City" simulation experience brought out varied responses, with some students critically reflecting on systems of privilege and oppression, while others related more to how the activity connected to the concept of "gaming" a system. Some students did not connect deeply, instead applying an instrumentalist or commercial games view of the activity as a "bad game," since it was not designed to maximize industrial concepts focused on in other courses such as flow, immersion, and replayability.

In a later session, to further explore power and dominant narratives, we used a card game called Barnga (Thiagarajan, 2006). In this game, students were split into small groups, given instructions on how to play, and told that they would play a tournament-style rotation. After the instructions, students were no longer permitted to talk. Following each timed round, winners and losers would move into different playing groups. What the students came to find out was that while the game mechanics remained the same, each small group was given a different set of rules (different suits were trump, different cards were high vs. low, etc.). This led to initial confusion and frustration as students moved between groups, and found they did not know the rules to effectively play the game. Learning connections emerged including reflection on the power of rules specifically in games, and then more broadly in terms of knowing and being able to operate within social rules and dominant narratives in different cultural contexts.

Lastly, towards the end of the course, the final game design assignment had students create a memoir game focused on specific social identities and/or lived experiences. The assignment was open in letting students choose what kind of game they wanted to design, and how they wanted to share their story with others. Some final designs had the player adopt the student's point of view, while others depicted the students' experiences as narrative. Modes of design included digital games, card games, and cooperative games. By completing this assignment towards the end of the course after having established a trusting and authentic classroom community, many students chose to share more personal and vulnerable experiences in their memoir games, also illustrating insights from our multiple dialogues on social identities and games. For example, one student shared her experiences as a bisexual Black woman through a digital game that had the player adopt her point of view as she navigated her identity development. Another student illustrated how he processed the transition and feelings of loss when his older brother went to college through a digital game as well.

Even with the application of the intentional sequential stages of dialogue and the use of experiential learning activities and games throughout the course, as well as integration in design assignments, not all students were able to deeply engage the critical concepts we were asking them to reflect on. In contrast to the clearly successful dialogue presented above, we had a number of dialogue experiences that were more challenging and included resistance. These too, however, present opportunities for successful learning when characterized through the lens of dialogue. As a contrasting example, we share another excerpt of our observations of an in-class dialogue that occurred in the second section of the course in response to the same prompt shared earlier: What have you learned from games about your social identity?

> The class appears stumped by the prompt and asks for further clarification. Three white students, two men and one woman, share that games are "just fun" and that they choose not to unpack them in the way that the prompt is suggesting. The facilitators ask the students to reflect further in small groups, which many do, but one white male student leaves the classroom and does not return for a quarter of an hour. Bringing the small groups back together, the facilitators present the prompt a second time to the large group. Multiple students, both women and men, share the white, cis-gendered, heteronormative male dominant narrative and norms present particularly in digital games. A group of male Chinese students voice a different perspective, sharing the experiences of prejudice and harassment they have faced playing online multiplayer games, encountering anti-Chinese racism in games, where Chinese players are cast as cheaters and toxic by white or other English-speaking players. A male Brazilian student shares that he has encountered language prejudice in games too, and negotiates this by choosing which language to speak according to which country's server he logs into. The group still shares a general consensus and acceptance that this is just how things are and that change would be far too difficult, or even impossible to achieve. There is a lack of engagement and energy to go deeper and consider ways to enact change, and some students even critique those who have tried to change game culture. A white male student references the readings from Anita Sarkeesian and Katherine Cross (Sarkeesian & Cross, 2015) and suggests that women who are harassed in online multiplayer games "should just use the mute button" instead of being so "harsh" in their response to harassment.

Similarly, in other dialogues throughout the course, there were multiple critiques and expressions of resistance

by students towards the experiential learning activities and games we had students play throughout the course. We share an excerpt of our class dialogue processing the "Sim City" activity:

> Multiple students call the activity a "bad game" due its educational nature and lack of replayability. Some students share reflections focused on the feelings they experienced while in their different socially stratified groups, including pain and discomfort in recognizing privilege. One white male student shares: "It hurts me to think society is like this because I am privileged." Even with these reflections, the majority of the students share takeaways connected to dominant narratives in digital game culture such as the need for the game to be entertaining, promote enjoyment and fun, and not cause negative feelings.

Our student reactions and lack of critical engagement observed in our class dialogues shared here were reminiscent of Wu's (2022) pedagogical encounters with structural whiteness in the games classroom. Most notably, we resonated with her following reaction to resistance she experienced in her classes: "I was unnerved by how viscerally aggressive they were towards announcing the illegitimacy of anything illegible to them. I was unnerved by how nonchalantly easy it was for them to withdraw when the conversation gets difficult" (Wu, 2022, p. 9). As facilitators, we were similarly charged by our students' dismissals, lack of engagement, and resistance to learning through discomfort when considering new critical perspectives. Yet, through these difficulties the frame of dialogue provided us with a lens to understand these failed or stunted dialogues as valuable learning experiences too, both for ourselves and the students, and reflective of the reality of our students' experiences and positionings.

This struggle between resistance and more engaged participation was further exemplified in our semester-long board game design assignment focused on the life and legacy of Harriet Tubman. Like our class dialogues, we observed both instances of clear success as well as resistance in student engagement in this assignment throughout the course. We will examine how, through dialogue, we were able to critically assess relevant examples of games about slavery, process our ongoing discomfort with confronting racism and white supremacy within game design, and consider how exploring history and celebrating marginalized stories through games and impactful play can be important parts of liberation, leading toward the goals of social justice.

3. Tubman in Play

For the fall 2019 iteration of the course, we included a semester-long small group design assignment with a focus on telling the fuller story of Harriet Tubman through games, for an exhibition at a local art gallery. In parallel, author Rebecca had been involved in a two-year collaboration with Professor Janell Hobson, who is a Black feminist theorist and a Harriet Tubman expert. Hobson had approached Rouse about a collaboration with a different course, AR Design for Cultural Heritage, for which Rouse's students had developed prototype AR and immersive applications focused on Tubman for a local science museum in 2018. The 2019 iteration of the History and Culture of Games course coincided with the 170th anniversary of Tubman's self-liberation from slavery in the fall of 1849. This exhibition brought together student work on Harriet Tubman from a range of undergraduate programs at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (games, music, sculpture) and a graduate course collaboration between SUNY Albany and Albany Law School on race, rape culture, and law. While Tubman has good name recognition in the US context, there is commonly a lack of deeper understanding of her history, who she was, and her significance. For the exhibition, our students first researched Tubman's history and legacy and then designed playable games intended to help tell her story in more depth.

In these critical dialogues, we also looked with honesty at the brutality of slavery to educate about history that should be more widely known than it is. We added reading materials to the course bibliography that focused on Tubman and representations of slavery in games, such as Kate Clifford Larson's 2004 biography of Tubman, Sarah Bradford's 1869 book on Tubman written during Tubman's lifetime, and Sarah Juliet Lauro's 2020 research on portrayals of slavery and slave resistance in games. Bringing together student engagement with historical materials, as well as critical reflections on representations of slavery in games, were both important components of the initial design process and led to some interesting and meaningful game topics and mechanics that honored Harriet Tubman and her experiences. Looking back, we can see the myriad ways that bringing the figure of Harriet Tubman into our course functioned as a generative and critical catalyst, pushing the "buttons" of the field in meaningful ways that we believe led to some of our students developing work that was highly original and deeply engaged Tubman's story, while others struggled.

Utilizing dialogue also was an effective method to critically engage students in a historical review of games about slavery that are problematic and perpetuate dominant narratives of racism and white supremacy. Games analyzed in class included: Brenda Romero's The New World (2008), Playing History: Slave Trade (2013), Mission US: Flight to Freedom (2012), National Geographic's Underground Railroad: Journey to Freedom (2014), Scholastic's The Underground Railroad: Escape From Slavery (2013), and Brian Meyer's Freedom: The Underground Railroad (2012). By using mutlipartical facilitation, we were able to deeply explore why some of these games had negative impacts while others were more successful, looking at the ways that they

characterized slavery in the US in their depiction, design, game mechanics, etc., moving beyond just telling students "these games are bad" or "good." For example, in analyzing the 2012 board game Freedom by Brian Mayer, which is a good-faith attempt to represent the experience of escaping on the underground railroad and is packed with historical educational material, we could also identify how it falls short in the affective experience of the game, as it is highly proceduralized in the manner of a resource management game, thus encouraging an intellectualizing mode of play. We looked too at very poor examples, such as the infamous 2013 Playing History: Slave Trade videogame, sometimes referred to as slave Tetris, which we examined as a racist misuse of games' ability to make meaning from mechanics, a quality known as "procedural rhetoric." In this game, players stack slave avatars into a slave ship in the same manner as blocks are stacked in the puzzle game Tetris. While the game developers had said the dehumanization was intentional on their part, to emphasize the brutality of slavery, we talked about the inappropriateness of placing the player in the role of the racist oppressor in a game in which pleasure could potentially be derived from succeeding in the puzzle task. Likewise, we discussed the shortcomings of the "empathy machine" perspective in games and interactive tech, pointing out how players inhabiting the identities of oppressed peoples can also serve to reinscribe harm and fall far short of liberating claims often made for such works (Rouse, 2021; Ruberg, 2020). Examining this variety of game examples together helped to open up dialogue around the nature of the game designer's responsibility, socially and politically, as well as tensions around who has the right to tell another's story, and the potential of games to aid in anti-racist and liberatory teaching. We started with class dialogues on games about slavery to explore in the game design process how to honor Harriet Tubman and create affective games that more vividly illustrated the humanity of enslaved people, which had not been done previously.

Ultimately, four of the eight student games designed in small groups were selected for inclusion into the public exhibition: Guided, Combahee, Safehouse, and Family or Foe? (see Figure 2). This "success rate" of 50% felt like an accurate reflection of the many ways in which our course in this specific iteration touched on many of the key shortcomings in the games field and pushed against design conventions and standards of practice that are prejudicial and racist in games. It made sense that despite our dialogic pedagogy approach, not all students were able to successfully create original and meaningful games on the topic of Tubman. Students whose work was not of the quality to be included in the exhibition had struggled with finding a connection to the Tubman topic, reflecting the dominant view in games that many areas of culture are "outside the purview of games," or that games are "just for fun" and should not spoil that "fun" with serious topics (of course, we can also reflect on who is welcomed into the fun of commercial games and who is excluded). The teams that created successful games found a way to bring genuine engagement and curiosity to the story of Tubman, were open to receiving constructive feedback on improving their designs, and worked to fabricate their games to a higher level of polish or completion.

While we are sharing the final designs of the games selected for the exhibition, the focus of our course was more process related versus design or production related. We utilized game design assignments, and this Harriet Tubman project in particular, to engage students more deeply in the process of dialogue in relation to the history and culture of games and critical game design practice.

4. Conclusion

Looking back on the experience of this course two years later, we also reached out to former students and asked for their longer-term reflections, to help assess the longitudinal impact of the course. Two students responded, each from one of the two course sections. The different perspectives they shared exemplify the diversity in experience of the course. Sarah, who is a Black female student shared:

> Being a Black student in a white-dominated field like the games industry is already alienating, so I didn't want to contribute to mishandling a game surrounding one of the world's most renowned Black historical figures....That intersection of history, social issues, and thought-provoking conversation, in my opinion, is greatly overlooked and underrepresented in the game industry at large. In class, dialogues that brought up potentially challenging points of discussion sometimes felt cathartic—and were, at other times, somewhat frustrating. We as students engaged in conversations that we typically avoided in day-to-day interactions, making the discussions all the more impactful. I became more aware of my peers' perspectives and, in part, how their backgrounds informed their ideologies.

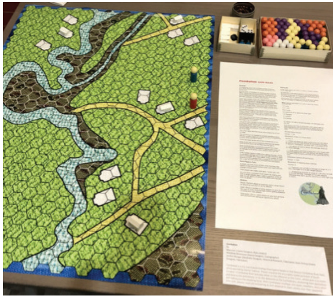
Sarah's response illustrates the purpose, value, and impact of engaging in dialogue and centering a historical Black figure by focusing on Tubman throughout our course. Another student, Matthew, who is a white male student, shared:

> Being a dialogue-based course [it] took some time to acclimate to. However, it encouraged student engagement, resulting in us having to reflect and think more about the material taught instead of us just listening to the professor....After creating my group's board game...the bigger takeaway would be learning about the Combahee River Raid and Harriet Tubman's role as the leader of the Union troops in this raid. When

Guided

By Sarah E. Mirekua, Hibiki Takaku & Justing Hung

In *Guided*, players take on the role of runaways and Conductors on the Underground Railroad. Playing off of oral tradition, music, and the safety provided by the cover of night the Conductor must come up with a code, pass it on to the player, and use the code to help the blindfolded runaway reach Freedom. With the blindfold simulating night and the musical codes guiding the player, Guided aims to simulate the experience of escape using cooperation and basic memorization.



Combahee

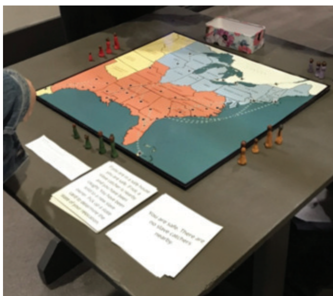
By Max Lico, Matthew Bonnacaze, Jenifer Monger & Sean Orelup

Combahee is a 1v1, turn-based strategy board game based on the famous Combahee River Raid, which was led by Harriet Tubman. Players traverse the accurately scaled portrayal of South Carolina's Combahee River and play either on the offensive as the Union, whose goal is to storm and destroy the plantations, or on the defensive as the Confederacy, protecting their plantations and stalling out the attacking force. With *Combahee*'s multiple unit types, modifiers, and a strict time limit, playrez must use everything at their disposal to claim victory over their opponent.

Safehouse

By Michael Willner, David Ducharme, Sun Jeong, and Rachel Lynch

Safehouse is a 1v1, turn-based strategy board game based on the history of the Underground Railroad. One player controls the slaves hiding in the station master's home as they attempt to not be caught. The other player controls the slave hunter, searching for runaway slaves to take back to the South. The slave hunter has 10 turns to discover the hiding player within the board space. The safe house space is masked so the hunting player cannot see it, however the hiding player may move furniture and their own location to seek protection while the hunting player tries to discern their location in a limited number of turns.



Family or Foe?

By Anushka Potdar, Alfa Cao & Sydney Stojkovic

Family or Foe? is a collaborative storytelling roleplaying game in which 4–10 players try to escape slavery by moving on a historically accurate map of the US from the 1850s to try to reach a free state. Slave catcher cards must be drawn during the game, and determine if the players are captured, killed, resold, or remain safe and on the run. This game highlights both the influence of chance on fate and brutality of slavery, providing and emotional and experiential educational insight into the history of those seeking to escape slavery in the United States.

Figure 2. Images and descriptions of the four student games selected for public exhibition: Guided, Combahee, Safehouse, and Family or Foe?

> it came to the design process for Combahee, my group researched the Combahee River Raid: Harriet Tubman's involvement, the purpose and events of the raid, the types of troops used, and the geography. After we finished our research on the raid, we then studied how other historical wargames used games as a medium to convey history.

We can see from the responses of these two students, both of whom worked on teams with games featured in the exhibition, that some students, like Sarah did demonstrate critical media literacies in games. These students left the course having experienced some elements of transformation, while other students like Matthew describe an experience that is more focused on the informational. Both experiences of the course are valid and can be understood as successful. We can see evidence of these students' critical media literacies in their ability to articulate the self as politically situated in mediatized culture, their ability to communicate across differences, to

analyze games through a range of perspectives beyond the instrumentalist, and to design a game reflecting this critical understanding of the medium, thus also pushing the medium forward, or making use of the friction afforded by Tubman.

For other students who exhibited resistance throughout the course or developed less conventionally successful artifacts, we can still see value in their engagement despite their discomfort. We also see value in the engagement of the facilitators as co-learners, even—sometimes—in our own discomfort. To develop the type of deep inclusion in media literacy teaching we discuss in this project, the teacher must also become included, learning alongside the students, while also maintaining the responsibility to provide a classroom space in which everyone is welcomed.

Our own identities as white female co-facilitators affected the experience of the course for both ourselves and our students. We are intersectional in how we perceive and relate to our identities in areas of both privilege and oppression. There were multiple ways this showed up throughout the course, especially considering institutional and structural contexts. In terms of gender dynamics, our course was predominantly male and there were consistent themes around participation and resistance related to gender representation in our course. Even while attempting to engage in dialogue and encourage understanding of others' experiences, there was often sexist resistance from male class members to accept our experiences as women even as the co-facilitators. We often felt pulled towards advocacy facilitation due to these responses, even while we were attempting to be multipartial. Additionally, our white racial identity had an affect on the overall course experience, especially throughout the Harriet Tubman project. We hold privilege within that identity as the institution is predominantly white, despite the racial and ethnic diversity we had in our course. We were conscious of our racialized ways of knowing and potential unconscious biases while engaging in the Harriet Tubman project, and therefore may have projected more caution and sensitivity to the students around the subject matter than was perhaps needed and may have contributed to a lack of design risk-taking. In an awareness of our white identity, we worked to bring in readings and materials from Black perspectives and worked with Dr. Janell Hobson, a Black female scholar, who is an expert in Harriet Tubman's history. She came into the course as a guest lecturer and provided feedback on student work on the game designs in progress.

By centering our awareness of our identities and utilizing multipartial facilitation, we aimed to create a learning environment that was inclusive and supportive for all students, including our Black students. Utilizing dialogic pedagogy and multipartial facilitation allowed us to consistently process interactions within our class community throughout the course and gave space and a framework for us to interrupt harmful dynamics, slow down, and reflect as a class. We regularly reflected on and named the identity representation, and lack thereof, within our class community and dialogued about how that affected our experiences and interactions with one another. As facilitators, we were conscious of the labor being taken on by marginalized students and enacted power-balancing facilitation techniques to ensure all were a part of the dialogue and learning process. That being said, we acknowledge our limitations and our inability to fully prevent harm to any students within our class as well as the role of institutional and structural power dynamics present in the class which we have reflected on (Corron & Rouse, 2022).

Looking back, we see how bringing Tubman into our course functioned as a generative catalyst, pushing many "buttons" in the field in meaningful ways (see Figure 3).

In conclusion, through dialogue we ultimately increased the capacity of everyone in the course, students and co-facilitators, to engage in an uncomfortable design process, to critically examine games, and create a deep understanding of ourselves and others.

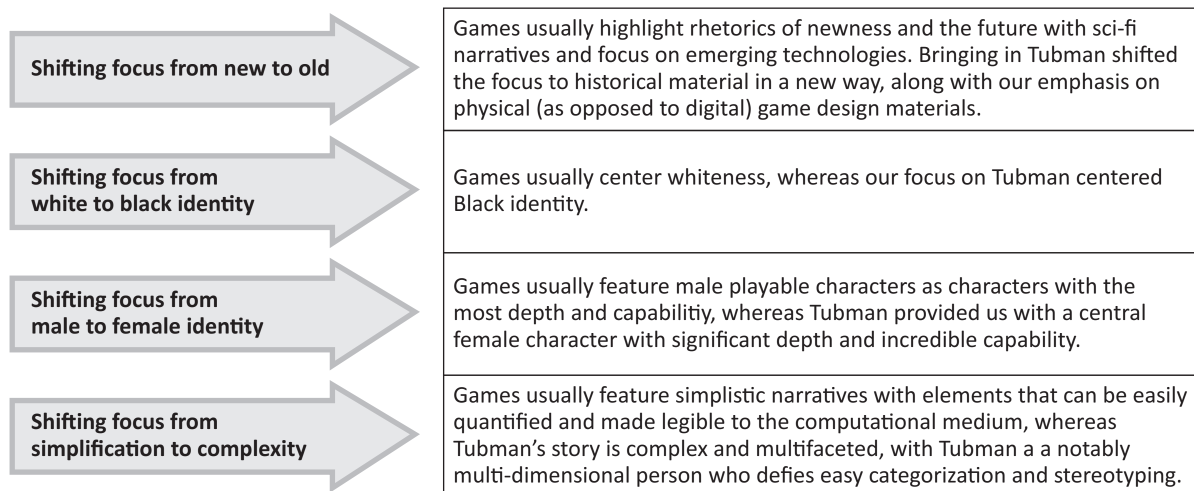


Figure 3. A series of powerful shifts, enabled by Tubman as a catalyst, in our games classroom.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Article

Digital Rights, Institutionalised Youths, and Contexts of Inequalities

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Abstract
In this article, we aim to discuss digital rights and media literacy in the context of socio-digital inequalities experienced by institutionalised youths. In the case of these digitally disconnected youths in detention centres, there is evidence of multiple life-course disadvantages that will resonate throughout their future lives. They see their present and future lives deeply challenged by the fast pace of technological innovation and its social impacts while living in environments that we see as digital deserts. The data we bring to the discussion results from the Portuguese participatory project DiCi-Educa. We worked for three years with institutionalised youth on digital media production and critical thinking regarding digital citizenship, participation, and otherness issues. This article is organised around two research questions: What were youths' practices regarding media and digital environments before institutionalisation? How did they discuss these digital environments and their digital rights during the project? Early findings point to (a) the importance of implementing critical methods to help them to think about technologies in diverse daily life contexts, (b) the need to provide venues for institutionalised youth to build critical thinking and communication skills, and (c) the necessity to widen their worldviews and promote positive behaviours.

Keywords
detention centres; DiCi-Educa; digital citizenship; digital disadvantage; digital disconnection; digital divide; digital rights; institutionalised youth; juvenile delinquency; youth-at-risk

Issue
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1. Introduction

Institutionalised youth who are deprived of physical liberty, digital autonomy, and internet access face problems that challenge their digital rights in their present and future lives. This article builds on data collected in the participatory project DiCi-Educa, held in Portugal. The project is anchored in digital workshops with institutionalised youth who do not have access to digital media or the internet, except in particular situations and with adults' close supervision. The research focuses on youth living in detention centres (in Portugal, these institutions are called educational centres, and hereinafter we refer to them as ECs). Using a participatory action research methodology, we stimulated the youths to widen their worldviews and reflect on their digital rights and acts of participation. We used digital media production and critical thinking regarding issues such as digital citizenship, participation, and otherness.

We will shed light on the discussion surrounding digital rights and media literacy departing from the context of socio-digital inequalities (Helsper, 2021). We will bear in mind critical and collaborative approaches to media literacy education to empower youths in the creation of their own media texts and narratives (Kellner & Share, 2007).

We argue that the response to these digital disadvantages faced by institutionalised youth would benefit from a deeper consideration of digital access and rights, adopting a more collaborative and co-deliberative educational approach. These youngsters see their present and future lives deeply challenged by the acceleration

of technological innovation and the increasingly related social inequities.

For three years, we worked with 48 institutionalised youth on two levels: (a) digital media production and (b) critical thinking, as part of a critical media literacy approach. We addressed digital citizenship topics, namely online and digital rights, participation, and otherness, with interconnections with how they receive, process, and create their own media narratives (Kellner & Share, 2007). DiCi-Educa recognises that social and digital inequalities are indissociable, and its work concerns social groups that can easily be left behind. The project focuses on reducing inequalities by developing critical, communicative, and digital competencies to achieve tangible outcomes (media production of photography, podcast, and videos) that can benefit these youths' everyday lives in the EC.

Given this, two research questions guide our analysis and discussion:

> RQ1: What were youths' practices regarding media and digital environments before institutionalisation?
>
> RQ2: How did they discuss these digital environments and their digital rights during the project?

These questions will guide our analysis in multiple dimensions, including their experiences before the ECs and their reflections during the research project. We used a holistic approach, followed a triangulation-inspired methodology, used complementary data sources and data collection techniques, and pursued continuous reflection on the data. We will not only reinforce the youths' voices but also bring their views on digital contexts (before and during life at the ECs) into the discussion; this entails hearing the perspectives of the professional staff who work at the ECs. These informants were key to helping us to understand the youth's contexts.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Digital Inequalities

Considering the ample context of living on the margins, societal and digital scopes of promoting and protecting digital rights cannot be overlooked (Helsper & Reisdorf, 2017; Lim & Suhaila, 2021). We chose the concept of digital inequalities as it considers the layers that go beyond simply distinguishing those who have access and those who do not (first layer or level of digital disadvantage). It urges us to look deeper into youths' socio-digital resources and opportunities as temporally relative (Helsper, 2017). The second layer of digital inequalities concerns how access is translated into skills, uses, and participation. The third layer or level refers to the outcomes and benefits one can achieve from succeeding in the first and second levels (Helsper, 2021; Massimo, 2018). In this case, we have to consider that these youths are at a different level of disadvantage compared to other individuals and contexts (Helsper, 2017). Thus, we look at the causes of these digital inequalities "as either coming from macro-level structural constraints which lead to inequalities between socio-economic and cultural groups or deriving from individual micro-individual level factors such as personality and skills" (Helsper, 2017, p. 2). We opted to use the concept of digital disadvantage over digital exclusion, in line with the proposal of Helsper (2021) in which "'disadvantage' suggests a more agentic, dynamic process where persons and organisations in different positions can overcome inequalities through action" (Helsper, 2021, p. 8).

We live in a time where a diverse range of media is omnipresent, escalating the digitisation and datafication of our everyday lives. The reconfiguration of human and digital rights needs to incorporate the increasing digitisation of youths' living environments. This assumes particular significance when considering institutionalised youths who are kept aside from digital possibilities because ECs privilege youths' security. In this case, we could argue that the lack of attention to digital rights (e.g., access, use, acquisition of skills, and benefits) also challenges the right to (media) education. This happens primarily because digital technologies and the internet play a key role in their lives as learners and citizens.

As Buckingham (2021, para. 2) states, "the ability to critically evaluate media, and to understand the broader social, political and economic dimensions of communication, is surely a basic prerequisite for informed citizenship." In the same line of thinking, Black and Cap (2016, p. 2214) emphasise another dimension: "Rather than shy away from topical, important and difficult human rights themes, we recommend that educators…address them with all the benefits in mind."

The digital inequalities these youths face are exacerbated by the rapid pace of technological change and are embedded in deep social inequalities (Reisdorf & Jewkes, 2016; Underwood et al., 2013; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014). Research in different countries highlights digital disadvantage as a central component of social inequalities (Reisdorf & Rhinesmith, 2020) and demonstrates a strong link between children and youth's offline vulnerability and risky digital experiences (El Asam & Katz, 2018; Helsper & Reisdorf, 2017; Lim et al., 2012; Reisdorf & DeCook, 2022; Stevens et al., 2017). Thus, intervention should be applied to prevent the use of the internet and social media as a way to return to risky and criminal behaviours (Bulger & Burton, 2020; Lim et al., 2013). Critical media literacy and participatory media projects can help these youths succeed in an increasingly digital society. The main point is that these educational approaches must take a critical model in which youth have access to inclusive educational content that presents forms to widen their views of the world and, at the same time, raise awareness about the risks and opportunities that may come with it (Lim et al., 2013).

2.2. Digital Freedoms at Stake

Participation rights are highly challenged by the digital provision driver (Covid-19) and the protection surveillance policies in place at the ECs (security concern). In the context of these rights, we include freedom to access information, freedom to have an opinion, and freedom to express it, as shaped in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, Articles 12 and 13) and applied to digital environments since February 2021 (United Nations, 2021). Historically, rights have always depended on the social context in which citizens live: "rights depend on making (and now, in digital environments, remaking) discursive claims in particular contexts rather than constituting pre-given and universally recognised fact" (Livingstone & Third, 2017, p. 11).

As Vissenberg and d'Haenens (2020) uphold, digital rights are better perceived and incorporated in contexts of access and use, rich social exchange, and collaborative knowledge. In the case of these institutionalised youths, their digital experiences before the ECs align with the results from the latest national survey carried out by EU Kids Online (Ponte & Batista, 2019).

Non-formal educational proposals and participatory media projects can be the best options to better tackle digital rights (Ravenscroft et al., 2020). Pedagogical practices grounded on technology use can improve capabilities such as collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking (Moreira & Dias-Trindade, 2020). Bermejo-Berros (2021) emphasises the essential encouragement of dialogue and audiovisual products as educommunicative models for media competence and critical thinking. Educommunicative research—at the intersection of communication and education (Bermejo-Berros, 2021)—promotes better communication competencies and the enhancement of personal competencies for autonomy, creativity, critical attitudes, and social participation. Critical dialogue (Bermejo-Berros, 2021; Ravenscroft, 2011; Ravenscroft et al., 2020) favours a dialectical perspective on work with different communities.

3. Methodological Context

DiCi-Educa (funded by Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian and Academias do Conhecimento) is a digital media production, critical media literacy, and digital rights-based project. Its implementation was firstly authorised by the national Directorate-General of Reintegration and Prison Services, which became a partner in the project, and then approved by each EC. The ethical protocol and procedures were an ongoing reflexive work across the project to tackle changing conditions (e.g., Covid-19), the specificities of the ECs, the youths, and field constraints. The ECs decided to recruit the youths, taking into account the goals of the project and the youths' needs. The project followed the ethical research guidelines used in Portugal. Having obtained the consent of the Directorate-General of Reintegration and Prison Services and the ECs as the youngsters' guardians, the youths also had to assent to participate in the project. They were also informed that they could withdraw at any time. For security reasons, the implementation of DiCi-Educa followed the ECs security protocol. As a result, we planned to consider that these youths would engage in critical debates on issues regarding the internet, social media, and the overall digital landscape from a disadvantaged point of view in which they were deprived of internet access. Between March 2018 and April 2021, 48 participants aged between 12 and 17 years, 44 boys and four girls, participated in DiCi-Educa. The low number of girls participating in one group does not allow us to address gender differences in this research. Most youths have a history of dropping out on their academic record (more details in Section 3.4). They come from families with low educational, social, and economic conditions and have precarious professional situations (a large majority worked in the cleaning and construction sectors). Five of the youths' mothers and three of their fathers were illiterate, nearly a third of the mothers were unemployed, and three fathers and three mothers were imprisoned. Almost half of the youths were already in the institutional system, namely in children's homes, before the ECs.

3.1. Methodological Design Justification

Different sorts of data and complementarity of methods were applied to gain a broader understanding of the participants, their subjectivities and complexities, and to ensure the quality of our interpretation and analysis of the data. To analyse and interpret the empirical data, we privileged thematic analysis. We began by organising data to fit codes driven by the research questions. This enabled us to get a panoramic view of the topics. After that, with more refined readings and reflection on the codes, we reached a more inductive, complete, unbiased look at emerging themes.

Both research questions depart from discussions that were recurrent during the workshops. What their life was like before the EC, and what their life was like in the EC. They often gave some clues about their family contexts and connection to crime. Although the activities in the workshops did not ignore this, they remained centred on the digital realm, rights related to those environments, and the balance between opportunities and risks.

The complexity of the context and the constraints described in this article demand a triangulation methodology, using complementary data sources. We privilege the youths' perspectives, but in some cases, the inclusion of the staff's views clarifies the understanding and interpretation of the data. Sections 4.1 and 4.2 address RQ1 and RQ2.

3.2. Workshops Details

DiCi-Educa paid attention to the group's singularities. The fieldwork was based on thematic and technical

workshops involving the institutionalised youths (six groups and a minimum of 25 hours per group) in three ECs. The locations and names of the ECs will not be disclosed for ethical reasons. We will refer to them as EC1, EC2, and EC3. EC1 targeted both sexes; ECs 2 and 3, only boys. The training involved the collaboration of the DiCi-Educa multidisciplinary research team (education, psychology, sociology, journalism, and communication) composed of five researchers and two consultants. The workshops used a bottom-up participatory approach, meaning that all the work was prepared and revised to meet the youths' needs identified by the ECs in the online questionnaires and during the workshops.

The workshops promoted critical thinking and making in a very dialogical and hands-on fashion. The subjects of the thematic workshops covered digital citizenship, being online, digital rights participation, and otherness. The technical workshops offered theories on the making of photography, podcasts, and 360 videos.

The youths explored digital equipment and its possibilities to create media products such as videos, photographs, and podcasts emulating radio programmes. To the ECs, the project offered access to high-quality equipment with digital cameras, 360 cameras and accessories, headsets, laptops, and media production software.

At the end of the workshops, we opened space to have a feedback session with the youths so that they could share their experience of the project. They were also invited to play a board game (Castro & Brites, 2021) produced for research and validated with other research groups beforehand. The game's main goal is to foster a balanced "onlife" (Floridi, 2015, p. 1). The game recognises the entanglement of our physical and digital worlds. It builds on activities that relate to well-being in digital and offline life (e.g., breathing exercises, health facts, what should be done to solve digital problems, or what the players know about more technical subjects, namely the internet of things, algorithms, and cookies).

3.3. Ambassadors

During the project, we continuously revised the training content and strategies to meet the influx of youths and their specificities, interests, and needs (e.g., privileging more dialogical daily life examples and audiovisual content). From the third to the fifth group, we had youths who returned to repeat the workshops of their own volition. These youngsters had their contributions credited as authors in the workshop's contents following their wish to see their names on the first PowerPoint slide along with the names of the research team; this was fair, and it recognised their involvement. We believe this involvement resulted from the stimulating and balanced informal environment we were able to provide in an institution with stringent rules. The opportunity to use digital technologies was an added value to keep them excited about the project. We gave them an active role in peer-to-peer education and their involvement in the process as active participants (Higgins et al., 2007). This illustrates the positive impact the experience had on their daily lives. We observed their progress as they revealed more elaborated arguments, informed reasoning, and leadership competencies in the tasks. This was the most rewarding achievement of the project. For this reason, the project continues due to the positive feedback from the staff (EC2, Focus Group 2 [FG2]) and the youth (field notes EC1, EC2, and EC3), and considering that there is a continual flow of youths through the ECs.

3.4. Sample and Data Collection Details

During the DiCi-Educa lifecycle, we collected data from the youths and the staff in three ECs. We began by collecting youths' data using two online semi-open questionnaires with closed and open questions. These questionnaires were applied before and after the workshops. During the workshops, we collected data from participant observations and field notes on the perspectives they shared during the workshops. The media products they envisioned and made, as well as their reflexive processes, were also registered in the field notes and participatory action research dimensions. At the end of the project, we collected data using a final semi-open questionnaire.

The questionnaires were answered online using Google Forms with a duration of 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the cognitive profile of the participant. The online questionnaires were applied outside the workshops, and the ECs' staff assisted in this data collection. The data collected from participant observation was captured by the researchers during the workshops. The initial online questionnaire aimed to collect information about demographics and socioeconomic status (Part I) and their perspectives and uses related to themes that were developed during the project (Part II). For ethical reasons, Part I of the questionnaire was separated from the second part. This first part was filled out by the staff with the institutional information. This decision was implemented to avoid feelings of stigmatisation, namely, information about the participants' demographics and family contexts, such as their family education, parents' job situation, if their parents had ever been imprisoned, and their marital status, as well as and particular demographics about the youths. The first part of the questionnaire was also filled out separately so that we could not establish any correlation between parts I and II and the participants. This measure ensured complete anonymity. The second part of the online questionnaire covered their digital experiences (what devices, frequency of use, kinds of use) and self-reported digital competencies (acquisition of skills, with whom, skills to search for news, participation, self-expression, content creation). After the workshops, the final questionnaire had two sections: one about self-reported digital competencies and the other for the project's feedback (with no collection of demographics or socio-economic status details).

The data collected with the staff began in our first contact with the ECs' through focus groups. These sessions helped us to obtain a context-based view of the institutions and the youngsters' lives. For the staff's data collection, we did six 50–60-minute focus groups (FG). These were held at the beginning and end of the project with 12 professionals from areas such as education, psychology, and social work. Other data collection came from participant observation and field notes taken during the workshops. The data is organised into around 80 text pages. The researchers made the focus groups' transcriptions.

As was the case with the youths, the staff involved in DiCi-Educa were selected by each EC, considering their professional profile, their work with the youths, and the digital competencies required to give continuity to the project afterwards. It is essential to add that, despite the goodwill of the staff, the ECs suffer from a scarcity of human and digital resources, so participation was not as regular as they/we would have wished.

During the workshops, we had at least two researchers switch roles to conduct the session and register observation notes on paper. For the whole data collection and subsequent analysis, at least two researchers were actively engaged in the tasks.

3.5. Covid-19 Implications

DiCi-Educa was temporarily interrupted in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its lockdowns. This situation changed the internet usage at the ECs as they were unable to maintain their state of almost total digital disconnection and were forced to adjust to a new digital reality. The digital medium was the bridge to remote schooling and communication with the family. These uses always happen under adult supervision for security and protection reasons. Covid-19 also impacted the continuity of the project's implementation. The first five workshops took place on-site, in-person, and outside an internet connection context. The sixth workshop happened during the lockdown, and for this reason, it was entirely remote and online, with an impact on the bonds and social proximity we were used to creating with the youngsters.

This change implied making some adjustments before the workshops. For instance, the EC staff became our hands, and we had to give them training beforehand so they could operate the digital equipment and support the youths during the technical workshops. With this final group, we faced technical difficulties regarding sound and broadband connection. The group was seated around one computer. This impacted the development of the debates, their sharing of views, and the collection of data.

4. Analysis

Considering the context presented here, the societal and digital scopes of promoting and protecting digital rights cannot be forgotten. This article aims to reflect on that complexity by looking at how institutionalised youths deal with digital environments and how their digital reality before and during institutionalisation can impact their digital rights. To answer our research questions and to deeply reflect on the insufficiency of only considering digital and internet access to exercise digital rights, we organised this section around two topics: digital attitudes and practices before institutionalisation, and digital access and digital rights in the ECs.

4.1. Digital Practices Before Institutionalisation

As previously stated, digital rights are better perceived in contexts of access and use. However, access per se does not guarantee the climbing of the digital ladder of opportunities and benefits, nor does it ensure the full exercise of digital rights. According to the youths' own answers collected in the initial questionnaires on their digital autonomy, access, and uses before the EC, four trends stand out:

1. Their media habits revolve around the daily use of the internet on their smartphones and watching television (in this order and with over 90%). The internet and the smartphone are the preferred means to hang out and stay in touch with friends and family, serving the needs of a digital nomad generation, which also shows less interest in searching for news online.
2. Very few respondents ever used a digital book or a kindle, and half had never read a physical newspaper. Only three youths mentioned the habit of reading print newspapers before being institutionalised. As we highlighted above, the online environments were always at the top.
3. More than half used to listen to the radio.
4. A quarter had never used a computer/laptop before the EC, which clearly points to digital inequalities that transcend the digital context.

The field notes pointed to similar results about habits before the EC, cross-checking what was collected in the questionnaires. Most of the digital activities were related to online gaming (including games such as Grand Theft Auto [GTA], a very popular open-world action game in which players assume the role of criminals: "We all played GTA before the EC, although it is not for our age," boy, EC2 field notes), illegal downloading ("in the past, it was easier to download videos from YouTube," boy, EC1 field notes), and consuming habits, namely shopping online, listening to music, watching movies online, and using social media. Almost all respondents considered that digital media facilitated communication. Besides social media, videos and other digital environments (e.g., gaming communities) were among the most suitable means of self-expression, even if they sometimes showed inappropriate content. This is echoed in

youths' accounts. One boy (EC2) shared that he had "posted a video online and couldn't get it down," another talked about a video posted on Instagram where "someone kicks a dog" (EC1 field notes), and a third one mentioned having filmed and posted a video on Instagram about "a girl being racist" (EC3 field notes). In the questionnaires, a quarter of the youths in DiCi-Educa indicated they had created false profiles and offended other people online. These results match the research that addresses how youths cope with fragile access to digital devices in low-income areas (Brites & Ponte, 2018).

4.1.1. Multiple Levels of Life-Course Disadvantages

The multiple levels of life-course disadvantages that start even before institutionalisation point to these media and digital disadvantages experienced by these youths. In situations of institutionalisation, internet access is poor, digital rights lose prominence, and youths turn to old media—allowed in slots during the day, namely television, radio, and newspapers—for information and entertainment purposes. Often, among different channels, they choose a tabloid television news channel to watch the news. The vulnerability faced in their daily context (social, economic, cultural, and personal) has implications for what they do in the digital realm, demonstrating that it is "difficult to escape a situation of disadvantage" (Helsper, 2021, p. 181) that has to do with the second level (skills and engagement) and third level (benefits) of socio-digital disadvantage.

Nevertheless, a sign of the alleviation of digital inequalities comes from the youths' recognition (both in the initial questionnaires and in the field notes) of the internet and its potential (which relates to outcomes that come with the third level of digital disadvantage explained before) to improve their living conditions. They identified as an added value using the internet for searching for job opportunities, health information, or academic purposes, and half of them for reading news online (initial questionnaire). On the question related to news consumption, their answers emphasised searching for news on diverse online platforms, followed by television. Their news interests focus on local news, sports, crime, justice, security, and *fait divers*, whereas political news, economy and business, arts, and science and technology are considered dull.

In the case of these institutionalised youths, there is an evident lack of social support (parental and school mediation). More than 80% stated that they learned to use digital media alone or with friends; few mentioned their parents. This idea was often confirmed during the workshops, where they self-reported being more technology savvy when compared to the adults in the family (EC1 field notes).

However, socio-digital disadvantages must be analysed deeper and beyond the division have–have not (first digital level). At one point, a staff member gave some context to help understand how digital is valued by the youngsters and shared the case of one boy with a cognitive impairment who does not own a smartphone but knows everything there is to know about it (Professional 2, EC2). This episode substantiates the power these cultural objects have and how they communicate a collective understanding while, at the same time, they mirror the modern technological way of life (du Gay et al., 1997). Youths' views on digital participation (the second level of digital disadvantage) boil down to giving their opinion on social media and YouTube channels. They see these as positive channels for interacting and talking "with my mother who lives in another country," says a boy. Another shared that he helped his grandmother "use the webcam" (EC2 field notes). None indicated participating, for instance, in an online forum to express their opinion or sign an online petition. The least identified digital activities were related to politics and online campaigns (initial questionnaire).

The subjectivities of these youths' socio-digital disadvantages are central to understanding how other vulnerabilities interconnect towards preparing adequate responses. This is evidenced by both youths and staff. In one focus group, the staff discussed that these youths need to be prepared to build their confidence and resilience by overcoming small challenges because "they are frightened by the idea of failing in front of their peers" (Professional 1, EC3 FG). As Lim and Suhaila (2021) indicate, their developmental stage is marked by the accentuated need for peer acceptance and identity construction. Thus, they need to be constantly encouraged to follow new (positive) challenges (EC1, EC2, and EC3 FGs and field notes): "These kids didn't have many opportunities, so nobody stops them when they do. I think the project has this dimension of providing discovery" (Professional 3, EC3 FG).

Youths' digital proficiency is also disclosed in the initial focus group with EC staff. As all of them agreed that about half of the institutionalised youths do not possess the expected critical, social, creative, or even technical digital skills: "They don't have as many skills as all that…for them, photography is simply using the smartphone" (Professional 1, EC3 FG).

4.2. Digital Contexts of Access and Rights in Institutionalised Disconnected Settings

In the previous subsection, we reflected on these youngsters' practices in their everyday digital routines before institutionalisation, using the voices of the youths and the views of the staff to give consistency to our analysis. The picture may or may not be influenced by their life trajectories, but we cannot disregard it. Consequently, there is a regression of rights. This reinforces our argument that institutionalised youths who are digitally disconnected while in the ECs fall back to the first level of digital inequality. They face these constraints to their digital rights along with the multiple inequalities they face in their lives. So, it could be asked how their situation

can be improved while they are institutionalised and on the path toward acquiring their digital rights. In this section, we will shed light on this reflection using the data and discussions of the DiCi-Educa project and processes of co-deliberation and collaboration.

4.2.1. Digital-Deserted Environments

As we pointed out before, the ECs face technological difficulties because these institutions are themselves taking small steps to climb the ladder of digital opportunities: They have poor internet connections and lack digital human resources and up-to-date technical resources, which are crucial to taking full advantage of digital opportunities and rights as well as developing digital skills and literacies. These difficulties impact youths' quality of internet access and, consequently, their digital rights. During the project, we faced several technical impediments working with the ECs' laptops during the on-site workshops and using an unstable internet connection for the online workshops. This situation was highlighted by the staff and by the institutionalised youths.

Regarding the internet, the youths and the ECs' staff consistently demonstrated their (a) preoccupation with safety and (b) the need for better media and digital infrastructures. This reveals ambivalence and tension between security and freedom to use the internet autonomously, challenging both online safety and digital rights. The staff predict that as youngsters are increasingly online, aggressions and convictions of youths involving actions in the digital realm will rise in the future. This concern was present in the focus groups and the field notes: "I want to reinforce the security issue and the need to use technologies safely. We don't yet have any situation related to digital crimes yet, but I believe this will soon change, either as aggressors or as victims" (Professional 3, EC2 FG). This account is relevant as it may justify the digital protective measures in the EC by anticipating future problems that may arise in digital environments, which from their point of view, represent a medium with increased potential for crime. In this case, DiCi-Educa was perceived as a preventive opportunity to learn about internet-related risks and how to deal with the internet, which primarily prioritised safety. However, this comes at the expense of disregarding opportunities for the youths to exercise their digital rights and develop digital citizenship skills.

From life before the EC, youths particularly miss having access to their smartphones and online games (EC3 field notes). Focusing on youths' voices regarding digital environments, rights, and challenges, we argue they would benefit from better digital conditions at the ECs. However, most of all, they would benefit from a more profound, co-deliberative, and collaborative approach to their digital environments and rights. In line with the ECs' cultures, there was a constant balance between promoting a co-collaborative and deliberative position in the project and the need to ensure the ECs' security. The workshops took place in a dialogical and co-collaborative environment. Thus, the ambivalence between internet access vs. security was a recurrent topic raised by the youths and staff. Some of the issues brought into the discussion were, for instance, fake news, 21st-century competencies, or acts of digital venues for participation. Despite the youths' limited options to take advantage of digital opportunities, they proclaimed themselves "digital natives," a benefit related to being born with the internet. As one boy observes: "Even small children know how to operate them [devices]" (EC1 field notes). But, above all, these were enriching opportunities to discuss internet access inside the ECs, in particular digital autonomy vs. safe behaviours and security. Interestingly, along with the conversations, the youths could understand arguments to support both sides of the argumentation. They recognised the importance of having a set of rules to guarantee both their digital rights and the ECs' security, namely having a limited time of use per day, using software to prevent illegal downloading, and supervision (EC2 field notes). However, these fruitful discussions with our mediation were interrupted because of the pandemic.

4.2.2. "Internet as a Right? Is That True?" They Asked

During the thematic workshops, we perceived that, for these youngsters, the concept and the relevance of digital rights were not always easy to understand (compared to human rights). They were not always aware of their digital rights, being sceptical about considering internet access as a right. Thus, we began the discussion by bringing definitions built by other youngsters through the 5Rights Foundation as a starting point. In this regard, the discussion was inspirational. They paid particular attention to the right to remove online information aligned with previous accounts. However, when confronted with the implications of digital reputation and digital footprint, they expressed some concerns and fears of losing, for instance, job opportunities if a future employer checks their social media accounts: "I will never get a job, then," stated a boy (EC2), or as a girl added one might "suffer the consequences of a photo posted online" (EC1). They also ignore settings related to privacy and personal information storage on social media or the possibility that someone might save what they post online even if they erase it (EC1, EC2, and EC3 field notes).

Furthermore, as a result of their reflections, youths feel that they lack technical knowledge and a place to learn about it (EC1, EC2, and EC3 field notes and initial questionnaires). This lack of social support may explain why they typically learn using the internet and devices autonomously or with their peer group instead of drawing on their parents. By social support, we refer to the parental and school mediation that is also pivotal in the second level of digital disadvantage to facilitate the acquisition of skills and to take full advantage of the digital medium. They also demonstrated a deficit in terms of digital vocabulary and literacy. When playing the board

game during the feedback session (EC3 field notes), and although the board game (see Figure 1) was a joyful moment, it was likewise another piece of the puzzle to support our analysis. To complete the tasks and move forward in the game, they had to make decisions based on given problematic situations (e.g., online gaming addiction, mediation, digital bullying, and online privacy), but they also had to understand what geolocalisation, the internet of things, cookies, algorithms, and the filter bubble effect are.

Discussions around risk and risky behaviours often arose explicitly and implicitly in the workshops. For the youths, the virtual world, as they often call it, is associated with words like "destruction, pollution, and sadness," and the dystopian future lack of technology access is linked with "poverty," negative behaviours, such as "cyberbullying" and "loneliness" (EC2 and EC3 field notes). They also reported on moral panics, internet challenges, and hoaxes when talking of high-profile phenomena like "MOMO" and "blue whale," and they talked about illegal downloading; yet few youths mentioned taking careful consideration of friendship/followers' requests; in fact, in their own words, social media "are an addiction" (EC1 field notes).

4.2.3. Hands-On Activities, Facilitating Learning

One of the most rewarding parts of the research process was the practical side of the project and the hands-on approach because this was a vivid experience and the most welcomed part for the youths. All the media products created included reflections (decided by them) about their past, present, and future life. So, this was a means to critically place themselves at the centre of their own lives and express their thoughts, regrets, hopes, and dreams through the media. Three boys (EC1 and EC2) and a girl (EC1) pointed out that "DiCi" made them reframe what they wanted to do in the future.

The hands-on tactic of learning by doing was an approach that allowed the youths to open up on these sensitive topics in a relaxed yet secure environment. They had the opportunity to work on 360 videos, digital photography, podcasts (content production and technical editing), and music/lyric production. This article offers examples from the photovoice approach and music production.

The digital photography sessions captured their attention easily and motivated them to action. Very few participants had ever used a camera like the ones employed in the project. They were more familiar with taking pictures just using their mobile phone. Very few understood composition rules or believed that photography could allow them to express feelings and perspectives (EC1, EC2, and EC3 field notes and initial questionnaires). They were challenged to document their everyday lives in the EC with pictures. The three pictures depicted here illustrate that. Some of these pictures (e.g., Figures 2 and 3) allowed them to look at details

Figure 1. Boardgame. Source: Photo taken by an institutionalised youth.

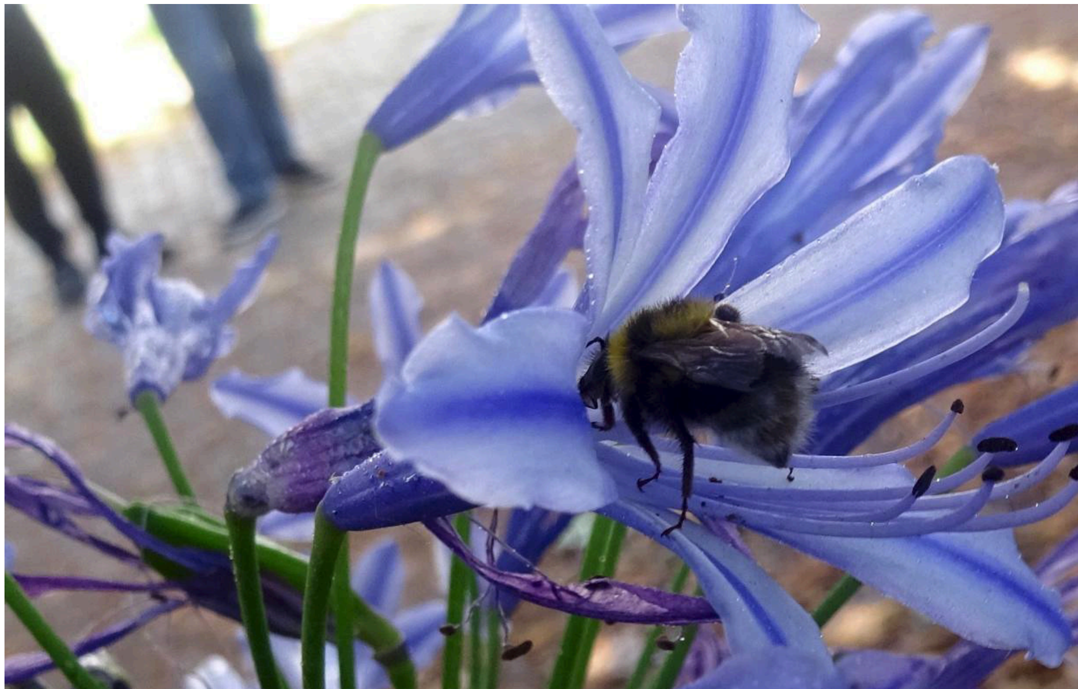


Figure 2. Nature at the EC. Source: Photo taken by an institutionalised youth.

that used to go unnoticed. The photographs revealed a high standard of technical and compositional quality. In cases where that did not happen (for instance, with youth with cognitive impairments), we still could find a strong message in the pictures. The use of the cameras also enhanced their organisational and collaborative skills. From the point of view of digital expression, this was one of the most exciting parts of the workshops, as they told us in the feedback session (EC1, EC2, and EC3 field notes).

Figure 3. The idea of freedom. Source: Photo taken by an institutionalised youth.

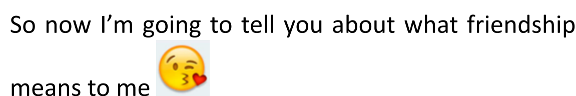
Having taken the pictures, all the groups were challenged to collaboratively edit and select the best photos, paying attention to critical and technical aspects. They organised and categorised the pictures by themselves into the following categories: friendship/companionship, nature, self-portraits, and freedom. Some pictures represented moments of friendship, daily tasks, how they see their friends, or their gaze to capture the life happening beyond the walls. The process of taking photographs demanded creativity and self-expression. In the final questionnaires, when asked about the best tools to express themselves, they put video in first place, followed by photography, and in third place podcasts, and only then came social media.

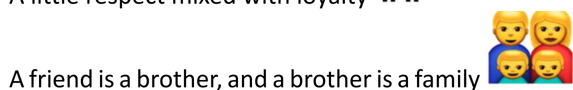
Music production was also a very powerful, creative, and critical media production process in which the youths took advantage of the different skills in the group. The lyrics they wrote for the project strongly reflect their present and future life contexts, such as the example we share below.

Through media production, they voiced their feelings about their lives before the EC (e.g., about their family, deviant or risky behaviours, and drug consumption) and about their plans and dreams for the future. One of the groups had previous experience writing, producing, and publishing music on YouTube. They saw it as a form of civic participation: "I write about what goes on in my mind. I write for me and for others" (boy, EC2 field notes).

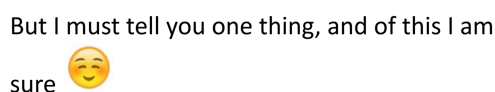
The following excerpt (DiCi-Educa Rap) is one of the lyrics produced for DiCi-Educa. We translated the lyrics from Portuguese, but we kept the emojis they inserted in the lyrics, which resembles how these younger generations talk in chats. This music talks about the strength of friendship ties, in which a friend can be like family. To keep this relationship solid, respect and loyalty are central requirements for nurturing that bond:

So now I'm going to tell you about what friendship

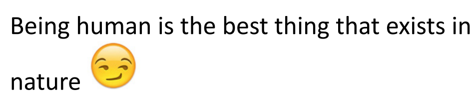




But I must tell you one thing, and of this I am



Being human is the best thing that exists in



4.2.4. Changes Imposed by Covid-19

Given what we said about Covid-19, it is not surprising that the ECs had to let the youths use the internet. All communications with families and schools became digital by default (provision). Still, as previously stated, these uses are limited and fall under the EC's surveillance (protection), meaning the youths' digital autonomy (Pasquier, 2008) is not straightforward.

The youths' deprivation of digital media and the internet is not recent in Portuguese ECs. However, the Covid-19 pandemic also brought about winds of (digital) change. Before the pandemic, internet access was reduced to specific situations: when required for academic tasks, school applications, and communication with parents who lived abroad, and, in all cases, supervised by the EC staff. In the staff's view, concern regarding supervision and the lack of trust in letting the youngsters explore digital opportunities without adults' control is central in their narratives: "We can't get distracted. If we look away, they're already on Facebook or Instagram. We must control it. They are motivated by entertainment. If we try to introduce digital tools for other purposes, they are not so interested." (Professional 1, EC3 FG). This account also reveals a lack of understanding of the mediatised world in which children and youth are growing up and reinforces the generation (digital) gap.

5. Final Notes and Future Perspectives

This article is guided by two research questions (RQ1 and RQ2). Our findings indicate the diverse constraints these youths face before being institutionalised that can negatively impact their (digital) rights. Findings point to an interrelation of measures that need to be taken into account: (a) the need to provide venues for institutionalised youths to build critical and communication skills, (b) the necessity to widen their views of the world and promote positive behaviours, and (c) the importance of implementing critical methods to help them to think about technologies in diverse daily life contexts. Besides the debate around digital inequalities, digital rights (Helsper & Reisdorf, 2017; Lim & Suhaila, 2021; Livingstone & Third, 2017), and media education, the results we present are consistent and show evidence that can inform important stakeholders, the guardians of these youngsters, and policymakers in order to change these youths' future lives. The present is already digital and comes with challenges and complexities that all of us, researchers, citizens, teachers, and policymakers, need to reflect on, learn about, and act upon. Thus, these results are important for different stakeholders to take decisions about social and educational policies for these institutions and these youths with multiple levels of life-course disadvantage.

In line with the intersection of communication and education (Bermejo-Berros, 2021) to promote personal competencies for critical dialogue, creativity, critical

attitudes, and social participation, we focused our gaze on the antecedents that may explain socio-digital disadvantages and the contexts that, instead of tackling them, sometimes, for diverse reasons (as pointed out), make these youngsters' role as digital citizens of the 21st century more difficult.

The results highlight the digital response of these institutionalised youths as it widens their digital disadvantage (Helsper, 2021) and, because of this, it demands a more collaborative and co-deliberative educational model (Ravenscroft et al., 2020) that will provide deliberative and constructive environments. Moreover, youths and staff pointed to the need for school transformation to allow these subjects to be addressed with students. But this also implies having a powerful and flexible curriculum to catch the train of digital innovation with equally well-equipped digital and human resources.

The discussions about (a) the ECs' digitally disconnected life that leads to them being digital deserts, (b) the need to be a 21st-century digitally-competent citizen, and (c) the learning relevance of non-formal settings of education were often discussed with both the youth, and the staff at different points, and with both groups at the same time. These are constant and unsolved concerns, and their discussion reinforced the project.

Considering future research in this context, we can point to the need to, first, further longitudinal participatory research with institutionalised youths—This is one of the most evident conclusions of the project. The interests of the young participants were mostly related to its participatory dimension, enhancing the contextual dimension of their lives (Vissenberg & d'Haenens, 2020). Second, we also point to the need for further research, particularly addressing their (dis)connection with news environments, especially online (which is our current focus with the Foundation for Science and Technology-funded project YouNDigital—PTDC/COM-OUT/0243/2021). There is a lack of research about news consumption in institutions and its repercussions for democratic life. As we saw from the youths' answers to the initial questionnaires, they revealed very low interest in traditional news. However, they responded very well to the journalistic-oriented methodologies, namely taking photographs, recording podcasts based on radio shows, and thinking about their lives in a reflexive way, expressing themselves through music lyrics and photography. Further research could better inform how they make contact with the world and democracy, moving beyond traditional views.

Third, we point to the training delivered to the staff working with youths in the ECs. Fake news has become a central concern regarding its dissemination since the Covid-19 pandemic. This is an opportunity for training that needs to be addressed with these populations that work directly with the young people, most of them unskilled, to assist them in news and media literacy-related issues.

Nevertheless, training initiatives must be considered but may not be taken up by the ECs, which still privilege old media and are reluctant toward new media. As we used to say during the workshops, this DiCi-Educa approach is a small seed that needs to be nurtured in a complex and difficult environment. As we hope to have clarified, their lives face multiple challenges beyond the digital deserts in which they live. This kind of intervention benefits from a longitudinal follow-up. Despite the difficulties, we would highlight that the discussions over digital rights were long-lasting and valuable, along with the use of digital opportunities to make these youths' voices heard.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Beyond Digital Literacy in Australian Prisons: Theorizing "Network Literacy," Intersectionality, and Female Incarcerated Students

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Abstract
Incarcerated students, especially women and Indigenous Australians in custody, are among the most marginalized, oppressed, and invisible identities in Australian society today. These prison-based university students experience not only multi-layered disadvantages that derive from intersecting experiences of oppression, including race, gender, and class, but they are also further disadvantaged by the experience of incarceration itself, despite their attempts to improve their life chances and social positioning through distance education. This is partly due to the challenges of learning within prison environments, including disruptions, disparities, and disconnections in terms of access to digital technologies, digital literacies, and digital channels. The majority of Australian prisoners have no direct access to the internet, smartphones, or internet-enabled devices which means they are disconnected from social media and other networked communication platforms. Although significant gains have been made in developing and delivering prison-based non-networked digital devices, digital learning platforms and digital education to Australian incarcerated students over the past decade, more work must be done to adequately prepare incarcerated students, with multi-faceted needs, to live and learn as empowered agents within the informational capitalism of the contemporary "network society." The purpose of this article is to argue for a new form of "network literacy" education over and above "digital literacy" skills for female Australian incarcerated students, through an intersectional theoretical lens which addresses the multidimensional disadvantages experienced by women in custody within Australian prisons.

Keywords
Australia; digital literacy; incarcerated students; incarcerated women; intersectionality; network literacy; prison education

Issue
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1. Introduction

In the postmodern, *connected* world, made by social media and networked computers, one social group remains relatively isolated, invisible, and *dis*connected: prisoners (Bagaric et al., 2017; Jewkes & Johnston, 2009; Jewkes & Reisdorf, 2016; Pike & Hopkins, 2019). Despite the fact that the right of all prisoners to education is recognized under the UNESCO (1997) Hamburg Declaration, article 47, the multi-faceted educational needs of incarcerated women, in particular, are often overlooked (McVicar & Roy, 2022). Here in Australia, state and territory governments are responsible for providing education in prisons, yet there is a dearth of published and accessible research into the educational needs of incarcerated women, especially in regard to their experiences with digital media and communication technologies. Indeed, there is a lack of research into the literacy needs of Australians in custody overall, further complicated by a lack of consistency in the identification of literacy education gaps across the state, territories, and jurisdictions (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, 2022, p. 134). Corrections educators in Australia have acknowledged that after release, female ex-prisoners will need digital and other literacies not only to secure employment, welfare services, and housing but to "network with others" (House of Representatives Standing Committee on

Employment, Education and Training, 2022, p. 133). Yet, most Australian prisoners still have no access to *networked* computers, smartphones, or internet-enabled devices. Over the past decade, state corrective services have worked with Australian universities to improve incarcerated students' access to higher education including, in some centers, through non-networked, secure laptops, e-readers, and offline digital platforms (Farley & Hopkins, 2018, 2019; Hopkins & Farley, 2014). In particular, a regional Queensland university, in partnership with multiple correctional state jurisdictions has designed and delivered offline, adapted digital educational solutions using e-learning alternatives on preloaded, security-cleared offline laptops, thus working around the persistent lack of internet connectivity in Australian prisons (Farley & Hopkins, 2018, 2019; Hopkins & Farley, 2014). Such innovations have improved access and opportunities for digital literacy development within mainstream Australian prison populations (Farley & Hopkins, 2018, 2019; Hopkins & Farley, 2014). Further action research is needed, however, into improving the "*network* literacy" of Australian prison *sub*-populations, especially female and female Indigenous incarcerated distance education university students.

To further enhance the equity and empowerment of incarcerated students, it is necessary to move beyond basic digital literacy skills to facilitate the development of network literacies which will enable some of the most vulnerable and oppressed members of society to prepare for a post-release future in the rapidly evolving social media age. Where digital literacy has established a foothold in Australian prisons, it tends to focus on the mostly technical skills of typing and scrolling as well as reading uploaded texts and watching pre-recorded videos on stand-alone computers or tablets that are not connected to the internet. Yet, in a network society (Castells, 2000, 2004), wherein individuals, communities, and organizations are increasingly shaped by linked global and local information networks, a fully digitally literate person must also be prepared to navigate, evaluate, and influence the new forms of digital sociability, creativity, and (mis)representation circulated on social media platforms. If carceral citizens (the incarcerated and the formerly incarcerated) are to reclaim voice and agency in a society wherein new media communication networks are increasingly superseding face-to-face communication networks and relationships, then they will need reliable access to networking sites such as Facebook as well as email, instant messaging, and other forms of networked communication before, during, and after incarceration. If, in the context of the network society, the "flow of power" is superseded by the "power of flows" (Castells, 2000, as cited in Stalder, 2006, p. 128), then the typical Australian prison may be comparable to those "black holes of informational capitalism" wherein powerless populations are effectively bypassed or treated as "redundant" (Castells, 2000, as cited in Stalder, 2006, p. 131). Following Castell's definition of power, which operates more through informational exclusion rather than violent repression (Stalder, 2006), Australian prisoners and other populations effectively cut off from electronic information networks are perhaps the most socially excluded, marginalized, and powerless of all disadvantaged and low socio-economic communities (see also Jones & Guthrie, 2016, p. 1).

If, as Castells (2009, p. 125) has suggested, social media is more than an influential element of popular culture and an integral part of the "new public sphere," then it is also important to note that this digital place is not always a safe space, especially for women, Indigenous women, carceral citizens, and other vulnerable groups particularly exposed to intersectional disadvantage, discrimination, sexism, and racism both online and in the real world. Hence prison-based technology-focused teaching and learning must not only include resources and digital tools used for social networking but promote online safety and empowerment for vulnerable groups within education programs for the network society underpinned by intersectionality theory. Moreover, given that the inequitable operation of power is so central to today's new media ecology, and the data economy which underpins it, conceptual frameworks which acknowledge overlapping forms of discrimination are vitally important for understanding the educational needs of incarcerated students. Drawing on black feminist theory (Cho et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1989, 1995), this article, therefore, argues for the application of intersectionality as a conceptual framework and practical tool within the field of Australian corrections education, where it now engages digital pedagogies, to improve outcomes for female and female Indigenous incarcerated students. Just as the experience and rate of imprisonment in Australia are highly classed, gendered, and racialized, contemporary corrections education must be more than digital, it must be networked and differentiated. Specifically, it must be differentiated according to the intersecting, multifaceted educational experiences and needs of female and especially female Indigenous incarcerated students in the new media network society. As Hopkins (2021) and Hopkins and Ostini (2015, 2016) have argued, digital literacy education for vulnerable and marginalized women will need to include a focus on networked communication, including the potential harms of the social media age such as intimate surveillance, digital predation, and technology-facilitated gendered violence. Indeed, technological advancement generally, within the carceral context, must be critically examined through an intersectional lens because, as Kaun and Stiernstedt (2022) point out, it is typically the most vulnerable groups that tend to feel the most toxic and negative impacts of new technologies. As Kaun and Stiernstedt (2022) rightly suggest, it is erroneous to assume that all technological advancement is inherently positive, even and especially for carceral citizens. Moreover, a myriad of sociocultural factors and intersecting axes of difference including gender, race, age, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and class must

be taken into account when designing and delivering culturally appropriate, differentiated, digital literacy corrections education appropriate for negotiating the unequal network society. Critical digital literacy is not just about providing access and exposure to stand-alone computers or digital devices, it must address the complexities and contradictions of our socially constructed relationships and experiences with new communication technologies (Knight & Van De Steene, 2017). As Engstrom and Tinto (2008) noted, in the context of transitionary pedagogies for non-traditional university students, *access* to university, without adequate, specialized support is not necessarily the same as an *opportunity* for equity groups.

2. Theoretical Framework

Unlike the author's previous publications in the field of corrections education, this article is not based on data collected from serving prisoners engaged in digital literacy programs, but rather is a theoretical exploration of and argument for deploying the concept of intersectionality in designing new approaches to new media literacy education for the most marginalized of prison sub-populations, female and especially female Indigenous students. American civil rights attorney Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1995) developed the term "intersectionality" in her seminal article "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color" in order to explore interconnections of race and gender within the experiences of women of color in the American legal system. Famously employing the analogy of traffic in an intersection, Crenshaw (1995) observed the compounding harms black women may experience from multiple directions across both sex discrimination and race discrimination due to the ways race, gender, and class intersect or interact (see also Collins & Bilge, 2016). Moreover, even well-intended programs and interventions which do not directly address these intersecting vulnerabilities and compounding experiences of sexism, racism, classism, ableism, and other forms of systemic oppression may effectively continue to exclude and silence those positioned as different or disadvantaged (see also Crenshaw, 1989, 1995). Since emerging in the late 1980s, intersectionality as both a theoretical and methodological paradigm has continued to expand into different research disciplines and teaching approaches, effectively refocusing attention on how apparently neutral institutions and processes are often actually disproportionately harmful to women and women of color (Cho et al., 2013).

Although widely adopted in other feminist theorizations, especially by black feminist activists in the US, there has been relatively little attempt to apply this important concept to the digital literacy needs and new media experiences of Australian female and female Indigenous incarcerated students. Understanding overlapping vectors of oppression and discrimination is vitally important, however, to understanding the compounding vulnerabilities of the most marginalized of student populations before, during, and after incarceration. As Batastini et al. (2022, p. 931) have observed in their assessment of American interventions that address criminogenic risks: "There are perhaps few other groups that exemplify the existence of intersectionality more than those who are involved in the criminal justice system." Hence, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers must understand and address the compounding discrimination and "labeling barriers" experienced by such intersecting identities if they expect to improve the prosocial reintegration of prisoners and ex-prisoners (Batastini et al., 2022, p. 931). Similarly, in her exploration of prison violence in the US, Bell (2017) has applied intersectional criminology as an important tool for recognizing the differential impact of race/gender, including understanding why, for example, black women are disproportionately labeled as "disruptive" and placed in solitary confinement. An intersectional framework is also appropriate when assessing the educational needs of Australian prisoners because imprisonment in Australia is not only classed, gendered, and racialized but also intersects with axes of disability, sexualities, mental illness, ethnicity, and nationality. These disparities across multiple identities and social categorizations will also reflect and reproduce differences in terms of internet access, digital skills, and digital experiences. Moreover, as contemporary digital life is increasingly about building and maintaining social connections online, and supportive social relationships are also integral to teaching and learning, "digital literacy" inside (and outside) prisons must move beyond individualized, isolated study skill acquisition to include (safe) social networking experiences as part of a (connected) learning community.

As Bell (2017) has pointed out from the US, an intersectional approach to criminal justice which considers the impact of compound discriminations is vitally necessary in part because incarceration rates are increasing faster for women than for men and black women are incarcerated at rates three times higher than for white women. In Australia, Indigenous people account for 27% of the total prisoner population, with an incarceration rate more than 16 times higher than for non-Indigenous Australians (Jones & Guthrie, 2016, p. 1). Women in custody typically have poor employment histories, lower educational attainment, and lower literacy levels than the mainstream Australian population (Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland, 2019; see also Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2012; Bedford, 2007). On top of this, a high proportion has experienced poverty, homelessness, and sexual and domestic violence as well as other forms of gender-based oppression (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015; Phelan et al., 2020). Across the last decade, women have been entering the Australian prison system at a higher rate than men, with the greatest increase amongst women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021; Bartels et al., 2020). Using an intersectional lens to consider women's incarceration in Australia involves attentiveness to gender-based violence, substance dependency, and mental illness so as to achieve holistic, trauma-focused correction practices (see also Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2012; Bartels et al., 2020; Hopkins, 2015). Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait women, specific precipitating factors also include poverty, intergenerational trauma, and gender-based violence (Wilson, 2004; Wilson et al., 2017). If, as Crenshaw (1995) suggested, the concept of intersectionality is key to understanding black women's experiences of the American legal system, it is also essential to understanding the experiences of Indigenous women in the Australian criminal justice system and their educational needs. As Jones and Guthrie (2016, p. 1) pointed out, cultural support and culturally appropriate interventions are key to the successful reintegration of Indigenous Australian prisoners and to reducing the increasing over-representation of Indigenous people in Australian prisons.

Now more than ever, corrections educators must understand the multiple ways race/gender/class interact in Australia because such compounding socioeconomic disadvantage, racial bias, and indirect institutional racism mean Australia has one of the highest Indigenous or first people's incarceration rates in the world (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). The imprisonment rate for Indigenous Australians has also risen 52% in the past decade (Jones & Guthrie, 2016, p. 1). Indigenous prisoners may also bear the legacy of the stolen generation, forcibly institutionalized and systematically removed from their parents and homelands (Blagg, 2008). In terms of producing different outcomes for different racial groups, the Australian criminal justice system, while not intended to discriminate, seems to reproduce a systemic bias against the Indigenous population (see Blagg, 2008; Harmes et al., 2019; Johnston, 1991; Weatherburn & Ramsey, 2016). In the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW) for example, Aboriginal people are more likely to be charged for offenses, less likely to be released on bail, and more likely to serve prison sentences than non-Aboriginal offenders, resulting in a 40% increase in the imprisonment rate of Aboriginal people between 2001 and 2015, with a continued upward trend (Weatherburn & Ramsey, 2016). There has been a doubling of the Aboriginal jail population over the past 10 years in NSW, due in part to harsher sentencing and expanded police powers which have resulted in more Indigenous people jailed for public order offenses (Weatherburn & Ramsey, 2016). Similarly, in Western Australia, more than 40% of the prison population are Indigenous (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021) with one in six Indigenous inmates incarcerated in that state because they could not afford to pay parking penalties and other fine defaults ("More than 1,100 people a year jailed over unpaid fines in Western Australia," 2014). The proportion of Western Australia prisoners incarcerated for fine defaults actually tripled from 2008 to 2013 (Pen, 2015, p. 133), suggesting it is minor offenders and fine defaulters causing prison overcrowding in these states, not dangerous criminals ("More than 1,100 people a year jailed over unpaid fines in Western Australia,'' 2014).

Moreover, the Australian-based Keeping Women Out of Prison Coalition recently reported that the over-representation of Indigenous women in prison further entrenches their vulnerability, leads to a loss of culture, family, community, and connections to the land and perpetuates the cycle of trauma (Phelan et al., 2020). Phelan et al. (2020) note that the over-representation of Indigenous women with disabilities in prison is particularly evident and unacceptable. As the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland (2019) has observed, our correctional systems are too ill-equipped and under-resourced to meet the multi-faceted needs of the growing number of incarcerated Indigenous women with mental health issues and serious intellectual disabilities. Moreover, most Indigenous women in custody are mothers who also have significant health needs associated with physical and/or mental illness (Phelan et al., 2020). Gender-based discrimination and oppression in Australia's criminal justice system are also evident in the link between incarceration and domestic violence. Women who have experienced domestic and/or sexual violence are not only more likely to be imprisoned but the experience of incarceration itself increases the risk and effects of domestic and sexual violence upon release (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015; Phelan et al., 2020). As Jones and Guthrie (2016) have argued, family and domestic violence are at the core of much Indigenous incarceration and thus must be directly addressed in specific prison education programs to break the cycle of the most vulnerable, financially dependent, mentally ill, and physically unwell returning to prison. Moreover, as previously stated, technology-facilitated gendered violence is on the rise in Australia with domestic violence perpetrators increasingly using social media to track down and harass victim-survivors (Francis, 2015; Women's Legal Service NSW et al., 2015). Even Australia's former female Prime Minister Julia Gillard has pointed to the misogynistic abuse, threats, and sexism Australian women often encounter in the digital public sphere (Anderson, 2016). Currently, Australia's criminal justice system does not adequately take into account such intersectional considerations of gendered, racialized, and classed oppression and violence. Hence, this article argues for the application of intersectionality as a vital concept within the field of Australian corrections education, digital literacy, and digital pedagogies.

3. Discussion

Upon their release, many ex-prisoners will reenter a society and economy vastly different from what they

may have experienced 20, 10, or even five years ago; a world of ubiquitous social media and unprecedented surveillance wherein distinctions between public and private are blurred. As Jewkes and Reisdorf (2016, p. 534) have observed:

> When prisoners come to the end of their sentences, they not only are faced with prejudice and poor job prospects due to their criminal record, but their digital exclusion during a period of incarceration may have compound effects and lead to long-term and deep social exclusion.

Moreover, the more social media is woven into the everyday lives of young people, in particular, the more profound the loss when they enter the effectively disconnected prison (Knight & Van De Steene, 2017, p. 30) and in Australia the prison population is predominantly young with over two-thirds aged under 40 years (Jones & Guthrie, 2016, p. 1). Indeed, the digital divide between those who are "inside" and "outside" the prison may mirror other cultural and economic, local, and global digital disparities (Jewkes & Reisdorf, 2016; Knight & Van De Steene, 2017). Vulnerable groups, such as incarcerated women, are also not adequately prepared to deal with the discriminatory "dark side" of new networked communication technologies (see also Knight & Van De Steene, 2017). Even incarcerated students who have enjoyed some access to offline digital literacy development through non-networked devices may not be adequately prepared for a "real" digital sociocultural environment of disinformation, fake news, technology-facilitated gendered violence, and the potentially exploitative nature of digital capitalism. They may not be adequately prepared to survive and thrive in a post-release society and economy increasingly dominated by big tech companies such as Facebook, Google, and YouTube. As Seo et al. (2022) have demonstrated in the US, women transitioning from incarceration will have particular gendered experiences and attitudes to digital technologies which will often include online privacy concerns and issues with ex-partners. Hence, female incarcerated students will need new media privacy education specifically developed for their needs and desires (Seo et al., 2022). In a postmodern society still divided by multi-faceted forms of discrimination, the stigma of incarceration may follow students throughout their private and working lives, exacerbated by information sharing new media platforms where distinctions between fact and fiction, public and private are often blurred.

Indeed, for the incarcerated and the formerly incarcerated, personal privacy and its opposite (public humiliation) are becoming an increasingly pressing issue, thanks to media (mis)representation and sophisticated and constantly evolving surveillance technologies available to both state and private agents (see also Hopkins, 2021, 2022). As Hayes and Luther (2018, p. 49) have pointed out, social media is increasingly used by law enforcement to both solve and anticipate crime today: "The impact on law enforcement is that they can track our activities more easily in the name of public safety." Moreover, the use of camera phones, social media sites, and the rise of what Hayes and Luther (2018, p. 52) refer to as "citizen journalism" means sometimes unqualified but very active new media users and members of the public may post or repost information about crimes or criminals without due attention and respect to the rights and reputations of the accused and often vulnerable persons involved. Online and in the "real world," black women, working-class women, and other marginalized groups are often disproportionately demonized and blamed for the very socio-cultural conditions that lead to violence and incarceration, conditions which they did not necessarily choose but are forced to survive and adapt to (Bell, 2017; Hopkins, 2022; see also Wacquant, 2005, 2009).

Thus, the interconnecting web of both public and private surveillance of vulnerable citizens continues to collapse into what Gurusami (2019) calls a "carceral web," weaved around incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, and yet-to-be-incarcerated disadvantaged persons. While explaining the characteristics of the carceral web, Gurusami (2019) refers to its "stickiness" as the internet's habit and function of rendering criminal histories "inescapable" or impossible to shed, thus making the formerly incarcerated susceptible to further humiliation, pain, exploitation, and ultimately (re)incarceration. Benjamin (2019, as cited in Kaun & Stiernstedt, 2022, p. 71) also demonstrates how the "sticky web of carcerality" in turn extends beyond the prison gates and through new surveillance technologies into the everyday lives of vulnerable people, who are typically targeted as either risky or at-risk individuals. Hence, as Gurusami (2019, p. 435) points out, carceral citizens need critical digital literacies as a matter of "self-defense" against the digital reach and privacy invasions of predatory capitalism and state-corporate convergence. As we are learning here in Australia, beneath the shiny sales pitch of American big tech companies, like Facebook (and their rhetorical promises of freedom, devolution, democracy, and global connections), there is another reality of potential misinformation, surveillance, and information monopolies which may leave the vulnerable even more exposed, exploited, and disadvantaged (see also Gurusami, 2019). Hence, digital education within custodial settings will need to be equally fast-moving and responsive to the social media world, as well as delivered by suitably qualified educators informed by feminist intersectional theory applicable to the new media ecology. Such new media literacy would enable isolated and vulnerable learners to understand the uses and abuses of networked technologies as critical thinkers and empowered agents. For living in the age of evolving social media and the networked society requires a more agile, holistic, and intersectional approach to female prisoners' digital literacy and technology needs. It also requires prisoners' access to the internet.

It could be argued that the digital disconnection experienced by Australian prisoners is itself another additional layer of disadvantage within the myriad axes of oppression experienced by female incarcerated students, who may rely on Facebook and other networked communication platforms to maintain family, friendship, and social connections. Certainly, the experience of incarceration overall may "represent an identity (self-ascribed or not) that interplays with other demographic and systemic variables, making it more difficult for these clients to disconnect from the system" (Batastini et al., 2022, p. 930). As Phelan et al. (2020) pointed out, incarceration leads to a loss of culture, family, and community, especially for Indigenous women and this unnecessarily increases the pains and vulnerability of marginalized women. Disconnection from the network society may also frustrate full reintegration into the digital economy upon release, a disadvantage compounded further by factors such as prisoner age and length of sentence (see also Reisdorf & DeCook, 2022). Due to the intersecting axes of difference discussed above, female and especially female Indigenous incarcerated students will need more specialized, personalized information and support than the mainstream prison population in order to ensure they are not further harmed by the experience of isolation and incarceration itself. As Bagaric et al. (2017, p. 321) have argued, internet-enabled devices have fundamentally altered Australian society over the past two decades, yet Australian prisoners are effectively "frozen in time to a pre-internet age." Near-total internet prohibition in Australian prisons increases the pains of imprisonment by increasing the stress and anxiety of prisoners and it also inadvertently punishes the families of prisoners who are deprived of online connections with their loved ones (Bagaric et al., 2017). Most significantly, the prohibition of the internet undermines the kind of networked education prisoners need for the best chance of successful social reintegration post-release (Bagaric et al., 2017). Despite public perceptions that prisoners would use internet access to intimidate former victims or access violent pornography, this is statistically less likely in the case of female prisoners. Moreover, as Bagaric et al. (2017, p. 322) point out, through monitored access, modern technology can provide "a near failsafe solution to this risk." While the benefits of networked communication may not be equally accessible for all social groups, the first step is to increase internet connectivity so incarcerated women can fully engage with the network society, sustain relationships, and emerge better equipped to deal with its potential harms and opportunities.

Intersectional exposures to online racism and misogyny, compounded by discriminatory stereotypes and misinformation circulated around carceral citizens in the still largely unregulated public space of social media, suggest critical digital literacy for incarcerated students must address the negative effects of new networked spaces as discussed above. It is equally important, however, to acknowledge social media's capacity to also facilitate prosocial behaviors, generate more positive self-concepts for some users, and afford opportunities to explore new identities beyond marginalized "outsider" status. Jaramillo-Dent et al. (2022, p. 208), for example, have suggested that while vulnerable groups continue to be "marginalized by sociotechnical configurations that perpetuate structures of dominance in the digital sphere and on social media platforms," immigrant influencers on TikTok have also built pathways toward visibility, creativity, activism, and agency. Similarly, influencers with intellectual disabilities have also found on social media platforms opportunities to advance social inclusion while reclaiming voice and visibility: "These results indicate that social networks allow them to make their interests visible, take part in the digital environment and interact with their audience, being a positive influence that promotes respect for diversity" (Bonilla-del-Río et al., 2022, p. 222). Presenting a case study of digital literacies and learning disabilities through an intersectional lens, Pandya et al. (2018, p. 387) explore how "digital video composing can be an act of redistributive social justice for students with learning disabilities." A convincing case is made to explore intersections of race, language, gender, and class among students with disabilities in schools while placing the power of productive communication technologies in the hands of those more typically isolated and denied such access and chances for self-expression and self-representation. Such previous theoretical and empirical studies suggest a new network literacy for incarcerated students, which includes opportunities to produce as well as critically analyze new media texts, might also be a pathway toward the empowerment of a marginalized "outsider" group, which facilitates their reintegration into the digital public sphere. It is important to acknowledge, however, the limitations of this article's exploration of network literacy, intersectionality, and incarcerated students, which is thus far essentially theoretical as most Australian prisoners still have no direct access to the internet or social media networks such as Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok. Unfortunately, currently, instead of mastering new networked technologies, our most vulnerable carceral citizens are much more likely to be manipulated or managed by it. As Knight and Van De Steene (2017, p. 25) have observed, while the digitalization of prisons has accelerated over the past decade, when technology is introduced into the unique environment of the prison and its context of punishment it is more typically focused on enhancing security, surveillance, and the threat to privacy, rather than on enabling oppressed groups to join the digital public sphere.

4. Conclusions

New network literacy education has the potential to facilitate vulnerable women developing and maintaining the social relationships and communication skills so central to full participation in the digital public sphere. Such programs, I have argued, should also include

differentiated, critical *network* literacy education on using social media safely and responsibly as empowered informed digital citizens. As Reisdorf and DeCook (2022) suggest from the US, emphasizing the concepts of digital rehabilitation as well as digital inclusion, digital literacy must be part of the reentry processes before and after release. In Australia, university-based educators of incarcerated students have worked in partnership with committed prison-based corrections educators to deliver such digital tools and digital skills training across multiple jurisdictions, as previously mentioned. My own personal experiences, however, of teaching academic and digital literacies to Australian incarcerated students for almost 10 years, both face-to-face and through distance education informs my argument here: The way forward is to move beyond these isolated digital literacy skills to advance a new network literacy education built upon feminist, intersectional theoretical frameworks. As a researcher, I situate myself as a white woman from a working-class background and a first-in-family university graduate with prior experience teaching marginalized groups in schools, not-for-profit organizations, universities, and prisons. Moreover, my prior studies and research expertise in the sociology of education also inform my understanding that social structures and systemic oppression are at least as influential as agency and life choices in shaping personal histories and experiences of incarceration. Certainly, as the number of incarcerated women in the Australian criminal justice system continues to increase, new approaches are necessary to reduce recidivism and address the underlying, compounding issues which lead to female incarceration in the first place such as poverty, homelessness, and sexual and domestic violence. Moreover, while offline digital devices represent a significant step forward in Australian corrections education, incarcerated students are still relatively disadvantaged by the internet prohibition, with no direct internet access to email their lecturers or tutors or engage in other networked socialization and enculturation such as online peer learning forums.

The classed, gendered, and racialized realities of Australia's criminal justice system are evident in the dramatically disproportionate rate of imprisonment of Indigenous women, and in Australia's increasingly punitive approach to crime and sentencing which typically captures already excluded and marginalized populations. Overall, incarceration rates increased in Australia across 2020–2021, but especially amongst women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Consequently, overcrowding in Australian women's prisons is compromising not only privacy and hygiene but the effective delivery and timeliness of specialized education, health, and rehabilitation programs (Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland, 2019). This article has documented these unacceptable, discriminatory realities of imprisonment patterns in Australia. Just as in the US, black women in Australia are disproportionately imprisoned and harmed at the intersection of institutionalized sex discrimination and institutionalized race discrimination which does not take adequate account of the role of domestic and sexual violence in the real and digital lives of women. Instead of retraumatizing marginalized and vulnerable women through imprisonment and increasing their risks of violence, homelessness, and unemployment upon release, more holistic and intersectional approaches to Australian criminal justice and digitalized corrections education must account for the harms and opportunities of the new media age. While digital literacy is indeed important to ensure the employability of carceral citizens, it is equally important to facilitate *network literacy* skills and knowledge to empower vulnerable women to protect their well-being, rights, and privacy online. As much, if not more, than any other marginalized group, Australian incarcerated women need internet connectivity and the benefits of a new digital literacy education appropriate for a rapidly evolving network society. Moreover, correctional staff across all Australian states and territories need consistent professional development opportunities in the field of network literacy education for marginalized groups informed by a feminist, intersectional lens, and an understanding of the multiple, compounding forms of oppression typically experienced by incarcerated women. This article, therefore, has argued for the application of intersectionality as a conceptual framework underpinning new network literacy education for female and female Indigenous incarcerated students and their teachers in the new media age.

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Conflict of Interests

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Article

Including the Experiences of Children and Youth in Media Education

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Abstract
This article explores how the concepts of inclusion and experience can be approached and applied in educating children and youth about the media. Using a multiple-case study approach, we present three cases where media education programs were delivered to students in the Czech Republic. The first case is a three-month-long program aimed at nurturing students' media literacy and encouraging their civic participation. It involved 17 vocational school students (ages 17–19) at risk of social exclusion. The second case is a three-hour workshop promoting children's cooperation with their peers and civic engagement with media in a diverse society tested with 60 children (ages 10–11) in three classrooms in two public elementary schools. The third is a year-long media education program based on students' guided self-reflection on their media experiences, attended by eight students (ages 15–17) at a private high school. Despite numerous differences in the programs (goals, activities, duration, context, student demographics, etc.) and their varied approaches to promoting inclusivity and the whole student experience, we argue that each one has the potential to contribute to creating a more inclusive society that respects diversity. We also believe that longer programs would be more successful in supporting children and youths' immediate and future well-being.

Keywords
children; Czech Republic; diversity; inclusion; media education; youth

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1. Introduction

An estimated 100 million people are at risk of social exclusion in Europe (Eurostat, 2021). This situation presents European society, institutions, and policymakers with a challenge that can only be met with social innovation in many areas. A large number of studies show that social exclusion is:

> A complex and multi-faceted process that is caused by dynamics that are often intertwined and as such strengthen each other and often lead to simultaneous deprivation at the level of work, education, living conditions, income, social security, daily resources or health. (Cappuccio, 2017, p. 223)

For the past 25 years, media education has been trying to contribute in various ways to a more inclusive society (Spandagou, 2021). This article presents a multi-case study that describes and compares three different media education programs in the Czech Republic for children and youth (ages 10–19). All of them strove to contribute to the creation of an inclusive society. One program was delivered at a state-funded vocational high school, another at state-funded elementary schools, and the third at a private lyceum. The case studies illustrate ways in which media education can address the problem of social exclusion by drawing on children's and youths' authentic media experiences and their other lived experiences. We look at how media education can balance the desire to meet externally set learning goals with students' personal needs and overall well-being,

especially when it is constrained by limits on the length of programs.

2. Inclusivity in Media Education

Social in/exclusion generally refers to "social processes in which financial resources and skills, knowledge and abilities enable or impede one to participate in (all aspects of) everyday life" (Brants & Frissen, 2003, p. 5). In media education, inclusion and inclusivity can broadly be understood as the "enlargement of the target groups (including all persons, even those with access difficulties) as well as of the multimodal texts and technologies" (Marci-Boehncke & Trapp, 2019, p. 4). The objective of inclusive media education could therefore be that regardless of their culture, gender, or language, all children and youth should enjoy the benefits of being media literate and of full participation in public life (The New London Group, 1996).

Media literacy is usually understood as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and produce print and electronic media (Aufderheide, 1993). However, striving for a highly specific definition of media literacy runs counter to attempts to unify what is a rather fragmented field, whether it is done in the name of "transliteracy" (Frau-Meigs, 2012, p. 20), or simply "literacy" (Potter, 2012). We unapologetically take advantage of the lack of a uniform definition of media literacy and media education in this article. The three media education programs in the case studies we will discuss were all designed and applied in order to both nurture students' media literacy and create a more inclusive society, in which all children and youth feel that they belong. However, each program approached both media literacy and the problem of in/exclusion in a slightly different way.

Like media literacy, inclusion can also mean many things in media education research and in pedagogical practice. A number of studies have attempted to determine whether the system of media education is in fact inclusive enough of all groups in society (Cho et al., 2020) and have tested various ways to improve inclusivity (Cappuccio, 2017; Hobbs, 2013; Kotilainen & Pienimäki, 2019). These studies have suggested changes in curricula and pedagogy that are intended to improve students' school attendance, participation, and success, as well as positively influence their personal and later professional lives (Guo & Chase, 2011; Rasi et al., 2017, p. 23). Through the first case study, we discuss media education program specifically designed to support marginalized students' inclusion in public life (Römer et al., 2022). We also focus on media education that teaches students (most of them non-minority) about inclusion through/by/in media (Ramsey et al., 2022), as in the second case study. Finally, the third case study illustrates media education that welcomes students' diverse experiences, even those seemingly irrelevant, in the process of learning about media and one's life with them (Hodboď, in press).

By marginalized students on which the first case study focuses, we mean youths who are deprived of full participation in society by others or themselves. This approximates the nomenclature of Kotilainen (2009), who calls them "vulnerable" youths, Freire (1970), for whom they are "oppressed," and Ashtana (2006), who prefers the term "disadvantaged." A large part of the media education agenda has been focused on designing programs to empower and include marginalized social groups. Studies have focused on programs for pensioners, disabled persons, and poor people (Brants & Frissen, 2003; Kaimara et al., 2021; Spandagou, 2021). Others deal with ethnic minorities (Pandya, 2018), youths living in segregated parts of a city (Cappuccio, 2017), and still others with "at-risk" youth (Pienimäki & Kotilainen, 2021). Numerous studies show that media education can be beneficial for marginalized students. It empowers them to raise their voices, as in a three-year study by Pandya (2018) based on video production. Pandya's study explored the role of media education in Mexican-American students' protests against the closing of their school in California. Another two-year-long media education program conducted in youth detention facilities in Portugal helped youths keep in touch with online technology while in detention (Brites & Castro, 2021).

Turning to the second case study, researchers have also explored ways in which social justice, equity, and cooperation can be nurtured regardless of students' sociocultural backgrounds (Pandya, 2018) and how media education can support children and youth in challenging white supremacy and hegemony. Media portrayals of people and situations often reinforce prejudices and stereotypes, contributing to social division, discrimination, and exclusion (Doane, 2022; Nilsen & Turner, 2021). That is why Neag et al. (2022) argue that inclusive media literacy education should be directed at both majority students and students living on the margins of society. Beyond teaching children to analyze and critically evaluate media messages, media education can also support children and youth in using the media to connect with people from different cultures and countries and take a stand against negative stereotypes and assumptions about others (Supa et al., 2021). Media education can contribute to a more inclusive society in diverse and complex ways.

3. Incorporating Students' Experiences in Media Education

In pursuit of their goals for an inclusive society, many media education programs have taken a project-based, experiential learning approach. These include Cappuccio's (2017) video-game-based project in Palermo, Italy, Pandya's (2018) filmmaking project at a bilingual charter school in California, and Hobbs' (2013) comic-book-making project, to name just a few. Traditional education mostly relies on the direct

presentation of existing knowledge by a teacher to students. By contrast, Dewey (1938, p. 59) says that, in experiential learning, "the teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities." Activities must be carefully planned by the teacher, taking into account his or her students' previous experiences, knowledge, and the surroundings in which they live (Buckingham, 2019; Carlsson et al., 2008). Hobbs (2016, p. 30) advocates "learning by doing," in which students and educators engage jointly with their "head, heart, hands and spirit." The first two case studies applied just such an experiential learning approach.

In the third case study, the educators took Dewey's approach to the "experience learners already have" even further by exploring what happens when learners' media experiences are not only included in the lesson but are truly made central to the media education program. In that case, media education fully includes the student's whole, authentic life with media. Zezulkova (2015, p. 168) recommends that "the child should be encouraged to learn about media through exploring and reflecting on the subjective role they play in his or her individual and collective life." As students engage in self-reflection in the course of their media education, their everyday media experiences become important for their own sake, not simply as tools for achieving externally mandated learning outcomes. Students who are reflecting on their unique media experiences begin to utilize all components of their being as a source of knowledge, i.e., their "whole self" (Jung et al., 1964, p. 60). Exercises in reflection also allow an educator to gain more comprehensive feedback about a student and the student's experiences, both with the media and with social inclusion/exclusion (Nagata, 2004). Such exercises help educators support learners as they navigate their own lives and mindfully put themselves and their experiences at the center of their inquiry (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998).

Even more crucially, media education must abandon all communication hierarchies (e.g., adult-child), protectionist tendencies, and the idea that children's and youths' media experiences need to be mediated by a "more experienced" adult. As Hobbs and Jensen (2009, p. 8) write, media education:

> Is not about replacing students' perspectives with the perspectives of the authority, be that expert, scholar, critic, or teacher…it is about teaching them how they can arrive at informed choices that are most consistent with their own values.

This freedom allows students to feel included in their educational experiences. It gives them the opportunity to explore and express their own lives with media while learning about and gaining respect for the experiences of others and their ways of being. We suggest that all three case studies presented here demonstrate ways in which children's and youth's experiences with media education can meaningfully contribute to their immediate and future well-being, as well as to a more inclusive society as a whole (Neag et al., 2022).

4. Multiple Case Study Research

This section introduces three separate case studies of media education programs aimed at including children's and youth's media experiences in media education. The first two studies applied a project-based approach and the third applied a reflective approach. We used multiple case studies to analyze patterns and explore similarities and differences (Ridder, 2017) in the three qualitative research and educational projects, which were conducted in the Czech Republic between the years 2019 and 2021. We adopted Eisenhardt's (1989) and Eisenhardt and Graebner's (2007) inductive approach to case study analysis. That approach produces theoretical propositions based on empirical evidence. Empirical data was collected using diverse qualitative research methods described under each case study (Sections 4.1–4.3). The data thus obtained was openly coded and subjected to reflective thematic analysis in order to identify common themes and patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The schools and the children's parents gave written consent for their children's participation, and the children and youths themselves gave their oral consent. The Research Ethics Committee of the Charles University Faculty of Social Sciences approved all three projects.

Although they differ greatly in many respects, we chose the three programs because collectively they show the relevance, importance, and educational potential of prioritizing children's and youths' experiences in pedagogy—no matter what approach to media education was applied. Each program made use of and addressed students' experiences and their social situations in a slightly different way. The case studies illustrate the problem in media education of balancing externally set learning goals against adequate attention to students' personal needs and overall well-being.

4.1. Case Study 1: Participatory Media Education for Young, At-Risk Students

The first case study examines a three-month media education program at a vocational school in the Czech town of Louny, in which 17 students aged 17 to 19 participated during the autumn of 2019 (see Römer et al., 2022). In general, students at vocational schools tend to be truant more often than other students (Sirovátka et al., 2003, p. 56). The schools' graduates are among those who have the most problems finding employment (Dvořáková, 2013). Czech vocational school students are further marginalized by the fact that while media education is compulsory for their peers in Czech grammar schools, that is not the case at vocational schools. As a result, vocational schools offer fewer media education courses (JSNS, 2017). The value of media education is greatly underestimated in the Czech Republic.

As The New London Group (1996) says, doing media education research with vocational students can be described as inherently inclusive.

The experiential learning media literacy program delivered by the research team in this case study was based on action research methodology (Bradbury, 2015). It consisted of online and offline media and civic participation activities that were included as part of the school's ongoing practical training class. Over the period of one semester, the students in the class focused on a social topic of their choosing—in this case, animal rights. They explored various ways to communicate their concerns about animal rights to heterogeneous target groups using different media. Their activities included making masks to wear and pamphlets to distribute at a parade in the center of Prague, the so-called Velvet Carnival, which celebrated the anniversary of the anti-communist demonstrations in Prague on November 17, 1989. The students also communicated with the general public and local media by organizing a press conference, preparing a press release, and posting on social media. They learned how to evaluate their potential audiences and to use a broad variety of offline and online communication channels. The researchers collected a large amount of multimodal data, ranging from field notes and student surveys to interviews with students and teachers. For more detailed information, see Römer et al. (2022).

The program of instruction was designed as a participatory and interactive experience (Livingstone, 2010). It was non-hierarchical (Dahlgren, 2013; Dewey, 1938). It blended the in-school and out-of-school worlds of the students (Carlsson et al., 2008) and their online and offline activities (Kahne et al., 2012). It aspired to break up the school routine in many ways, such as allowing the students to use the first names of the lecturers and decide on class activities to a certain extent (e.g., choosing to work on some tasks in groups or alone and choosing the class's theme for its presentation at the Velvet Carnival parade). Nevertheless, some students complained that the project was not run democratically because they were obliged to participate in it as a part of their practical training class.

We observed a strong improvement in the students' media literacy competencies. The blending of online and offline activities and the in-school and out-of-school life of the students enabled them to recognize that they had gained new skills: "I knew that people use social media to participate in politics. But I never realized I could do it. Then I experienced the process live." It was the first time in their lives that the students had created media content for a political, civic-oriented purpose. As has been found by other researchers working with other students (Hobbs, 2013; Pandya, 2018), creating content was the students' favorite part of the project: "Making the masks was the best. I had never worked with clay, and it was just so cool to feel it taking shape." The students' confidence in their ability to create offline, digital, and social network media content meant to influence a public debate increased significantly. According to post-study surveys and interviews, the project also led them to reflect slightly more on the quality of media sources.

Most of the students came from challenging backgrounds. One minor student already had a child, and another had several family members who were in prison. A minimum of three students were active drug users and one participant had experienced severe bullying. Many students struggled with low self-esteem and general apathy. Only some of the participating students felt they had developed strong, permanent civic participation skills. As one of the participants said, "I don't care about the outside world. When people ask me what I think, I say nothing. Whenever I have tried to speak, everyone has always been mean to me, including the teachers."

4.2. Case Study 2: Media Education to Address Diversity, Social Exclusion, and Lack of Participation

The second case study involves a three-hour-long, externally delivered media and multicultural education workshop called "Changing the World Together," developed for elementary school classrooms. It was repeated three times and was attended by 60 10 to 11-year-olds. The workshop was designed based on findings generated by 25 focus groups with a total of 85 children (46 girls and 39 boys) aged eight to 12 and conducted in four public schools in the Czech Republic in 2019 (see Supa et al., 2021; Tejkalova et al., 2021). The focus groups explored (a) children's attitudes toward people from diverse cultures and their relationships with them, as formed by the media content the children consume and produce, and (b) issues of diversity and conformity in the children's peer culture. The educational program based on the focus group work was developed and tested in schools during 2020 and 2021 in cooperation with an external research partner from the Multicultural Center Prague, who delivered the workshops. Observational notes and post-program questionnaires in which students reflected on the workshop and the most important things they had learned were collected by the research team and then openly coded.

The program was designed based on findings from research with children who were exploring their experiences with media and diversity and their attitudes toward them. Therefore, it encouraged them to draw on their experiences right from the start. It had the goals of (a) fostering cooperation through joint activities and by sharing interests, (b) challenging the participants' stereotypes about others and encouraging them to accept diverse people, and (c) supporting children in developing the willingness and confidence to become activists/agents themselves, using different types of media to express themselves, connect and communicate with others, and take action. The workshop consisted of different kinds of experiential learning activities in which groups of children together developed campaigns

addressing a social cause of their choice. The first activity, "pulling together with one rope," was an icebreaker that encouraged cooperation in solving complex tasks. In the second activity, "looking for shared civic interests," the children were asked to decide upon a social issue they would like to address in the program. In the third activity, "being inspired," they were shown photos and video clips of young activists from different parts of the world who shared their perspectives on diversity and their experiences with it. In the fourth activity, "from facing challenges to becoming superheroes," the children chose a fictional superhero to help them fight for their chosen cause. In the fifth activity, "communication and media strategy," the children created a mock media campaign that included various forms of media. The children communicated across platforms, coming up with ideas about how their selected superhero(es) could help them achieve their goals. Finally, the groups presented their media campaigns to the entire class. For more details about the program, see Ramsey et al. (2022).

The first two rounds of the program showed that the children were more interested in discussing their personal experiences and shared interests than in coming up with a communication campaign. This was especially true in one round when a group chose an intimate topic with which the children had shared experience:

> We chose the topic of parental divorce. We both have experience with it. We want to send a message to parents: 1. Please don't argue! 2. If we don't have a complete family, we're experiencing hell. 3. Others mock us and bully us because of it. 4. We don't want to celebrate Christmas twice, we'd rather do it together. I would make short YouTube videos…and I prefer TikTok.

The first two rounds of the workshop clearly showed the usefulness of the media education method we developed for supporting children in reflecting on and sharing their personal experiences. Therefore, we changed the third round of the workshop in order to achieve a better balance of the three intended learning outcomes. We did so by increasing the time allocated to activities focused on using media for collective civic participation at the expense of time for the children to think about and reflect on their lived experiences and the issues that are important to them in their lives.

The post-program questionnaire asked open-ended questions which revealed that the participating children enjoyed the workshop ("I had a nice and fun day today"). Two of the main ideas that the children said they had learned from the workshop were the importance of respecting others and their ideas and opinions ("everyone can have a different opinion") and the benefit of working with others ("cooperation is important"). Although the social issues on which the children chose to focus their media campaigns were not always related to inclusion, social justice, and equity, they did incorporate the children's own lived experiences with their chosen issue, which proved to be very useful during the workshop. The children especially appreciated the opportunity to discuss and reflect on topics that interest them and that were directly relevant to their lives. For example, they said that the best thing about the workshop was that "we were supposed to give our opinion on life and what seemed to bother us." The changes made in the third round of testing arguably helped to achieve the intended learning outcomes ("we already know a lot about social media, we can now use it for something useful"). However, the changes may have decreased the children's overall satisfaction with the workshop itself ("I wish I had had more time to write and think about it").

4.3. Case Study 3: Learning About Media Through Self-Reflection

The third case study is of a year-long program (in the school year of 2020–2021) that was attended by eight first-year high school students aged 15 to 17 years. It was delivered by the research team at a private lyceum, Naše Lyceum Praha. The course was entitled Information Technologies and Communication. The program was designed to research the youths' actual media experiences and determine the educational potential of self-reflection by the students about them. The participants attended a total of 32 classes (20 online classes of 45 minutes each and 12 offline classes of 90 minutes each). The classes focused on nurturing the skills students needed for reflection on their media experiences and for deepening their understanding of the relationship between the media and themselves in a broad socio-political, cultural, and cultural-economic context. In the classroom sessions, the students discussed their experience with selected media (film, music, smartphones, etc.) in the light of different theories of obtaining self-knowledge: the "scarf model" (Rock, 2008), "possible selves" (Markus & Nurius, 1986), and "internet psychology" (Amichai-Hamburger, 2017). These theories were introduced in the classes to the students, who then reflected upon the relevance of the theories to their own lived experiences, including those with the media. The participants produced 94 standard pages of reflective accounts altogether. Seven semi-structured interviews (totaling seven hours and 38 minutes) were conducted at both the halfway point of the program and at its end. The interviews focused primarily on evaluating how useful to the students the reflective approach was for gaining an understanding of the media's role in their lives.

Although students attending a private school (for which they must pay tuition) are not at much risk of social exclusion in terms of their socioeconomic status, they do face other social and individual challenges. The research participants formed a diverse group of international students, students with special needs and learning disabilities (which in some cases had prevented them from

succeeding in the state-funded school system), students suffering from severe mental health problems, and students with previous experience of bullying. The program was entirely based on self-reflection about the adolescents' own media experiences. It allowed them to openly share those experiences, to connect their in-school and out-of-school environments, to reflect on their feelings of belonging and not belonging, and more. Through the process of reflection, they gradually recognized and understood the distribution of power in society and their role in it, while also gaining confidence and the will to take action.

During the first year of the program, which will continue in the coming years, we discovered that the students' media experience was multilayered and affected almost all aspects of their lives. However, it did so in different ways and with different intensities. We identified six layers of the media experience and sorted them from the least intense to the most intense. We preliminary defined the layers as: (a) ordinary and everyday media experiences ("my [dance] training is on Zoom, where you can share music, so it's all set up"); (b) ambivalent media experiences, meaning that some media are shared, allowed, or even required but other similar media are limited or forbidden without a reason clearly understood by the students (e.g., parents approved and favored a student's watching a Champions League football match on TV with dad late into the evening, but the next day rebuked the student for playing too much FIFA on the computer); (c) media experiences that enhance ontological safety ("the media are like my 'fixed point,' they are how I shape my image and my status….I seek connection and understanding from others through them"); (d) purposefully repeated media experiences ("about two years ago I had a playlist that I made specifically for when I wanted to cry. Most of the time it worked"); (e) intimate media experiences ("it's a zone where I allow myself to be sad and cry"); and (f) spiritual media experiences ("feelings of hopelessness and self-doubt are something that often trouble me….I felt understanding and sadness when the same thing happened to the main character"). These layers are interconnected, overlap, and depend on context. At any given moment, one type of media experience can turn into a different one. For example, an ordinary media experience can offer ontological safety when needed and subsequently turn into a purposefully repeated media experience. As one of the participants noted, using maps on a smartphone is an ordinary media experience unless he is lost. Then using it reassures him and gives him a feeling of safety. Consequently, any time he thinks he might possibly get lost, he uses the map.

It would not be possible to explore the complexity and diversity of youths' media experiences in detail without seeking the students' own active and continuous self-reflection. We devoted significant time and effort to that during the program. At first, the students' reflections on their experiences with media were almost unintelligible ("you're not used to these questions and the things you look into through these questions. Like the question of what it's like to listen to music opens up a lot of new thoughts for you"). As they became more accustomed to our questions, they felt safer and more capable of giving specific answers ("I think definitely. As time went on, and once I'd got something written down, I had a better ability to just describe those things"). They began to appreciate the program more ("in math, there is a right or wrong answer, but in media education, we didn't have that. And that was the good thing about it. It's an atmosphere where we can make mistakes"). The students' attitudes toward the media changed significantly. Before, it was something that they took for granted. However, through self-reflection, they started to think about media in a completely different way:

> Before, the media was really like a newspaper to me, completely dusty somewhere on a shelf, and still behind books [smiles]. I really didn't give it a thought. I had Messenger, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, I had that, I used them often, but I never thought about it in any way.

The students said that self-reflection "opened their eyes" and went significantly beyond just learning about the media. It helped them more generally to improve themselves ("I am able to take a step back and think rationally about a situation, which was something I was not good at before") and their lives ("I think it could help me with my mental health").

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The people at risk of social exclusion in Europe are likely to increase because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the current geopolitical situation. We are aware of the differences between the social, cultural, and economic types of exclusion. However, those types are interconnected and, for each of them, a growing number of authors find a correlation with how media literate people are (Cohen & Kahne, 2012; Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013). Finding ways to reduce the social, cultural, economic, digital, and all the other gaps in society has grown in importance. Our multi-case study adds to previous research that has found that media education can contribute to a more inclusive society. The data from the Czech Republic is especially valuable because Central Europe is rather underrepresented in this area of research.

Furthermore, we have illustrated different ways in which media education can be researched and practiced. In the first two project-based media education programs, we hoped to answer questions about externally imposed ideas and practices of inclusion that often appear in media education for children and youth. Nurturing students' media literacy, knowledge, agency, and civic participation through such programs is an important way to meaningfully increase social inclusivity (Marci-Boehncke

& Trapp, 2019; Supa et al., 2021). Also, in line with Dewey's (1938, p. 20) theory of experiential learning, we focused on nurturing and respecting the "intimate and necessary relation between the proves of actual experience and education," and providing the students with an opportunity to create media content themselves. However, our programs were rather neglectful of student experiences that were not directly related to the media (e.g., drug use, bullying, imprisoned parents, and divorce) because we wanted the students to be able to achieve our pre-set goals in the short time frame of the programs.

The third program in our case studies, which applied a reflective approach to the media, was by contrast truly inclusive of all the experiences the students themselves identified as important. We gained a profound understanding of the diverse media experiences of learners, and of the researcher/educator as well (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009; Jung et al., 1964; Nagata, 2004). The third media education program brought about gradual transformative changes and gave students a deeper understanding of their life and media experiences. It offered multiple ideas for encouraging future learning (Laal & Salamati, 2012). However, the third program proved to be only marginally linked with an increase in concrete media literacy knowledge and skills. It focused purely on teaching the students to reflect on their complex and multifaceted life with the media (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Woodfall & Zezulkova, 2016; Zezulkova, 2015). As such, it might raise the question of whether it could properly be called media education. Nevertheless, we dare to do so.

Our three case studies promoted inclusive media literacy as it is defined by Neag et al. (2022). The programs were designed for diverse groups of children and youth, including those who may at first not seem to be at risk of exclusion. Their sharing of their lived experiences proved otherwise, and they increased their media literacy along with their respect for inclusivity and diversity. Yet the case studies also demonstrate that the limited time available for the program required compromises. The programs ranged from a three-hour-long workshop to a year-long course of study. Yet even the year-long program was able to cover only a limited range of the media children and youth experience every day. It only provided the students with a basis for meaningful self-reflection. This conclusion comports with other international research, which recommends that media education programs be long-term—two years (Brites & Castro, 2021), three years (Pandya, 2018), or the students' entire lives (Bradbury, 2015, p. 323). Arguably, longer programs can better utilize children's and youths' lived experiences, thereby enhancing their media literacy and their openness to social inclusivity. An additional benefit of longer programs is that children and youth can learn that their own unique experiences in life and the media matter and that they must give the experiences of others equal respect. Either an experiential or a reflective approach will contribute to a more inclusive society if it is used in a longer-term program. Media education will then support two goals even better, giving everyone the opportunity to become media literate and helping all of society to become more inclusive.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Mapping the Inclusion of Children and Youth With Disabilities in Media Literacy Research

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Abstract
The way we communicate and make meaning in a complex socio-technical infrastructure demands multiple literacies. Media-literate citizens must be able to create, evaluate and effectively use information, media, and technology. The pandemic context demanded increased online learning and work, highlighting the importance of media literacy in citizens' lives. Although in recent years, crucial reforms have happened in education for children with disabilities, media education for them is residual and framed on medical concepts neglecting how disability is socially constructed. Aiming to map recent research (2015–2021) in the field of media literacy and children with disabilities, a systematic literature review was conducted. The number of articles obtained from a search for "media literacy and children" in the scientific databases (*N* = 1,175) supports the relevance of media literacy in research. Filtering these data for "children with disabilities" reveals an inexpressive sample, with 12 articles included in the study after the eligibility phase. The overall results indicate that this population is significantly underrepresented in media literacy research, explained by a low prevalence of studies with disabled children as an audience. Moreover, research designs have shown a greater focus on conceptual approaches, highlighting a deficit of fieldwork and tangible interventions. Strong ableist media discourses emerged as a barrier to the promotion of media literacy in this population, with a clear mismatch between media representations and the current disability paradigms, besides all the positive aspects of the actions registered in the sample.

Keywords
children; disabilities; inclusion; media education; media literacy; youth

Issue
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1. Introduction

Defining media literacy could be, by itself, a research piece. Nevertheless, for the specific purpose of the present work, it will be adopted as an umbrella term for the "investigation and promotion of the diverse competencies, and the skills needed in the contemporary media and communication environment" (Livingstone et al., 2014, p. 215). In a highly digitized society, these skills are crucial for full and engaged citizenship, due to their role in the comprehension of democratic structures, free self-expression, and conflict resolution, through access and analysis of diverse sources of information (Hobbs, 1998).

With the increased educational innovation based on digital media and, more recently, the pandemic context, media literacy skills have become increasingly central to students' inclusion, highlighted by platforms' low accessibility (Russ & Hamidi, 2021) and the proliferation of misinformation (McDougall et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the implementation of digital media platforms in different educational contexts also brought several opportunities, including personalized learning environments that are likely to accommodate the support needs of students with disabilities (Basham et al., 2016).

Full citizenship for individuals with disabilities has been a central concern due to the prevalence of ableism

in contemporary society (Nario-Redmond, 2019), which extends to media (Ellis & Kent, 2011). The Convention on The Rights of Persons With Disabilities is the legal framework for this concern by defining the conditions for full and effective participation and inclusion in society through the promotion of individual autonomy, independence, equality of opportunities, and accessibility (United Nations, 2006). This framing is also centered around the paradigm shift from a medical model of disability that emphasizes individuals' impairments and visions of "treatment" or "cure" (Silvers, 1998) to a social model that reinforces disability as emerging from the prevailing ableist social structures, based on the context's inability to accommodate their support needs (Ellis & Kent, 2011).

Accompanying this modification, fundamental changes in terminology and educational approaches have occurred—from "special" to inclusive education—aligned with the demands of activism organizations and grassroots movements (Greenstein, 2015) and which has consistent positive impacts on children's cognitive and social development (Hehir et al., 2016). Moreover, the designations of "disabled" or "handicapped" have been progressively replaced by the notion of "person with a disability," which prioritizes the identification of individuals as human beings before any specific physical, cognitive, or psychological conditions while preserving the sociopolitical impacts of the word "disability" (Andrews et al., 2019).

Considering this context, and with the notion that access to digital media per se does not impact the decreasing of social inequalities, media literacy can be seen as a crucial pillar for full inclusion and citizenship (Pernisco, 2014).

The present systematic literature review (SLR) aims to map the inclusion of children with disabilities in media literacy research through the operationalization of the following research questions:

> RQ1: To what extent are children with disabilities targeted by media literacy and media education research?
>
> RQ2: What are the conceptualizations of the intersection between disability and media?
>
> RQ3: What are the positive outcomes of media literacy actions in children with disabilities?

2. Method

2.1. Eligibility Criteria

The method of the present study was developed considering the PRISMA 2020 statement guidelines for the reporting of systematic reviews (Page et al., 2021).

The eligibility criteria were formulated considering the above-defined objectives. Studies exploring media literacy, directly or indirectly, concerning the specific characteristics and needs of children with any type of disability were included in the sample. Other eligibility criteria for the sample included: (a) peer-reviewed research, (b) published in the English language, (c) published from 2015 to the final day the systematic search was conducted, on 19th February 2021.

Every study that did not comply with these criteria was excluded, namely non-peer-reviewed research, research published in other languages which could not be properly assessed by the research team, secondary research, and research that did not approach one of the crucial aspects of this study's aim, including children, media literacy, and disability.

The selection of six years (2015–2021) intended to summarize and highlight the more recent conclusions in the field as a strategy to better understand the current needs for media literacy research with such audiences. The reporting of the most recent evidence is considered a relevant quality factor for systematic reviews (Schlosser, 2007).

The inclusion of primary non-empirical research frames the present study as an integrative review: a more exploratory approach that intends to establish the complete mapping of a set of concepts or phenomena of concern (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

2.2. Information Sources

The search was conducted in electronic databases defined during the search strategy. This included ACM Digital Library, EBSCO, and B-On. Considering the nature of the study and to ensure the inclusion of "grey literature" that can broaden the scope of the review while providing a more comprehensive view of the available evidence (Mahood et al., 2013), ResearchGate was also included as an information source.

2.3. Search Strategy

Considering the exploratory nature of the present review, the search strategy was always composed of two different phases. First, each database was systematically searched through the equation: "media literacy" AND ("children" OR "youth"). Secondly, the obtained studies were filtered with one of the following terms at a time: "special educational needs," "special education," "inclusive education," "disabilit*," "autism," "ASD" (autism spectrum disorder), "deaf," "deaf and hard of hearing," or "blind." Results were also filtered for the time range 2015–2021. The search was then conducted in the electronic databases with the search equation; filters were applied when possible.

2.4. Selection Process

The selection process throughout the final sample is represented in the flowchart in Figure 1. The identification

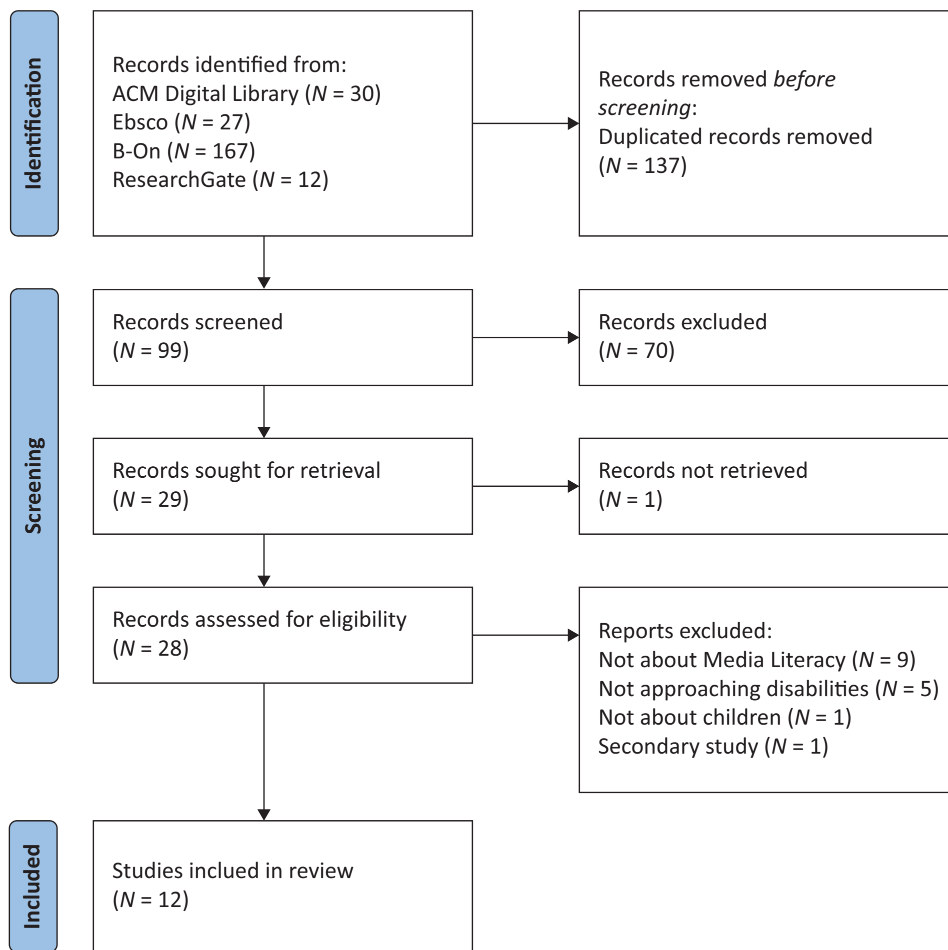

Figure 1. Flowchart of the selection process. Source: Authors' work based on Page et al. (2021).

phase was developed by applying the search strategy to the information sources and retrieving the obtained data. In the screening phase, the above-defined criteria were applied at a superficial level, meaning that only titles, abstracts, and general information were considered. In the eligibility phase, the criteria were followed by thoroughly analyzing each study before selecting the final sample.

2.5. Risk of Bias

The risk of bias in the present study was approached through two different perspectives: (a) potential reporting bias in the selected studies, and (b) potential bias resulting from the content analysis performed by two different researchers.

The evaluation of the potential reporting bias was based on two different guidelines, depending on the research design of each study, namely, if it was an empirical or a conceptual study. In the first case, a 16-item version of the quality assessment tool for studies with diverse designs (QATSDD) was developed by Sirriyeh et al. (2012). To this extent, a set of nine criteria was transversally applied, and a variable number of complementary criteria that depended on the research design, whether it be quantitative, qualitative, or both, was also applied. A scoring system to rate the compliance of the article with each criterion was adopted, ranging from zero (*not at all*) to three (*complete*), as originally described by the authors (Sirriyeh et al., 2012). Considering the need to assess the risk of bias in conceptual articles, another approach was also adopted, based on the research design elements in conceptual papers developed by Jaakkola (2020), aligned with a scoring system similar to QATSDD (Sirriyeh et al., 2012). The guidelines adopted to assess the risk of bias in each article are systematized in Table 1.

To ensure the reliability of the present study's conclusion and considering the qualitative nature of the analyzed data (MacPhail et al., 2015), intercoder reliability was computed as a preliminary phase of the content analysis. Thus, it is possible to highlight the contribution of such technique to enhancing the systematicity, communicability, transparency of the developed coding, and cohesion of the research team (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Considering the sample size (Gwet, 2012), Cohen's kappa was adopted as the intercoder reliability indicator. Multiple coding was applied to 16.67% of the coded material (two articles), following the good practices that generally recommend the application of

Table 1. Studies' characteristics regarding the sample and the adopted research design (N = 12).

Study No.	Citation	Adopted Guidelines
1	Cheung (2016)	
2	Ellison and Evans (2016)	
4	Friesem (2017)	
7	Alsumait and Fasial (2018)	Conceptual papers (Jaakkola, 2020)
8	Eriksson et al. (2019)	
11	Friesem and Probst (2020)	
12	Subashkevych et al. (2020)	
3	Probst (2017)	
5	Kasap and Gürçınar (2017)	
6	Rodriguez and Diaz (2017)	16-item QATSDD (Sirriyeh et al., 2012)
9	Hachisu et al. (2019)	
10	Anukool and Petsangsri (2019)	

this procedure to between 10% and 25% of the sample (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Cohen's kappa, agreement rate, and disagreement rate for each node were computed in NVivo 12, while averages and standard deviations for the full sample were manually calculated.

In the different coding nodes, kappa ranged from 0.50 to 1, with an average kappa of 0.80 (SD = 0.20) for the full coding. Agreement between the two coders ranged between 97.67% and 100.00%, with an average agreement of 99.39% (SD = 0.60), and disagreement ranged between 0.00% and 2.33%, with an average disagreement of 0.62% (SD = 0.60). The obtained scores are acceptable and represent "great" correspondence, mainly for an exploratory approach (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

2.6. Analysis and Synthesis of Results

In the present study, and considering its qualitative and exploratory nature, the synthesis of results was performed through content analysis with the support of NVivo software, version 12 plus. For risk of bias analysis and other numerical aspects of the review, descriptive statistics were calculated using SPSS, version 26. A simultaneous top-down and bottom-up coding frame was developed to foster an analysis frame that fits both the study's conceptual framework and the data from the articles.

3. Results

3.1. Study Selection

Considering the nature of the present integrative systematic review and its goal of mapping the intersections between media literacy research and disability for children and youth, the obtained records in scientific databases were further analyzed with descriptive statistics procedures. The number of articles published between 2015 and 2021 obtained by applying the terms "media literacy" and "children" to the above-mentioned scientific databases (N = 1,175) supports the relevance of media literacy in the current research scenario. Although the paradigm of inclusive education is adopted in the study, "special education" was used to ensure a broader spectrum of studies.

Nevertheless, when filtering such data to focus on interventions for children with disabilities, it is possible to highlight that such results become much less expressive, with only 236 studies (20.09%). Regarding the specific filters (Figure 2), the most inexpressive results were obtained for the term "ASD," with 11 articles (0.94%), followed by "inclusive education" (N = 14; 1.19%) and "special educational needs" (N = 16; 1.36%). The most expressive results were obtained for "disabilities" (N = 67; 5.70%), "special education" (N = 34; 2.89%), and "autism" (N = 27; 2.29%). A graphic representation of these results can be found in Figure 2.

3.2. Study Characteristics

The present SLR had a total sample size of 72 subjects, with each article's sample ranging from one to 50 subjects (M = 14.40; SD = 20.38). Due to the integrative nature of this work, seven studies with a conceptual or media-driven emphasis were included, and therefore, not included in the previous sample calculations. Studies were categorized considering their sample of participants or audience targeted in the conceptual approach. Thus, a total of four studies (33.33%) had children and youth with disabilities as a sample or audience, followed by studies approaching students in general, with a specific focus on the ones with disabilities (N = 3; 25%). Other considered samples or audiences included youth with ASD, adults with disabilities, teachers of deaf or blind students, deaf children, and experts in deaf children's education (N = 1; 8.33%).

In terms of research design, four studies (33.33%) were considered conceptual positioning articles; this means that their main focus is not on empirically testing premises but rather on integrating and proposing new relationships between constructs (Gilson & Goldberg,

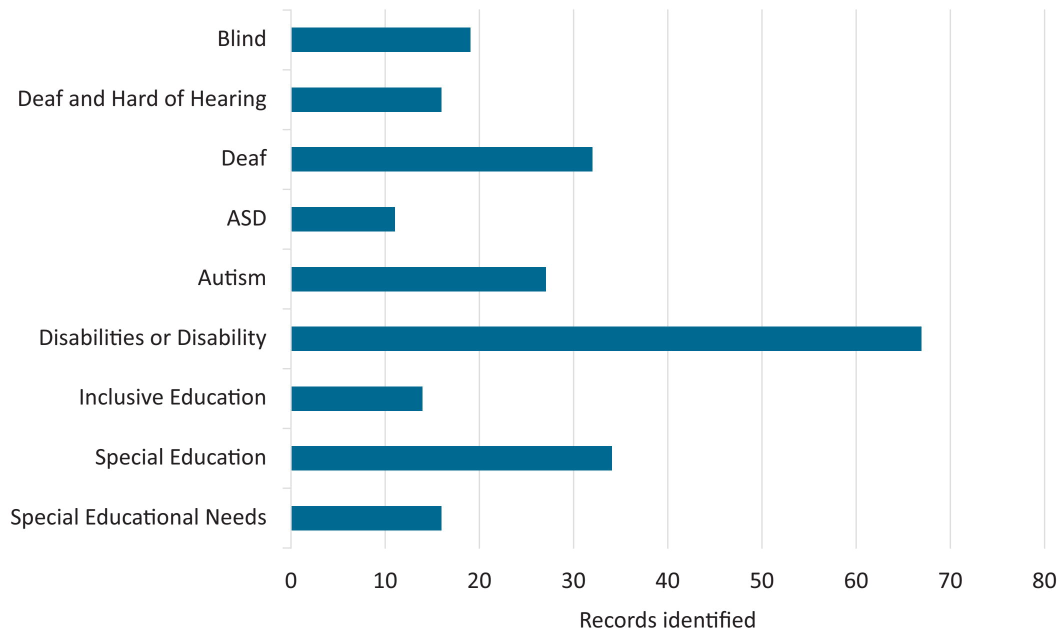

Figure 2. Records identified with each specific filter.

2015). The sample was also composed of two media critical analysis articles (16.67%), one case study, one in-depth interview (qualitative approach), one quasi-experimental study (mixed-methods) approach, one technology design report, one usability study (quantitative approach), and one focus group based descriptive study (qualitative approach), each representing 8.33% of the sample. An overview of the studies' characteristics is presented in Table 2.

3.3. Risk of Bias in Studies

By assessing the risk of bias in the sample's empirical studies (N = 5), it was possible to register a heterogeneity

Table 2. Studies' characteristics regarding the sample and the adopted research design (N = 12).

Study	Citation	N	Studied sample or audience	Research design
1	Cheung (2016)	n.a.	Children and youth with disabilities	Conceptual positioning
2	Ellison and Evans (2016)	n.a.	Children and youth with disabilities	Conceptual positioning
3	Probst (2017)	1	Youth with ASD	Case study
4	Friesem (2017)	n.a.	Students, in general, emphasizing the needs of the ones with disabilities	Conceptual positioning
5	Kasap and Gürçınar (2017)	50	Adults with disabilities	In-depth interview (qualitative)
6	Rodriguez and Diaz (2017)	12	Teachers of deaf or blind students	Quasi-experimental (mixed methods)
7	Alsumait and Fasial (2018)	n.a.	Deaf children	Conceptual positioning
8	Eriksson et al. (2019)	n.a.	Students, in general, emphasizing the needs of the ones with disabilities	Design report
9	Hachisu et al. (2019)	2	Students, in general, emphasizing the needs of the ones with disabilities	Usability study (quantitative)
10	Anukool and Petsangsri (2019)	7	Experts in deaf children's education	Descriptive study (qualitative focus groups)
11	Friesem and Probst (2020)	n.a.	Children and youth with disabilities	Media critical analysis
12	Subashkevych et al. (2020)	n.a.	Children and youth with disabilities	Media critical analysis

Note: n.a. = not applicable in this specific research design.

in the reporting accuracy. While some reporting criteria registered a high level of compliance, such as definition of aims (*M* = 2.80; *SD* = 0.45), or the fit between research question and data collection tools (*M* = 2.50; *SD* = 0.71), others registered a low level of compliance, including evidence of sample size in terms of analysis (*M* = 0.40; *SD* = 0.55), and the reporting of detailed recruitment data (*M* = 0.60; *SD* = 0.89). Two criteria were not registered in any of the sample's articles, namely "representative sample of target group of a reasonable size" and "statistical assessment of reliability and validity of measurement tool(s)." The complete results can be found in Table 3.

By implementing the research design elements (Jaakkola, 2020) to the sample of conceptual studies (*N* = 7), it was possible to register an average compliance score above the mid-value for all studies, ranging from 1.83 (*SD* = 0.75) and 2.67 (*SD* = 0.52). The choice of theories and concepts used to generate novel insights was the most complied with (*M* = 2.57; *SD* = 0.79), followed by the choice of theories and concepts analyzed (*M* = 2.43; *SD* = 0.79). The perspectives in terms of applied levels of analysis and aggregation were the criterion with the lowest values of compliance (*M* = 2; *SD* = 0.82). Full results for the risk of bias in conceptual studies are presented in Table 4. Considering their reflective and descriptive nature, media critical analysis and design reports were analyzed as conceptual papers to this extent.

3.4. Results of Individual Studies

3.4.1. Research Question 1

Children referred to as "students," "disabled children," and "children with special needs" are the main audience in the sources, followed by teachers, parents, and support technicians. Media literacy actions in studies took place mainly within schools (*N* = 6; 50%), with four schools referred to as special education and the other two as mainstream.

Media production and media analysis are mentioned in sources as the most used pedagogical approach. Since many media educators call for a reflective pedagogy, media production in education is increasingly emphasized and could also be a plus for children with disabilities, who could benefit from expressing themselves and their narratives (Cheung, 2016). Education that promotes media literacy to children with disabilities enables

Table 3. Implementation of the 16-item QATSDD (Sirriyeh et al., 2012) to the sample of empirical studies (*N* = 5).

Criterion/Study	3	5	6	9	10	*M*	*SD*
Explicit theoretical framework	3	3	2	1	1	2.00	1.00
Statement of aims/objectives in the main body of the report	3	3	3	3	2	2.80	0.45
Clear description of the research setting	3	2	3	1	2	2.20	0.84
Evidence of sample size considered in terms of analysis	1	1	0	0	0	0.40	0.55
Representative sample of target group of a reasonable size	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
Description of the procedure for data collection	2	1	3	2	1	1.80	0.84
Rationale for choice of data collection tool(s)	1	1	3	2	1	1.60	0.89
Detailed recruitment data	0	0	2	1	0	0.60	0.89
Statistical assessment of reliability and validity of measurement tool(s)	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
Fit between the stated research question and method of data collection	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3	n.a.	3.00	0.00
Fit between stated research question and format and content of data collection tool (e.g., interview schedule)	n.a.	n.a.	2	3	n.a.	2.50	0.71
Fit between research question and method of analysis	3	2	3	n.a.	1	2.25	0.96
Good justification for the analytical method selected	2	2	3	n.a.	2	2.25	0.50
Assessment of reliability of analytical process	0	0	0	n.a.	0	0.00	0.00
Evidence of user involvement in the design	2	1	n. a.	n.a.	1	1.33	0.58
Strengths and limitations critically discussed	3	2	n. a.	n.a.	1	2.00	1.00
Total	23	18	24	16	12	18.60	4.98
Maximum possible score for the study	42	42	39	33	42	n.a.	n.a.
M	1.64	1.29	1.85	1.45	0.86	n.a.	n.a.
SD	1.28	1.12	1.34	1.21	0.77	n.a.	n.a.

Note: n.a. = not applicable.

Table 4. Implementation of the research design elements (Jaakkola, 2020) to the sample of conceptual studies (*N* = 7).

Criterion/Study	1	2	4	7	8	11	12	*M*	*SD*
Choice of theories and concepts used to generate novel insights	3	3	3	2	3	3	1	2.57	0.79
Choice of theories and concepts analyzed	2	3	3	2	3	3	1	2.43	0.79
Perspective; level(s) of analysis/aggregation	2	1	2	3	1	2	3	2.00	0.82
Key concepts to be analyzed/explained or used to analyze/explain	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2.14	0.38
Translation of target phenomenon in conceptual language; definitions of key concepts	1	3	2	3	3	1	2	2.14	0.90
Approach to integrating concepts; quality of argumentation	1	3	2	3	2	1	2	2.00	0.82
Total	11	15	14	16	14	12	11	n.a.	n.a.
M	1.83	2.50	2.33	2.67	2.33	2.00	1.83	n.a.	n.a.
SD	0.75	0.84	0.52	0.52	0.82	0.89	0.75	n.a.	n.a.

Notes: The maximum possible score was 18 for all studies; n.a. = not applicable.

them to understand how they are portrayed in the media through the decoding and encoding of media messages, as well as empowering them with a critical understanding of their identity and representation in a confident manner. Through media production, children with disabilities could have a voice in the media, be creators and not only consumers, and be prepared to take up a future career in media industries (Cheung, 2016; Ellison & Evans, 2016; Friesem, 2017; Friesem & Probst, 2020). Furthermore, through media analysis and the deconstruction of media representations of disability, all students will contribute to the fight against stereotypes and ableism.

Regarding interventions with children with disabilities, one source (8.33%)—Probst (2017)—presents a case study: "provocative selfies" with a 16-year-old female student diagnosed with ASD, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and anxiety. This student had a history of presenting difficulty with perspective-taking. In terms of procedure, "the participant was asked to select three images from Instagram to evaluate" (Probst, 2017, p. 51) and an inquiry-based discussion prompt designed to elicit critical evaluation of an image from social media followed. For each image, the researcher began with an initial question and then continued in a conversational tone, offering prompts to help address a variety of the areas covered by the National Association for Media Literacy Education's key questions or to clarify the participant's responses. The participant provided verbal answers, which the researcher then recorded. The four questions for the participant regarding image analysis were related to social awareness (two questions) and self-awareness. Results show that the participant was engaging in social comparison, but they had difficulty identifying their feelings about each image and interpreting the image. The author concludes that "this case study provides suggestive evidence of a promising opportunity to help students develop better social and emotional learning skills through social media literacy education" (Probst, 2017, p. 54).

Hachisu et al. (2019) presented the development of EnhancedTouchX, a bracelet-type interpersonal body area network device for analyzing contextual information of interpersonal touch interactions, evaluated in the lab by two participants. One of the applications of EnhancedTouchX is EnhancedTouchPlay, a social playware that uses, measures, and interprets interpersonal touch interactions and can provide real-time visual and haptic feedback. Particularly, visual feedback facilitates touch interactions among children with ASD. One could ask why this is related to media literacy. But the answer could easily be found in the central role of personalized learning environments in promoting media literacy and related skills by including children with disabilities and human diversity in general in the education environment. EnhancedTouchPlay is a technology and a possible affordance to be used in social-emotional competencies, which is important to children's understanding of their and others' online presence and collaboration. The other three empirical studies have as the main audience teachers of deaf or blind students (Rodriguez & Diaz, 2017), adults with disabilities (Kasap & Gürçınar, 2017), and experts in deaf children's education (Anukool & Petsangsri, 2019), and all of them give important contributions to programs of media literacy development in children with disability.

3.4.2. Research Question 2

Considering the analyzed sources, the intersection between disability and media seems to be conceptualized in a dichotomous manner, including negative and positive views. Negative views were mentioned in five articles (*N* references = 28), and positive views in three (*N* references = 10).

How media unrealistically portrays people with disabilities emerges in the sample, strongly linked to the potential negative influences this factor may have on youngsters. Nevertheless, research also seems to acknowledge the role of media literacy education (Cheung, 2016). Besides Cheung (2016), other sources emphasized the negative conceptualizations of this intersection, including the likelihood of students with disabilities engaging in behavior that will receive rejection feedback that develops into social media prejudice (Probst, 2017). Friesem (2017) extended this premise by emphasizing how training in journalism and mass communication is influenced by this, based on the case of the negative portrayals of speech disabilities in textbooks, usually framed as a handicap. The negative framing of people with a disability seems to be transversal in media, crossing different platforms and ultimately impacting media literacy due to the lack of presence of people with disabilities in written media, most specifically in the first pages and other prominent positions (Kasap & Gürçınar, 2017). According to the work of Friesem and Probst (2020), with an intersectional focus that includes gender and sexuality, representations of disability in the media are still closely linked to strong ideologies of "normalcy."

On the other hand, the positive conceptualizations of this intersection also emerged in the sample's articles, closely linked to the potential of media literacy, namely based on critical media analysis. This included exploring the benefits for youth of using social media, specifically in promoting cognitive and affective empathy (Probst, 2017). Also, media seems to have a strong role in validating the existence of children and youth with disabilities by providing them with representations with which they can empathize, including paralympic athletes, artists, politicians, and scientists with disabilities (Kasap & Gürçınar, 2017). An interesting strategy to promote this emerged from the work of Nikolaidis (2013), where the movie *Rust and Bone* was used to reflect on media, gender, sexuality, and disability, through critical analysis, as explored by Friesem and Probst (2020).

3.4.3. Research Question 3

In terms of media literacy actions' positive outcomes, inclusion and social and emotional learning were the most frequent, being mentioned in six studies (50%) with 19 references (16.81%) and 16 references (14.16%), respectively. Problem-solving and e-health were the least present ($N = 1$; 8.33%), with four references (3.54%) and one reference (0.88%), respectively. Descriptive statistics on all the positive outcomes are presented in Table 5.

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to perform an integrative review to summarize and analyze the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in media literacy research, with the overall results pointing to this population's significant underrepresentation.

The first relevant aspect supporting these results is the number of studies about disabilities and media literacy compared to the number of studies approaching media literacy which do not include this population. Such an expressive result seems to provide a strong answer to RQ1 by acknowledging the low involvement of children with disabilities in media literacy research. Moreover, this lack of involvement is not only represented by the small number of studies obtained in this SLR but also by their specific characteristics. A dominance of conceptual research designs corroborates how the discussion around the media and information literacy skills of

Table 5. Positive outcomes of media literacy in the sample and number of references ($N = 12$).

Outcome	*N* Sources (%)	*N* References (%)
Inclusion	6 (50.00)	19 (16.81)
Social and emotional learning	6 (50.00)	16 (14.16)
Critical thinking	4 (33.33)	15 (13.27)
Identity expressions	3 (25.00)	12 (10.62)
Empowerment	2 (16.67)	10 (8.85)
Future work skills	3 (25.00)	8 (7.08)
Classroom engagement	3 (25.00)	8 (7.08)
Civic engagement	3 (25.00)	8 (7.08)
Collaboration	3 (25.00)	6 (5.30)
Problem-solving	1 (8.33)	4 (3.54)
Digital citizenship	2 (16.7)	3 (2.65)
Creativity	2 (16.7)	3 (2.65)
e-Health	1 (8.33)	1 (0.88)
Total	12 (100.00)	113 (100.00)

children and youth with disabilities is, above all, theoretical, highlighting a deficit of fieldwork and tangible interventions. It was also possible to note that even empirical studies frequently use experts or teachers as the research subjects instead of directly including the voices of children with disabilities. A lack of systematic approaches to sample definition and data gathering was also registered in the risk of bias analysis, supporting the results discussed above.

The answers provided to RQ1 show a discrepancy between media literacy research and the postulates of the Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), based on the classical notion of "nothing about us without us," as well as with the premises of inclusive research (Schwartz et al., 2019), where participants must have a "co-researcher" role.

The intersections between media and disability (RQ2) are mainly conceptualized through the dichotomy between a set of challenges and opportunities. The main identified challenges approached how media tend to represent people with disabilities in a stigmatized, unrealistic, and mainly negative way, impacting this audience's views about themselves. These notions seem to be linked to a strong ableist media discourse centered around ideas of "normal," which is simultaneously a cause and a consequence of the lack of disability representation and the lack of presence of these individuals in media and audiovisual production. Ultimately, a mismatch between media representations and the current social paradigms emerges, which diminishes the role of accessible media and the social context in the full citizenship of this population.

Considering the explored context, it seems easy to understand why media literacy is so crucial for children with disabilities, especially since this SLR has also concluded that they are more exposed to social media abuse. Nevertheless, the intersection between media literacy and disability presents opportunities to tackle this issue. Such opportunities include the documented role of media literacy interventions in promoting cognitive and affective empathy and a sense of otherness that develops awareness of diverse human functioning and identities.

Another relevant aspect to be discussed regarding the obtained results is how the positive outcomes of media literacy in children and youth with disabilities seem, to some extent, similar to those of children without disabilities, except for the inclusion factor. Reflecting on RQ3 allows us to understand that. In a highly digitized society, the promotion of media literacy in people with disabilities seems to be linked to effective educational and social inclusion. Furthermore, media literacy seems to promote other aspects that can also be, directly or indirectly, linked to inclusion, such as social and emotional learning, critical thinking, identity expressions, empowerment, future work skills, classroom engagement, civic engagement, collaboration, problem-solving, digital citizenship, creativity, and e-health.

4.1. Limitations and Future Directions

Although the present study provides a set of interesting insights into the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in media literacy, it also raises a set of practical and methodological concerns. Firstly, the sample size is small and considerable heterogeneity was found in the included studies, with a risk of bias that should not be ignored. Although this implies some methodological issues, it is important to highlight how it reinforces the invisibility of this group in media literacy research. Secondly, it is also important to note how an SLR only includes academic and research-driven approaches to the promotion of media literacy in children with disabilities. Even if we consult a broad range of articles, this does not consider the field interventions, potentially done in formal and informal education, which are not documented as a research piece. Another aspect is how the included studies do not allow for a more detailed analysis of the specific disabilities or support needs of some individuals from the sample (e.g., some motor or psychological support needs), which can be relevant considering the different layers of discrimination and how they intersect with media representations and roles.

Future research must consider human diversity in media literacy and media education research actions as a strategy to foster inclusion in education and society. Inclusive educational research can be operationalized through more representative and participatory research that considers these individuals as agents of change. Furthermore, this premise could be strengthened by a study that acknowledges other forms of dissemination actions to carry out a broader mapping of the field that transcends academia.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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