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Supporting Teacher Collaboration Aimed at Developing High School Students' Digital Media Literacy: A Participatory Action Research Study

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SUPPORTING TEACHER COLLABORATION AIMED AT DEVELOPING HIGH
SCHOOL STUDENTS' DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY:
A PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

by

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my village; with your collective showings of moral support, shoulders to cry on, and copious amounts of caffeine I was able to make it through this doctoral process. To my husband and two little men, you have given me the motivation to see this through even when things became tough. Your patience and hugs were the best for keeping me on task and I will be forever grateful. To my parents, who should also be considered for a degree based on the information they obtained while I read and reread my paper to them over the phone, I thank you for your help and support. To the co-workers who were willing to open up their classrooms and listen to me talk incessantly about a topic I feel so passionately about, thank you.

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ABSTRACT

The growing use of social media as a source of information about important current events among high school students requires the development of new instructional strategies that promote digital media literacy. Recognizing that the use of social media varies extensively among high school students, the nature of this problem is highly context dependent. As such, the most likely approach to be successful in a given classroom is one led and enacted by teachers in their own classrooms. Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation in practice was twofold. The first purpose was to develop effective curricular materials that support digital media literacy among high school students. The second purpose was to better understand how teachers who are attempting to develop curricula for social media literacy reflect on and use student data that is generated in the classroom. Using a participatory action research (PAR) design, my participants and I engaged in a collaborative effort to design and refine a set of instructional strategies through the use of Lesson Study. Iterative cycles of development, enactment and reflection provided new insights into both teacher collaboration and student development of digital media literacy. The results of this cyclical collaborative practice led to a new digital media literacy lesson series that could be applied throughout the social studies and observational data about teacher decision making through collaborative data-driven decision making. Implications for teachers, teacher educators, and those that directly support teachers in schools are discussed.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CoP .... Community of Practice

CTE .... Career Technical Education

CTECS .... Connecticut Technical Education and Career System

LS .... Lesson Study

PAR .... Participatory Action Research

SM .... Social Media

UDL .... Universal Design for Learning

USH .... United States History

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

One early September, a group of eleventh grade students entered my classroom, eager to participate in the days' discussion and debate about historical and modern American immigration. Always the politically charged and eager participants, two students began discussing modern political perspectives on the day's topic. As one student suggested the importance of a wall to protect jobs and prevent illegal immigration, the other cited hearing about three-hundred specific lies told by our national leadership. I was forced to halt the conversation in recognition of a teachable moment. Each student believed that the brief and politically charged headlines they recently viewed within their Twitter and Facebook feeds were facts to be thrown into educational discourse. Neither student knew the source of their claim, nor could they establish the context for which the claim was being used. With growing charges of fake news and bias media it became glaringly apparent that my students needed more guidance in navigating this increasingly divisive and prevalent source of digital media.

While I am a product of a generation that is familiar with social media, I fell early enough in that generation to have been educated in the importance of vetting information for levels of bias and reliability through alternate means than Internet resources. My own experiences differ from that of my students, particularly in regard to the use of social media as a primary source of both entertainment and knowledge of current events. Despite this difference, I recognize the value of this easily accessible source of information and the significance of social media as a digital learning tool. It could be posited that social media

has a significant level of impact on media consumption and comprehension (Len Rios et. al, 2016), and therefore digital media literacy is a skill that must be taught to this generation.

The definition of media literacy is fluid and dependent upon one's generational upbringing. Younger generations have been exposed to more digital and social media than any generation prior (Len Rios et. al, 2016). Rubin (1998) defines media literacy as, "…understanding the sources and technologies of communication, the codes that are used, the messages that are produced, and the selection, interpretation, and impact of those messages" (p4). Digital media literacy, for the purposes of this paper and in recognition of prior interpretations of media literacy, can be defined as one's ability to understand the unique coding, organization, impact, and interpretation of media sources shared through newer digital resources; including social media, online news outlets, and through digital blogging.

Our access to new technology and media has become significantly more personal over the last few decades; shifting from traditional print and news-media to interactive social media. Len-Rios et. al (2016) found that over seventy-five percent of adolescents (aged 13–17) use some form of social media, with older adolescents (ages 15–17) reporting use of social media more than their younger counterparts —81% vs. 68%. More than seventy-percent of adolescents said they used more than one social media site (Len Rios et. al, 2016). We now use social media as a source for information on both current events and historical analysis. Access to this new social media through personal digital devices, and the widespread age range of access to digital media, has led to a significant increase in the need to address media literacy within the secondary classroom (Fry, 2011). These

newer media sources provide opportunity to interact with our media text in new ways; but bring with it an inundation of unreliable media information. Social studies educators are well aware that, "media literacy education is obligated to harness the technological imaginary and steer it in a productive direction" (Fry, 2011); that is, media literacy instruction should guide students toward developing productive and contributory citizenship. If students are instructed to navigate new technologies and social media to recognize bias and reliability, they are inherently able to be more productively engaged in their political and social surroundings.

Problem of Practice

As a secondary social studies instructor in the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) for the last thirteen years, I have seen a shift in student awareness of bias and reliability in source material. Students partaking in the academic and trade programming offered by the CTECS district are more likely to enter the workforce and take on civic responsibility upon their high school graduation than many of their local education program counterparts (EdSight, 2018). Social studies instructors within the district are tasked with preparing students to be informed and engaged consumers of their world and the media that is visible in all facets of their life.

In a world that feels as though it is becoming increasingly divided over news credibility and the idea of "fake news" it is important to assist students in creating reflective guidelines for their ever-growing choice of media, social media (Len Rios et. al, 2016; Fry, 2011). In recent times, it appears that students' selections of research media sources have transferred from traditional encyclopedic reference materials, which are arguably reliable and usually less biased due to their vetting processes, to digital and social media source

materials that are developed and written by a variety of ideological groups and organizations (Ahlers & Hesser, 2019). Upon examining current and historical events in our class discussion, students often cite information obtained from popular online social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, or the like. This information, and student usage of it, has some glaring inaccuracies even beyond the ideological. This observation elevated concern that if my students are missing the key historical accuracy of these sources, what must they be missing in ideological bias?

This is not to say that social media is not a valuable source for content. In fact, it could be argued that students who do not know how to decipher the reliability and bias in digital text may not have equal access to our democratic structures due to the increased use of those sources (Shearer & Gottfried, 2017; Len Rios et. al, 2016; Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012; Fry, 2011). In late 2017, seventy-eight percent of Americans under the age of fifty reported getting their news information primarily from social media sources (Shearer & Gottfried, 2017). As an adjunct professor for an early-college program at local university I had the opportunity to collaborate with many freshman-level university faculties; many of whom had stated that incoming freshmen demonstrate a fear of the word *bias*, rather than acknowledging that bias is not always bad and allows us perspectives outside of our own. From the lens of a freshman college professor it appears that high school students are being taught that bias is negative and that all media must be objective to be of value. However, objective political and even historical context and content just simply does not exist. Students must instead be instructed how to navigate social media and its inherent biases (Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012); to recognize fake digital media

versus valid digital media and to contextualize the reliability of some of their favorite digital news sources.

Recently, I became a humanities department head and instructional coach, where I noted that other practitioners were also struggling with instructing students to use digital and social media resources in effective ways. Teachers were left with the task of answering: how can we best develop lessons and instructional activities that help students recognize the bias or reliability of the information they encounter in our current era of social media? Moreover, how does student interaction with new forms of social media impact their ability to become an informed and active citizenry? According to Herold (2016), "both students and teachers (need to) have an effective framework for evaluating the credibility of (the) information they encounter." Though Herold does not propose what this framework should look like, the Canadian Center for Digital and Media Literacy, "MediaSmarts" (n.d.), suggests that there are five key constructs of digital media literacy that must be addressed in order to effectively teach digital media literacy: media as a construct, audience, commercial implications, political implications, and aesthetic form. As the implementation of new digital media literacy was brought to the Connecticut Technical High Schools, there was a noted need for a collaborative approach to designing and modifying curricula; to develop both effective practice and create buy-in from instructors and students alike. The department elected to carry out its first implementation of the Japanese practice of lesson study (Schipper, 2017; Dudley, 2015; Lewis et al, 2006) to facilitate this collaboration. Lesson study, as a practice within education, provides a framework for practitioners to carry out cycles of lesson creation, observation, and refinement based on data collected through observation and student assessment (Dudley, 2015).

Theoretical Frameworks

Constructivist (Vygotsky, 1978) theories within education suggest that the best means for producing effective learning experiences is through collaborative and reflective practice amongst educators. The Japanese practice of lesson study provides a forum in which instructors can effectively communicate and collaborate. A leading trend in media literacy instruction is the inclusion of digital and social media literacy. Within the justification of Social Efficiency theory (Tyler, 1949) effective education practices must also adapt to meet societal needs. Therefore, lesson study is being utilized under the justification of constructivist theories to address modern concerns about digital media literacy within the secondary social studies classroom (Vygotsky, 1978; Takahashi & Yoshida, 2004).

Vygotsky (1978) suggests that the primary means for developing and expanding upon new knowledge is through the collaborative collection of new ideas and shared experiences. This theory of Constructivism gives purpose to the lesson study design of practitioner collaboration outlined within this study (Vygotsky, 1978). Lesson study utilizes multiple instructional improvement strategies which are evaluated through collaborative lesson design, observation, and data collections (Lewis et. al, 2006). Lesson study is grounded in both constructivism as a collaborative approach for attaining knowledge and is an extension upon the practice of utilizing Communities of Practice (CoP) (Vygotsky, 1978; Lave & Wenger, 1991). A CoP within education is a group of practitioners who desire to work collectively to improve the quality and delivery of instruction in their classroom (Takahashi & Yoshida, 2004; Widjaja, 2013). Constructivist theories behind CoP guide the lesson study framework, in that lesson study is a detailed

collaborative practice in which trust is developed between practitioners, with a collective knowledge and support for a common end goal (Groves, Doig, Widjaja, Garner, & Palmer, 2013; Widjaja, 2013). The end goal in this practice is the growth of learning amongst students and the improvement of personal instruction practice, however this requires trust amongst the participants (Takahashi & Yoshida, 2004; Widjaja, 2013).

Additionally, the purpose of education, according to early Social Efficiency theory (Tyler, 1949), is to produce productive members of a society and the needs of the child are secondary to the needs of the greater society. A modern approach to Social Efficiency theory suggests that the needs of the student reflect the needs of the society; student needs and student learning can frame effective teaching practice and reflection (Tyler, 1949; Schiro, 2011). Modern digital media literacy curricular needs can be effectively addressed by examining the needs of the community, and the teacher practices that guide lesson design. Through practitioner collaboration and inquiry, newly developed lessons can address community, student, and practitioner needs.

Informed by the theory of constructivism and the need for a digitally literate youth population within the social efficiency structures of education, the collaborative efforts of practitioners engaged in lesson study can be applied to the development, enactment, and reflection on instructional strategies that promote digital media literacy. Constructivism also suggests that student development of social media literacy can be done through collective discovery and collaboration and thus influences the work and the collaboration of teachers (Vygotsky, 1978; Takahashi & Yoshida, 2004; Widjaja, 2013).

Research Questions

The purpose of this dissertation in practice was twofold. The first purpose was to develop effective curricular materials that support digital media literacy among high school students. The second purpose was to better understand how teachers who are attempting to develop curricula for social media literacy reflect on and use student data that is generated in the classroom. Given these two identified needs, this study employs lesson series that was created and tested through collaborative practitioner lesson study. In consideration of the multiple levels of research participation: facilitator, instructor, and student, this research examines two questions:

> **(RQ1)** How do specific instructional strategies contribute to the development of digital media literacy among secondary students?
>
> **(RQ2)** How does the development of digital media literacy amongst secondary students influence teacher decisions during lesson study?

While there will likely be a growth in digital media access in the future, it is important for educators to continue to develop curricula and learning strategies that assist students in their development of literacy strategies to decipher this new digital media age. These two questions represent each part of the cycle of lesson creation through lesson study (Takahashi & Yoshida, 2004); lesson design and creation of instructional strategies, evaluation of student data, and practitioner decision making.

Researcher Positionality

I have a unique perspective on the role that digital media has played on the youth's access to their world. My father was a computer programmer and therefore, I had access to computer technology and the Internet much earlier than many of my age-peers; my

personal definition of digital media literacy includes social media as a primary media message source. My experience with social media and familiarity with the world prior to its advent makes my interpretation of it as a media source different than that of my students. The assumption that there needs to be digital media curricular intervention is based on the belief that there is some underlying negative component to student use of that form of media (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). That is, in my own classroom I have witnessed students cite false information in class, at the detriment of their ability to carry out civil discourse. This assumption neglects to examine the positive implications of easy access to social and digital media.

Action research is inherently biased, as we seek to examine students in our own classrooms based on our own interests and concerns. In traditional research, the researcher is not usually personally involved with their subjects, though equally committed to the outcome (Mertler, 2014). Traditional or experimental research utilizes the scientific method and is traditionally conducted by researchers outside of the organization being examined, with the intent of creating a body of knowledge that is generalizable to larger populations (Mertler, 2014). In action research the educator must consider their role in relationship to both the practitioner and the students; and "as a member of the dominant culture in multiple categories it becomes increasingly important to establish trust with participants" (Bourke, 2014, p2). The students that were introduced to the new digital literacy lessons in this study were familiar with their instructors teaching practice, as they have worked significantly toward building comfort in their classrooms; across ethnic, political, and socio-economic divides. The first research question considers the impact of specific instructional strategies on student learning.

As a secondary social studies instructor for nearly thirteen years, I have worked with many students on the development of media literacy, but have found that as time progresses, the sources that many of my students cite in their analysis have become either less credible, or less reliable; and often based on initial social media interaction with those sources. This is a personal concern, as I feel my role in education is to develop productive and aware citizens. Recently I was appointed as a department head and instructional coach for a General Education/ Humanities Department at another school in my seventeen-school district. I am a white cisgender woman in my mid-thirties. I come from a middle-class family in a more affluent area of New England but grew up in the very town that is home to a wide range of ethnicities and social classes; and where I now serve as a department head. In this new role, I view myself as an insider, collaborating with other insiders within the framework of this participatory action research study (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

The second research question asks how student data influences the curricular decision-making processes of a team of teachers. My positionality, both in job duty and personal identity, greatly impact my collaborative interactions with my faculty peers. Effron and Ravid (2013) clarify that each classroom has its own dynamics, and that action research carried out in one classroom may not always be seamlessly applied elsewhere. Each of the instructors I facilitate as a department head and instructional coach hold their classroom as their own community, with their own routines and methods. It should also be noted that this was not a hindrance to the results of this study, as action research often lacks transferability, which can be attributed to this variance in classroom cultures and the demographics of students versus their instructors. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) cite a case study in which a teacher is left to analyze the role that their race, versus those of their

students, plays on the way a curriculum is delivered. In this case study, the teacher notes that the addition of inquiry and self-efficacy to curricula can assist students in bridging the divide that a curriculum created by one particular race or identity creates. Media literacy instruction can serve as a connecting force between varying ethnic, racial, and social backgrounds. Within this research, I had to consider my own cultural background and those of the instructors assisting me in collaborative curriculum design, the very nature of media literacy forces both the student and the practitioner to examine their personal biases.

Research Design

Given my role as an instructional coach, the design of this study reflects my stance that effective teacher learning needs to be self-selected, self-directed, generative and participatory. The design also reflects a constructivist perspective that informs the decisions related to effective classroom instruction. Since the primary focus for my participants was on the creation of a valuable media literacy curriculum through a lesson study between two social studies instructors, and the researcher that serves as their department head and instructional coach. This research was participatory, as action research in education always combines insider and outsider perspectives (Herr & Anderson, 2015). According to Ivankova (2013), "action research applies a collaborative approach to research because they seek knowledge about 'what works' in practice" and "combine insider–outsider perspectives" (p 52). Action research is inherently collaborative through practitioner inquiry. Herr and Anderson (2015) stress the importance of collaboration in carrying out *any* action research. My intention was to use student data to support and participate in the collaborative creation of a digital media literacy curriculum through lesson study. The desire was to develop an action research study that examines

three components of lesson study guided curricular design: creation of instructional strategies, evaluation of student data, and practitioner decision making.

Lesson study is a form of collaborative practitioner inquiry that clearly outlines a strategy to promote reflective teaching practice; in which educators engage in discourse at frequent intervals and observe each other's instruction practice in order to guide best practices in delivering material to their students (Souto-Manning, Mills, & O'keefe, 2010). Collaborative inquiry through lesson study uses the input of both teacher/practitioners and students to develop reflective practice and new curricula (Figure 1.1). The results of a high-quality lesson study can often be adapted for instructional use in other courses or classrooms (Schipper, 2017; Dudley, 2015). In both practice and theory, lesson study aids collaborative inquiry by providing a structure and framework for practitioner discourse and lesson refinement.
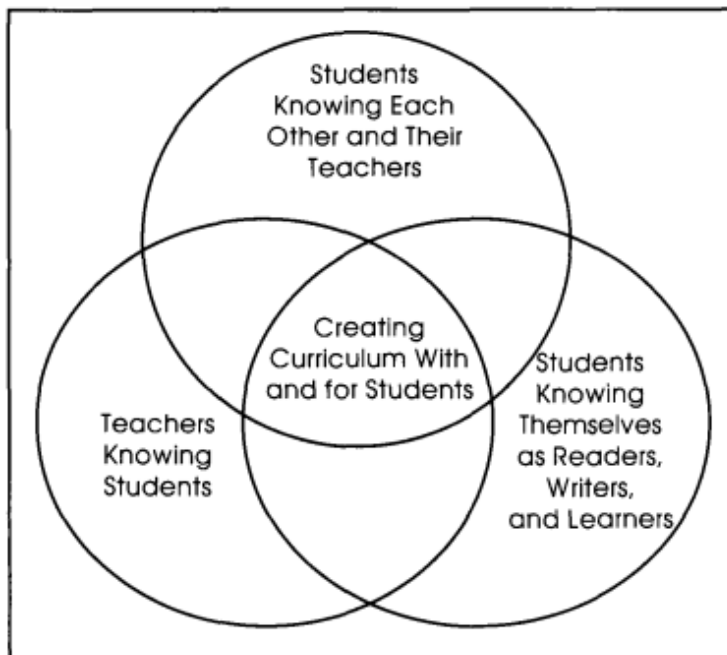

Figure 1.1: From Souto-Manning, Mills, & O'keefe (2010) "KNOWING STUDENTS VENN DIAGRAM" (p170)

To improve the dialogue between practitioners and support the teaching and learning goals of the district lesson study collaboration required instructors to utilize data to support their decisions for curricular and lesson changes (Figure 1.2). Data-driven decision making (DDDM), is a significant component of traditional lesson study (Schipper, 2017; Dudley, 2015). Data is an important tenet of any practitioner decision making process, as valid data analysis is considered one of the leading contributors to positive curricular change (Kennedy & Datnow, 2011). Collaborative practice that utilizes DDDM is more apt to consider student needs over all other education factors; lending connection to modern interpretations of student-centered and social efficiency approaches. In fact, Kennedy and Datnow (2010) suggest that including student in DDDM is a more progressive and effective way of using data to guide instruction. Student data is examined frequently and guided each of the two action research cycles of this research study. Students had opportunity to express their individual learning needs and even contribute to
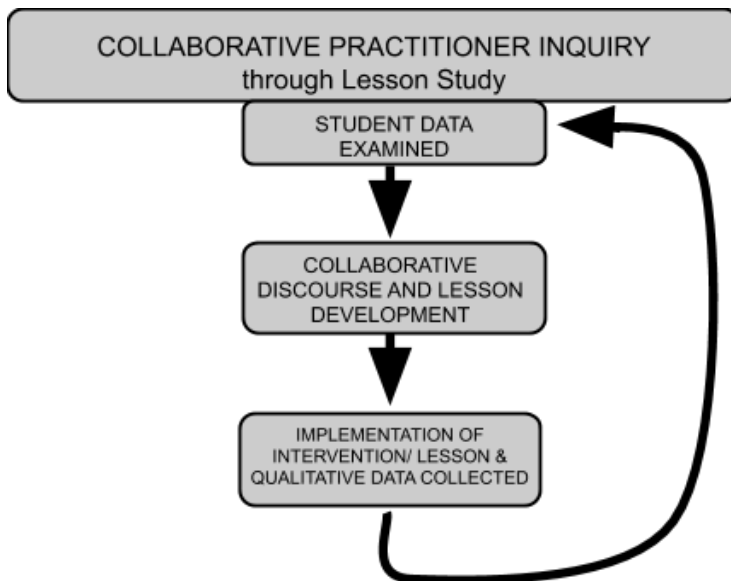

Figure 1.2: Lesson Study Design

the guidance of practitioner collaboration. Furthermore, if lessons within a unit of study are not connected to student interests or everyday experiences then they lack both utility and true retention of learning (Misco, 2014). Lesson study allows practitioners to compare and contrast what works in their classroom and is needed in the community and apply this information to a greater curriculum design (Schipper, 2017).

The students that participated in the first curricular implementations of the new digital media literacy lesson series were comprised of heterogeneously grouped social studies students in grades ten and eleven at a Connecticut Technical High School. The sample group was selected because it provides a broad demographic and curricular grouping within the district's curriculum frameworks. Through the examination of these two sample groups I was able to find new and innovative ways to address the development of digital media literacy prior to students completing their secondary level schooling. The students come from a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, and social classes. Many of them are from working- and middle-class families with a history of trade-work; thus, their attraction to attending the career technical (CTE) high school that this study examines. The technical high school system where this study took place operates in a 10-day cycle schedule, where students attend academic classes for ten days, then attend career technical trade classes for ten days, then return to academics cyclically. Based on discourse and previously administered school surveys, it is evident that most students have internet access from home. Students often bring information they have encountered through the internet into course discussions; this information is not always reliable or holds some level of media bias.

To examine student cognizance of bias and reliability of digital media this research study implemented both a new collaboratively developed media literacy curricula, qualitative formative assessments of student cognizance of bias, and intense student observation. The curriculum and formative assessments were developed and implemented across a team of social studies instructors; all with a vested interest in student cognizance of media bias and reliability. At the beginning, and at benchmarks within this study, members of the social studies department collaborated through a lesson study in the development and adjustments of the curriculum on digital media literacy. To evaluate practitioner decision making, field notes and transcriptions were collected and coded using both holistic and in vivo coding (Saldana, 2016). Throughout each of the two action research cycles, student participants responded to two common formative assessments. The National Center for Media Literacy Education developed a set of questions that need to be considered when evaluating the credibility of social media or other media sources; "Who paid for this? When was this made? Who might benefit? What is left out of this message that might be important to know? How was this shared with the public?" (Herold, 2016, p3). These questions provided a framework for the new curricula and culminating qualitative assessment. The assessment was examined both for accuracy of student response and student reaction to the instructional strategies used in the lesson. In an additional attempt to triangulate data, this research also included researcher observations, field notes, and scripting during classroom implementations. These were also coded holistically to look for trends in both practitioner adjustments and student response to instructional strategy (Saldana, 2016).

Action research is constructivist, situational, and practical (Efron & Ravid, 2013). The unique traits of the modern high school student and the importance of developing media literacy make this study conducive to an action research methodology. Efron and Ravid (2013) note that action research often utilizes multiple research questions to frame the study; therefore, making the results more applicable to other audiences. The measurement tools, outlined in the following chapters, include multiple qualitative mediums for data collection.

Significance of the Study

The significance of research on effective digital media literacy instructional methods, in a social media era, is twofold. In their secondary coursework, students must be able to clearly express their viewpoints with supporting evidence, as well as mastery of content standards. Additionally, there are elements of social justice through equal access to our digital world through the instruction of social and mass media literacy. Educators must instruct students to recognize when mass and social media is perpetuating stereotypes, or an imbalance of institutions in modern society (Carr, 2010). Each of these contribute to the creation of productive, involved, and cognizant global and democratic citizens.

A primary goal of social studies education is to instruct students to develop cognizance of the world around them; to become critical thinking productive citizens. The intersection of bias recognition and productive discourse is media literacy. Hobbs (2011), "anticipates a great shaking-up of the disciplines in both K-12 and higher education, which will result in a flowering of creativity in both practice and scholarship as new forms of digital and media literacy education thrive" (p31). One component of literacy in social studies education is implemented through classroom instruction, guiding students to

recognize bias and reliability in various media formats. In our current era of social media influence, this appears to be particularly important. It has become pervasive in many of my courses that students are often citing inaccurate, biased, or even satirical, evidence from social and other media sources. Students often require additional guidance in order to recognize biased material; instructors must provide both background knowledge and support the acquisition of media literacy skills. This research seeks to examine which forms of lessons or curricula best assist students in developing media literacy. In the process of this research, it became apparent that an examination of how social media can be used to instruct; and whether this instructional strategy positively impact students' abilities in media literacy.

The interactive nature of new media sources, including social media, contributes greatly to its influence on modern youth (Fry, 2011). "The technological imaginary could completely run wild unless reined in by media literacy educators who understand a larger context of media development, who can teach critical analysis of form and content, and can reach their educational constituents and a wider public" (Hobbs, 2011, p15). The hope is that this study will be transferable to future humanities courses in which digital research is a requirement and incite professional growth and awareness of how to incorporate social media literacy into the traditional segments of media literacy instruction in a social studies classroom.

Limitations

The current social studies course curricula for the technical high school system addressed here, concentrates on both historical references and modern connections, including current events. Awareness of current events, ideological belief systems, and

historical concepts contribute to the creation of productive citizens. It is a fundamental role of social studies education to produce students who can view their world with a critical eye. While classroom differentiation based on audience was implemented throughout, it was the goal of this study to develop an action plan that is both transferable and generalizable to other similarly structured secondary social studies or humanities classrooms. It must be noted that while this study feeds into the limited body of research that currently exists on media literacy in the modern digital age, as in an action research study, it is not generalizable to all classrooms. While significant emphasis and structure has been given to studies around general media appreciation and awareness, many have neglected to transfer this information into specific strategies to teach social media literacy. This study has given both me and other educators a look at what influence social media sources has on our students, and what we might be able to do to combat the bias or misunderstandings that potentially exist. The study provides a framework on how to address media literacy, however, in the future this research could be expanded to examine whether the format of digital sources has an influence on student bias and ability to recognize media source bias.

Finally, while this study sought to develop ways in which educators can instruct students to think critically about media sources it may have neglected the positive contributions of new media toward student recognition of bias and reliability. In educational action research the practitioner-researcher has a significant impact on their research. The topics are of personal interest and choice, with the motivation of student growth. The positionality and motivations of the educator impact all facets of the study. When a researcher is unaware of their bias, it can hinder the interpretation of results in an

action research study (Kirshner, Pozzoboni, & Jones, 2011). The practitioners of this study may have held pre-existing beliefs about student access to social media and the influence that this newer form of media plays on student media literacy; potentially as a product of our own positionality. As the participating researcher, I also needed to be aware of my positionality, particularly in developing the new media literacy curriculum and in order to provide accurate data analysis at the end of this action research. Effron and Ravid (2013) express that researcher implicit bias must be monitored both before and during an action research study. In this study, I had to be conscious of my own assumptions that social media impacts student ability to recognize bias and approach my research instead as the formulation of a new curricula to increase student awareness of media bias and reliability in the new digital age.

Organization of the Dissertation

The research outlined throughout the following chapters provides the rationale for and support of the inclusion of digital media literacy curricula in a secondary classroom. The second chapter provides an analysis of past literature on both best practices and pedagogy for collaborative lesson design and clarification of the need for digital media literacy coursework. This portion of the paper examines past traditional and action research surrounding curriculum design, media literacy implementation, and instruction of student recognition of bias and reliability. Following this analysis of current perspectives, this paper further outlines a prescribed methodology for an action research study in which qualitative methods are utilized. Lesson plans and adaptations, student formative work samples, and researcher observations are provided both within this methodology and the accompanying appendices. The results of this research, discussed further in chapter four,

critique best practices for digital literacy instruction within social studies education. Finally, a discussion on transferability to other secondary classrooms in the humanities and a future action plan conclude this paper.

It is hoped that the curriculum designed as a result of this study will effectively endorse media literacy skills and assist students in the development of quality criteria to use to evaluate media in our participatory democracy. In addition to recognition of reliable information, social media literacy can assist students in cognizance of various cultural, religious and ethnic perspectives (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015); a vital skill to the development of productive citizens. Regardless of media format, students must be instructed to recognize that media always has a distinct purpose either to inform, persuade, or entertain; it represents a given perspective, each released media piece has specific intended audiences, and it must be financed by some source (Brunner & Tally, 1999).

Glossary of Key Terminology

Bias: emphasis or prejudice toward a specific ideological or social belief system

Collaborative Practice: educators engage in discourse at frequent intervals to guide how they will best deliver material to their students (Souto-Manning, Mills, & O'keefe, 2010).

Data-driven decision making (DDDM): an effective way of using student data and assessment to guide instruction (Kennedy & Datnow, 2010).

Digital age: the era in which access to information has become faster and easier via new computer technology. "The digital age began in earnest with the widespread use of the Internet" (IGI Global, 2018).

Instructional strategy: research-supported instructional tools used by teachers to support learning (Marzano, 2016).

Lesson study (LS): a curriculum theory and design in which educators work collaboratively to conduct cycles of planning and lesson refinement (Schipper, et Al., 2017).

Media literacy: thorough understanding of the various sources of communication, the varying codes that are used, the messages that are produced, and the "selection, interpretation, and impact of those messages" (Rubin, 1998).

Reliability: coming from a trustworthy source with consistent messaging

Social Efficiency Theory: the belief that the needs of a society are equal to the needs of the individual; in social efficiency theory the purpose of education is to develop future productive members of a greater society (Tyler, 1949)

Social Media: "websites or software applications, which allow the publication or posting of user generated content and interactions between their users" (Machin-Mastromatteo, 2011)

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been a significant shift in student awareness of bias and reliability in multimedia, textual, and digital source material. The historical approach to media literacy, where students examine print media, television news media, or encyclopedic reference materials, is no longer the best practices in media literacy education (Jolls, 2015; Tyner, 1998). Examining media and establishing media literacy in a classroom environment began as a "critical viewing skills curricula" (Tyner, 1998, p. 134) in the 1970's. At the time, its emphasis was placed on recognition of bias and reliability of paper or television news media sources. In recent history, there has been a shift in the classroom toward instruction based on online media source information. Our secondary students' media access has shifted to online source materials that are developed and written by a variety of ideology-driven individuals, groups, and organizations (Buckingham, 2007).

Media literacy education is a vital component in all levels of education, and in all disciplines. There have been many positive contributions as well as significant critical analyses regarding the changes that have occurred over the last ten years of media literacy instruction. Media literacy is the piece of our teaching practice that allows students to connect classroom materials to the relevant media that surrounds them outside of our classrooms; "if there's one giant research question that is the *sine qua non* of all education practice, indeed it is the question of how learning transfers from school to home and beyond" (Hobbs, 2011, p30). The primary goals of media literacy education, particularly

in this age of digital access to mass media content, is the instruction of our future citizenry (Ashley & Maksl, 2017; Loth, 2012; Solmaz, 2017).

The purpose of this dissertation in practice was twofold. The first purpose was to develop effective curricular materials that support digital media literacy among high school students. The second purpose was to better understand how teachers who are attempting to develop curricula for social media literacy reflect on and use student data that is generated in the classroom. This literature review ties together previous works on student cognizance of bias and reliability of media, and student access to media, in order to develop a historical analysis. For this, the literature review examines best practices in media literacy curriculum development, essential questions to be posed to students, and multiple references for key media literacy terminology that are further addressed in the curriculum designed for and utilized in this action research study.

Are educators providing their students with the necessary skills to become productive members of the citizenry? Are there curricular approaches to digital media literacy that work better than others? Has adolescent dependence on social media changed students' ability to recognize bias in source material? These are additional questions that this literature review seeks to examine. It will begin by walking the reader through the historical and theoretical approaches to media literacy; discussing the general goals of media literacy education throughout the ages, beginning with a shift toward social education policy in the early 1900's.

Following this historical analysis, the literature review examines what role social media and news formats play in modern adolescent literacy and cognizance of bias or reliability of information. The review of literature then assesses curricular approaches that

past researchers and systems have implemented; in order to evaluate both the successes and failures or those approaches, as well as outline guiding questions for digital media literacy curricula and key terminology. The final portions of the literature review will address pervasive concerns in modern media literacy and outline the next steps for this dissertation. This latter section will also consider the obstacle the new digital media literacy faces; this includes educator apathy and bias, inconsistent access to digital technologies, and the impossibility of objectivity in both media and the classroom.

Purpose of the Literature Review

This complex literature review examines past studies, Pew Research surveys, media literacy curriculum samples, and critiques of historical and modern approaches to instructing students to recognize bias and reliability. To carry out this research I utilized multiple sources through the University of Connecticut and University of South Carolina online databases and libraries. Particularly helpful in establishing an understanding of past studies, was the ProQuest Dissertations database. This research also includes information from multiple online educational and curriculum leadership reviews and resources. The aim is to provide quantitative data on adolescent digital media usage, qualitative analyses (from prior studies) on the impact of media literacy curricula on student cognizance of bias and draw connections between increased digital media use and a decrease in secondary-level student awareness of bias.

Literature reviews are an important component to a research study because they help frame the research question by outlining what has already been studied about a particular topic, provide an opportunity to examine the limitations of previous studies, and provides the researcher with a broader background on the content they are interested in

studying (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). Any quality study calls upon evidence to support both the problem of practice and research questions (Efron & Ravid, 2013). As this action research study seeks to examine student cognizance of bias and reliability in digital media texts, the literature review must develop an outline of the history of media literacy, as well as support the rationale for new research.

Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this research was to analyze which instructional strategies best support student growth in digital media literacy while examining how instructors reflect on student growth and learning data in the development and implementation of new instructional strategies. As a participatory action research study (PAR) this research combines insider and outsider perspectives in order to both attain new confirm existing knowledge (Herr & Anderson, 2015). In this study, the end goal is positive growth in student outcomes, improved instructional strategies, and a trusting and collaborative relationship between practitioners to promote reflection on practice and student outcomes (Widjaja, 2013). The learning theory of constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) suggests that the best way to attain new knowledge and understanding of the world around us is through the sharing of ideas and collective analysis. Lesson study is an action research study carried out through collaborative inquiry and practice (Groves, Doig, Widjaja, Garner, & Palmer, 2013; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Lesson study utilizes multiple instructional improvement strategies which are evaluated through collaborative lesson design, observation, and data collections (Lewis et. al, 2006). Lesson study is grounded in both constructivism as a collaborative approach to learning and is an extension upon the practice of utilizing Communities of Practice (CoP)

(Vygotsky, 1978; Lave & Wenger, 1991). A CoP within education is a group of practitioners who desire to work collectively to improve the quality and delivery of instruction in their classroom (Widjaja, 2013). Constructivist theories behind CoP guide the lesson study framework, in that lesson study is a detailed collaborative practice in which trust is developed between practitioners, with a collective knowledge and support for a common end goal (Groves, Doig, Widjaja, Garner, & Palmer, 2013; Widjaja, 2013). The end goal in this practice is the growth of learning amongst students and the improvement of personal instruction practice, however this requires trust amongst the participants (Widjaja, 2013).

Digital media literacy, as addressed in this research, is a product of a Social Efficiency ideology (Schiro, 2013). In the Social Efficiency model, the aim of education is to produce productive members of a society (Tyler, 1949). In recent years, education at a global level has aimed to bring about higher standards of living, and removal of the "plagues" of society (Oliva, 2013). Media literacy and critical thinking curricula serve just that purpose. According to Schiro (2013), proponents of the Social Efficiency ideology believe that the individual is first part of a greater society, and an individual second. This, however, is not the only educational ideology that might be drawn to a digital media literacy curriculum. While the previous ideology seeks to create an informed citizenry, the social reconstruction ideology may use media literacy as an approach to a recognized concern and promote societal stereotype reduction (Schiro, 2013; Tyler, 1949). As maintained by Maxine Green (1997), if teachers were to frame their position around fixing the ills of society, "they would *not* exclude the multiple-literacies and the diverse modes

of understanding young persons need if they are to act knowledgeably and reflectively within the frameworks of their lived lives" (Green, 1997, p. 3).

While social media can be a powerful information source both in and out of the classroom, teachers must create student cognizance of its value. In her study regarding successful strategies for instructing media literacy in a digital age, MacDonald (2008) suggests that one of the key components of media literacy is instructing students to recognize that, "all media messages are socially constructed representations of reality" (p. 228). Access to new media formats can promote inquiry-based learning, and these technology-based formats can be used both to promote student media literacy, as well as an example of a need for media literacy instruction (MacDonald, 2008). In order to measure student growth through the examination of multiple digital media samples, formative assessment is key (Howard, 2003; Smith, 2013). Previous studies and many academics suggest that social media is a positive force for digital access to relevant current events and historical content knowledge (Fry, 2011); how we address this force within the classroom is vital to student development of the new-age literacy skill. While developed in the early 1900's as a model for curriculum design, social efficiency theory is seeing its resurgence as a means to develop civic-minded and digitally conscious youth (Tyler, 1949; Hobbs, 2010; Tahirsylaj, 2017). With social efficiency in mind, educators must use digital media to instruct digital media literacy and support students to become informed and active citizens.

The needs presented in the creation of a modern digital media literacy curricula can be effectively addressed by examining the needs of the community, the instructional strategies to achieve student growth, and the teacher practices that guide lesson design. Te

examination of learning and growth is best achieved through a practitioner lesson study utilizing PAR, while acknowledging the impact of cognitivist learning theories and the social efficiency goals for student growth in society. To better understand the historical perspectives on the purposes of education and media literacy the following sections will review past research, motivations, and strategies for media literacy instruction.

Historical Perspectives on Media Literacy

In the early 1900's a shift occurred in education in which education leaders began taking a more scientific approach to curriculum development and lesson planning (Schiro, 2013); measurable objectives became the norm. The introduction of media literacy skills has always struggled to follow this pattern of measurable outcomes, given the subjective nature of media (Buckingham, 2007). Historically, literacy coursework has focused on written media, in the mid twentieth century, education began critically analyzing print news media for bias. Much of our modern take on literacy instruction stems from the middle of the Cold War era. Digital literacy, once called "computer literacy", dates back to the early 1980's. The emphasis of digital computer literacy in the early days of personal computing focused more on using computer software, and less on recognition of written digital content. The shift from computer literacy to modern digital media literacy took place in the mid-1990s, as we saw an expansion in access to the Internet (Buckingham, 2007).

Modern literacy is often viewed as a study of discourse, rather than a quantitative measurement of official documentation. In the classroom, this is often seen as the dominant culture becoming pervasive in acceptable discourse. More recently, studies have expressed a correlation between overall literacy, library usage, and home internet access (Tyner,

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1998). For this reason, it is vital for teachers of media literacy to examine both traditional literacies and modern digital impacts.

Goals of Media Literacy

The goals of media literacy vary depending upon grade level or era within of education. Hobbs (1998) suggests that the goals of universal media literacy are twofold: students must be able to analyze media sources, and students must be able to effectively create their own media texts. The term *texts* while used frequently in the discussion of media literacy, can be seen as a limiting term. Media literacy has the broader goal of examining both alphabetic texts as well as visual video "texts" and photographs (Dezuanni, 2014). It has also been stated that media literacy entails the ability to access and evaluate media messages, then develop and communicate one's own perspective via media (Aufderheide, 1993). Jacobs (2014) states that the goals of new media literacy are accessing, selecting, curating, and creating digital media. If we compare traditional literacy goals with this new literacy we see many similarities. Just as a student must learn *how* to read, they must learn how to access digital resources. Students in traditional literacy must know how to select texts that are appropriate for their needs, just as they need to know how to select appropriate and reliable digital texts (Jacobs, 2014). Student in both traditional literacy and digital literacy must know how to pull information together to develop conclusions and hypotheses. Finally, while traditional literacy teaches students to write, media literacy teaches students to create media in a new digital world.

At the elementary level, media literacy instruction is mandated by national standards, though not usually explicitly instructed. At the secondary level, media literacy curricula are utilized in multiple subject areas, with many schools offering coursework that

examines just media, such as "current events" coursework. The aim of secondary level media literacy tends to focus on civic engagement (Livingstone, 2003). Post-secondary media literacy serves a different purpose, which is evident in its instruction. The only level at which media literacy education in public schools is not mandated by standards legislation is in the post-secondary environment. Contrary to legislation, university level professors report instructing students in media literacy strategies far more than their elementary and secondary counterparts (Schmidt, 2013). Given the recent introduction of media literacy components to the national standards in the social studies, this perception of missing literacy skills may decline in future surveys (Youngbauer, 2011).

Media literacy as a tool for civic engagement

Regardless of the level of education, media literacy training holds a common goal of creating an informed citizenry. Livingstone (2003) offers the question, "is media literacy intended to promote a democratized, diverse, anti- elitist approach to online representations or should it underpin a more traditional, hierarchical discrimination of good from bad, authoritative from unauthorized, information and communication?" (p. 1). An ill-informed youth population are either unaware of political and social happenings due to a lack of media literacy, or do not participate in the legal right to vote because they expressed frustration and lack of understanding of media materials (Kubey, 2004).

Digital media literacy activities have a direct positive impact on creating exposure to diverse viewpoints. Educators play a vital role in developing the 21ˢᵗ century globally aware citizen. The impact of appropriate inclusion of digital literacies in the classroom will create a participatory youth (Gretter & Yadav, 2016). Students who partake in more digital media literacy coursework are able to critically analyze social and digital media texts and

think critically about their role in social and political conversations (Kahne, Lee, & Feezell, 2012; Gretter & Yadav, 2016). Ashley and Maksl (2017) also conclude that there is a relationship between a student's media literacy and the various ways in which they may be politically engaged. In their quantitative survey study of post-secondary students, Ashley and Maksl (2017) found that while media literacy "scores" were higher for students who were more aware of current events, there were no statistically significant connections between a student's level of media literacy and the amount of political and civic engagement that they carried out. Uninformed students, participating significantly in media platforms, demonstrate a strong need for news and media literacy education as piece of traditional civic education. The authors identified a news media literacy gap, which they refer to as a "digital divide" (p 90). They state that the level of media literacy of an individual determines their involvement with news or digital media.

The increase in digital media consumption will allow for a more connected society, but one that must be hyper-critical of all information (Fry, 2011; Minkle, 2002; Youngbauer, 2011). Pre-service teachers are coming into education on the cusp of an information laden society; their students often having been exposed to more digital media than their instructors. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed a focus on media literacy that comes from a growing concern that ill-informed youth make for a less active and informed citizenry (Youngbauer, 2011).

Proper media literacy education can assist in the development of critical thinking citizens and encourage students to examine how their own response to media is impacted by underlying messages (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). Being an informed citizen or field expert is no longer a requirement for developing digitally accessible media (Gans,

2010); the digital media that students encounter often lacks the vetting process that traditional print media faced in the past. Research has shown that youth who possess media literacy skills can think more critically about racial and ethnic stereotypes that exist in the multiple forms of digital and traditional media. Racial, ethnic, and sexual stereotypes appear covertly, though significantly, in digital and mass media (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015; Hancock, Jolls, & Jolls, 2017).

Media Literacy in a Digital Age

In the new era of digital technology, the concept of literacy has expanded yet again. Hobbs (2011) emphasizes the importance of media literacy education in the new digital era. She summarizes the recent changes in how we deliver media literacy, including a more modern interdisciplinary approach to instruction. The emphasis of both written language and comprehension of political climate impact student ability to recognize bias. Digital media literacy incorporates not only the interpretation of media sources, but also the creation of digital texts (Buckingham, 2007). Communities that may have been held back by what Tyner (2011) calls the "alphabetic literacy" (p 42) are now able to have a shorter reach between thought and communication with the world. No longer are we held to the pen and paper forms of literate communication; other sources of media and literacy have come up the ranks. Many institutions have added educational technology to their extensive list of updated approaches to education. Only the future will show if this new push for technology in the classroom will increase digital literacies. In modern education, educators now balance the multiple forms of literacy, both alphabetic and digital format becoming teachable literacies (Tyner, 2011; Jolls, 2015).

According to a 2015 Pew Research survey, ninety-two percent of teens reported going online daily. Fifty-six percent of those teens stated that they go online multiple times per day, while twenty-four percent of these adolescents reported that they go online "almost constantly". Only two percent of those teens surveyed stated that they rarely go online (Lenhart, 2015). The significant amount of exaggerated and blatantly false information portrayed via mass and digital media can cause significant conflict for an uninformed or media illiterate public (Loth, 2012). There is an ongoing debate about whether or not digital media is a positive or negative force in our gathering of information (Bartlett & Miller, 2012). This argument likely stems from an overall lack of digital fluency, or a cognizance of bias and reliability. Bartlett and Miller (2012) reference multiple causes for our societal lack of internet fluency and media literacy; these include anonymity, an absence of gatekeepers, a generational divide, pseudo-sites, propaganda, imagery, and a concept referred to as "echo chambers" (p 7). Gate-keepers, or references that confirm reliability of source material, are not used in social media platforms. Nearly anyone can create a blog or post without any peer or expert cross-checking (Bartlett & Miller, 2012). Additionally, faux media sources and propaganda are rampantly distributed via digital media. An echo chamber is a term given to the man-made filters utilized by many social media and news media outlets that deliver content digitally. Readers and users are only provided with information that is relevant to previous search histories or online discourse. This does not provide youth with varied materials, and often only presents biased agenda.

Brookfield (2015) expresses a list of assumptions he has observed in his own media literacy instruction. These assumptions include the negative, "Twitter has destroyed millennials' capacity to read and absorb arguments" (p.50); this offers an unfair

assumption, given the important role that social media plays in disseminating information to a modern society. In respect to the future of media literacy education, Hobbs (2011) anticipates a shift in instruction, due to digital media's consistent blurring of the lines between the personal and political realms. The importance of instructing students to navigate this new frontier of media is more important than ever before.

Social media and digital literacy. Social media platforms are a medium by which most citizens can participate in civic discussions. There is arguably nothing that will hinder both artistic expression and civic engagement in American online platforms (Buck, 2012; Solmaz, 2017), as anyone can post content that expresses their opinions. MySpace, Twitter, Snapchat, and Facebook have become the most used platforms amongst teens (Lenhart, 2015). Each of these platforms allows user to combine brief text with video or photographic media (Buck 2012; Lenhart, 2015). While most of these posts are of original composition, they often lack significant background information or substance; this creates a society that is connected, but also one that observes significant misinformation. Youth are particularly susceptible to this misinformation. In a research study by Dawn Bronstein (2007), 80-100% of the seventh- ninth grade students she surveyed believed that the Internet was always factually accurate. An alarming number and significant cause for media literacy education.

Adolescent brain development makes teenagers particular susceptible to bias and influence of their peers via social media. Adolescents that use social media have strong ties between content observed while online and content knowledge obtained in the real-world. While there are significant studies and curriculum development behind traditional media literacy education (news, print, etc.), there is a lapse in the body of knowledge surrounding the impact of new media on adolescent ability to recognize bias and reliability; particularly

in social media formats. All facets of media literacy education agree that the overarching theme is that 'all media messages are constructed' (Jolls & Thoman, 2016; Sparano, Gould, Langford, & Hirsch, 2016). In this, it is meant that there are specific agendas to all media that is for-profit. This secondary agenda influences the reliability of a media or digital media text.

Angela Orr (2008) carried out an action research study addressing the impact of modern media sources on her middle-level students' media literacy skills. She sought to examine the impact of a new curriculum on developing media literacy in her students. She posited that changing media consumption habits had impacted the ability of students to recognize reliability and bias in information they are observing. In this study, the data demonstrated that adaptations made to media-literacy curricula can improve student efficacy or awareness about media consumption; allowing students to think more critically about content. Orr's (2008) action plan ultimately stated she would more explicitly teach media literacy terminology (p. 88), but she suggests that the format of her new research curriculum was not conclusively the cause for notable changes in student media literacy and self-efficacy.

Len-Rios et al. (2016) examined patterns in how teenagers obtain information digitally and what factors may hinder their access. This study is from the perspective of those looking at public relations and media observance for an adolescent market. The authors advise that adolescents that do not feel comfortable utilizing the Internet are usually those who lack a proficient level of media literacy skills. Adolescents report that they spend more time observing information from television than they do from social media sources. Teenagers also report that they often engage with other people's posts on social media

more than they are posting their own content. The results also indicate that parental limits on social media use only drives the adolescent to seek out information from other sources of media.

The synthesis of these studies leads one to believe that online digital media, specifically social media, has a tremendous effect on an adolescent's ability to recognize bias and reliability in text. When we consider that most studies align with the idea that teenagers obtain most of the social and civic information through some platform of social media, it is safe to assume that social media has some impact on both their civic awareness and their civic engagement.

Faux news and consumerism. There is a disconnection between adolescent youth and the news media, more so than has existed in the last fifty years (Marchi, 2012). This disconnect has caused a greater need to address objectivity in the news media. Multiple research studies examine the so-called "fake news" outlets and their impact on a teenagers' ability to recognize factual information. In one study, teenagers frequently cited a repetitive nature of traditional news media outlets as their reasons for being less engaged (Marchi, 2012). Additionally, the adolescents stated that they often learn about current events from social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube, blogs, etc. Occasionally the teenagers cited pop-up advertising from popular teen websites.

Though fake news media sites have often been cited for inducing an era of apathy and misinformation, some students in Marchi's (2012) study stated that that the sarcastic "fake news" sites were more entertaining, and often sparked an interest in them that lead them to look more into credible sources to find accurate information about the topics from the faux-news sites. In a quantitative study of educators in England and Wales, Bartlett and

Miller (2012) found that forty-seven percent of their teacher-respondents reported that they have students that frequently cite grossly biased or fake news media sources in class discussions and coursework submissions. Ninety-five percent of those same teachers stated that students had brought in online materials for use in class discussions or course submissions. From this same data set, Bartlett and Miller (2012) find that approximately half of their sample set of secondary students are able to decipher most faux news-media source materials from the more credible or reliable sites.

Curriculum Design for Media Literacy

Media literacy curricula in the digital age differs from the traditional methodology. The following sections will examine what theorists believe a curriculum should look like when addressing digital media literacy. The scope of a digital media literacy course at the secondary level may include both traditional discourses, as well as the implementation of "disruptive technologies" such as social media (Mihailidis, 2015), this section will also examine how these newer digital technologies can be used to instruct media literacy. Ultimately, educators must establish essential questions and key terminology to be addressed by new curricula. The final portions of this section are designed to offer suggestions on essential elements for a digital media literacy course.

Considerations for a new curriculum. There are two pieces that impact a student's ability to develop a consciousness of media literacy: family and school (Taskin & Turin, 2012). It is suggested that in order for students to develop media literacy, a formal curriculum must be implemented in schools. In the age of information, not only are schools needing to focus on traditional literacies and the tools to achieve them, but they must also focus on how to interpret new digital media information such as video or other visual digital

sources. Tyner (2011) suggests a linking of the various forms of literacy. Individuals must be instructed to recognize the agenda of any particular piece of information; and for whom that piece was created. Literacy is a key component to breaking down the various ideologies of text and video. The author refers to this overlap in traditional, network, computer, and media literacy a broader term, "information literacy" (Tyner, 1998, p. 103).

The oft referred to "technological imaginary", which includes specific biases, myths, and unreliable digital text, has necessitated the need for outlining a successful approach to media literacy curricula. The first emphasis of a new digital media literacy should be the instruction of techniques to think critically about *all* media content. Students of media literacy must be instructed to recognize that all media has an agenda, a bias, and a message. This comes from the very reason why digital text is created; its aim is often to persuade (Fry, 2011). Bartlett and Miller (2012) conclude that students must be taught how to do three things: find reliable information on the Internet, verify that the information they have found is correct and unbiased, and avoid propaganda while understanding the key terminology that marks this type of material. Critical thinking skills alone are no longer the only attributes of a media-fluent student. Students must now be taught specific media literacy skills in a digital world. This level of media literacy, say Bartlett and Miller (2012), will effectively produce global citizens.

There are many valuable strategies for instruction of media literacy in our new digital age; these include both traditional methodology as well as the incorporation of digital technology in the classroom. Students may develop their own digital media, communicate via blogs and discussion boards, critique existing media platforms, or exclusively focus on key vocabulary of biased media. Using technology to teach digital

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media literacy has been shown to increase the positive literacy outcomes for students (Mihailidis, 2015; Shapiro, 2015). Buckingham (2007) considers how education can both incorporate new digital media into the classroom and address the challenges and that the internet and other digital media bring forth. The use of media in the classroom in a critical way can aid in the discussion of media literacy. Kubey (2004) offers a significant number of options for adding media literacy into the traditional civics classroom. He suggests the addition of student-created media, video or written material, to encourage critical thinking and multi-source evaluation.

There are many approaches that a practitioner may take to design a curriculum that best addresses the construct of digital media literacy. When designing any curriculum, it is important to consider the academic and social needs of the students (Misco, 2014). To best meet the needs of both instructors and students, this study utilizes a Lesson Study approach to practitioner collaboration. The practice of Lesson Study began in Japan well over a century ago and is considered a growing approach to collaborative curriculum design (Dudley, 2015; Lewis et al., 2006). Lesson study is typically carried out within small collaborative teams of educators; educators' conduct cycles of planning and lesson refinement until the learning needs of their students are met (Schipper et al, 2017). The instructors consider the tools and practices that may best address their students, potentially considering alternative approaches to instruction.

Social media and other forms of technology that are often deemed disruptive to education can actually be used to enhance classroom experiences while embedding a lesson in digital and media literacy (Nowell, 2014; Shapiro, 2015). Studies regarding this use of so-called *disruptive technology* advocate a return to using digital media in the classroom

in order to increase digital literacy (Mihailidis, 2015; Nowell, 2014; Shapiro, 2015). While the amount of digital content has increased tremendously over recent years, there has been little increase in instructing students in appropriate deciphering of those pieces of text. Mihailidis' (2015) paper posits that instructing students to "curate" their own digital media can improve both their analysis of media as well as their storytelling skills in peer-to-peer formats. Nowell (2014) also advocates a return to using both digital media and digital devices in the classroom, in order to increase digital literacy. Her study suggests that when teachers utilize digital media, such as social media, students begin to use those platforms for not only personal interaction, but also for academic discourse. While many schools have advocated a shift away from allowing students to use cell phone or personal devices in school, the need for familiarity with both digital devices and the media access they provide, is ever growing (Nowell, 2014). The inclusion of social media and digital devices, when done appropriately, can aid in both discourse and student digital media literacy.

Digital media literacy is expressed not only through the observance of media, but particularly through the creation of digital media (Buckingham, 2007). Dezuanni (2014) states that, "digital forms of communication are ubiquitous and vernacular, and students deserve the opportunity to learn to participate with these technologies in ways that will enhance their life opportunities" (p. 436). Through their own review of literature, Gretter and Yadav (2016) assert that that to accomplish media literacy, students must engage with our connected society by participating in the new technology and media exchange formats. Drawing from modern computational thinking strategies, Gretter and Yadav (2016) address this need to incorporate technologies; the authors offer suggestions on how to integrate new technologies into the classroom while developing the necessary media

literacy skills to navigate them. They consider seven big ideas for computational thinking in media and internet literacy. Perhaps the most valuable of these ideas is *abstraction* or instructing student to break down digital texts into their key ideas in order to look for trends or signs of reliability.

School-based interventions on media-literacy, as directly related to online gaming, may also create a more conscious consumer and provides for a significantly slower growth in student usage of the internet for gaming and social purposes (Walther, Hanewinkel, & Morgenstern, 2014). When discussing excessive online gaming, Walther, Hanewinkel, and Morgenstern (2014) concluded that an increase usage of online media and gaming contributed adversely to adolescent's ability to think critically about digital media. Excessive use of Internet and digital platforms led them to conclude that, "there is support for the idea that one successful prevention effort might be the change of social norms regarding media use frequency" (p. 622); this finding is counter to those researchers who have advocated an increase in digital technology usage in the classroom, and means that direct interventions on appropriate quantities of and types of Internet usage has a positive impact on student cognizance of media literacy from digital platforms.

Social media is a digital platform for which we need to instruct digital literacy techniques but can also be used as a method to instruct media literacy (Machin-Mastromatteo, 2012). Using social media platforms to instruct digital media literacy is an alternative to the traditional instruction methods. In preparing students for the discourse of society and high education, discussion boards, status updates, and blogs can all serve as tools in the classroom. In Horn's (2010) classroom he asks students to critique each movie for its underlying agenda. The terminology and concepts are repeated with each subsequent

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movie until they become familiar for his students. In the last seven years, media literacy education has shifted toward alternative digital literacies, stepping away from the movie analysis of the past (Machin-Mastromatteo, 2012). New media literacy programs often use these new digital forms of media to address the social media components and new technologies that feed into modern digital media literacy.

There is a significant need for new digital literacy curricula at the secondary level of instruction. Our students are exposed to far more digital content that at any other point in history; online gaming, social media platforms, and constant connection to digital news media are both disruptive and rewarding (Nowell, 2014; Walther, Hanewinkel, & Morgenstern, 2014). With new information always at their fingertips, adolescents must be instructed in the appropriate navigation tools (Bartlett & Miller, 2012).

Driving questions and curricular scope. Mihailidis and Viotty (2017) suggest new approaches to media literacy design, given our new digital media era. The first entails, "repositioning media literacies for spreadable connectivity" (p 451). This means that new media literacy curricula must recognize the connective nature of new media formats. Social and digital media platforms allow for a global conversation and observation of diverse viewpoints (Buck, 2012; Kahne, Lee, & Feezell, 2012; Solmaz, 2017). Their second suggestion is "repositioning media literacies as mechanisms for caring" (p. 451). Educators should approach media literacy as a means to create responsible media consumers who view the information they consume as relational and not individualistic. This requires teachers to develop their students into critical consumers who examine multiple sources of information before drawing conclusions. With varied ideological expressions available on the Internet, it is important for consumers to look beyond a singular source. The third

recommendation is to reposition "media literacies as facilitators of 'everyday' engagement" (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017, p. 451). A media literacy curriculum must be connected to ideas that are relevant to the adolescents that are receiving this instruction.

In the process of designing a digital media literacy curriculum, there are questions that educators must consider:

- Where do media literacy constructs appear in existing learning activities?

- Which media literacy constructs appear in daily instruction?

- How do a teacher's instructional practices introduce and promote the use of media literacy constructs?

- How do students demonstrate and apply media literacy knowledge, skills, and/or habits of mind? (MacDonald, 2008).

Additionally, Minkle (2003) suggests that teachers consider how the materials used in their classrooms may contribute to an understanding of media bias and reliability. Ultimately, DeGaetano (in Taskin & Turin, 2012) states that a media literate student can use digital screen technology appropriately and efficiently, be critical of visual messages and their emotional or cognitive responses to them, can express a critical analysis of media source material, and understand how the design of a piece of media adds to its impact.

Taskin and Turin (2012) provide a clear outline for the objectives of a course in digital media literacy. Students of a course established to address the tasks (above) would consider not only what the message and bias may be of the media they are examining, but also how a students' own personal bias impacts their perceptions of a digital media text.

Key terminology for instruction. The literature suggests multiple terms for the instruction of digital media literacy strategies. Terms such as hegemony, hierarchy, cultural

capital, oppression, privilege, resistance, marginalization, constructed consciousness, false consciousness, and critical consciousness lead students toward cognizance of the inequality that exists in mass media (Horn, 2010). Other terms established by the Center for Media Literacy include audience, branding, censorship, consumer, and marketing (Boles, 2017). This latter set of key terminology lends itself to the understanding that all media is being produced with an agenda or ideology. Given that students often lack knowledge of this terminology, its impact on our understanding of our digital world, or its place in discourse, it is important for these terms to be addressed by digital media literacy curricula (Boles, 2017; Horn, 2010).

Educational Challenges in Instructing Media Literacy

There are many areas in which this study could falter. In order to better understand the methodology of this study, we must first examine what role access to digital media, teacher perceptions of media, teacher apathy toward the instruction of media literacy, and parental bias play in the scope of digital media literacy curricula.

Unequal access to technology. Educators must recognize that there is a "digital divide" in access to online resources in young persons' access to technology. The significant gap between those with and without access to digital media can be seen at both the global level and in communities that are often considered more developed. Political, economic and social stratification can impact both the amount of student technology usage and reluctance to try new technology (Buckingham, 2007; Radonovic, Hogan, & Lalic (2015). However, overall access to media has been increasing. While consumers no longer have to buy print media in order to be informed, they can gain access to similar content digitally. This increasing access to information should, in theory, increase the informed

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citizenry (Gans, 2010). While considering this inconsistent access to digital media, Buckingham (2007) suggests that one of the best ways to create a climate of digital literacy is to help students become the creators of digital media. He notes that there are many schools already carrying out this form of lesson, but that lower income areas may have less access to the technology required to give student digital access. Without this access, they are less able to think critically about the media that exists in digital formats.

To combat the stratification in access to digital technology, it is imperative that students not only have access in their education, but also access to the skills to appropriately navigate those new digital media platforms (Bartlett & Miller, 2012; Gans, 2010). As the new dominant cultural means for ideological and informational text, technologies such as cell phones, tablets, social media platforms, etc., all have an impact on our students' ability to later navigate the advanced digital age (Austin & Nelson, 1993).

Educator bias and apathy. Teachers must take a leadership role in the instruction of digital media literacy; they must examine their own practices within the scope of consumerism and social/digital media to reflect upon their own literacies and deficiencies (Fry, 2011) Educators must not only instruct the literacy skills necessary to decipher biased texts, but also lead by example in their own analyses and instruction methods. One of the greatest issues with digital media literacy education is that those who are teaching this content are less familiar with digital media than those there are instructing. Multiple studies reflect that teachers and teacher-candidates are often unaware of their own media biases (Filiz & Fisun, 2012; Brookfield, 2015; Taskin & Turin, 2012).

More effective instructors are media literate, and they are able to instruct their students to be critical of media. (Dezuanni, 2014; Simons, Meeus, & T'sas, 2017). Schools

are often faced with teachers who are lacking in their own general consciousness of bias and reliability of various forms of media. This is particularly true for pre-service teachers, as many college programs are lacking in their preparation for the addition of media literacy materials in humanities classrooms (Brookfield, 2015). If pre-service educators in the field of media literacy are not in themselves "media literate", then they cannot responsibly deliver a media literacy curriculum to their pupils (Taskin & Turin, 2012). Conversely, a study by Simons, Meeus, and T 'sas (2017) concluded that most educators are media literate, though this does not negate the need for educators to be aware of their own level of media literacy.

Schmidt (2013) suggests that in order to increase instruction of digital media literacy there needs to be formal professional development for those instructing; they also express that the clientele is not to blame for the lack of instruction that should be occurring at the secondary level, but rather the educators' experiences and desires. Professional development on media literacy strategies is a valuable asset for educators. In order to provide students will the best possible guidance, teachers must be sufficiently media literate, as well as aware of how to instruct students to become cognizant of their digital world. Often pre-service teachers express a fear of instructing media literacy standards is a personal fear of showing bias and receiving backlash from administration or parents (Youngbauer, 2011). Greater than this concern, Horn (2003) discusses the hidden curriculum that most teachers struggle to recognize in their own classrooms. With our current media saturated and technology driven classrooms we frequently use source material that is biased, or even unreliable and inaccurate.

While lesson plans in the social studies often contain segments of media literacy, very little of the media being used to supplement coursework is followed up with a literacy critique (Youngbauer, 2011). To demonstrate that bias exists, instructors must portray to their students that it exists in all media, even that which we provide in our daily instruction. Youngbauer's (2011) qualitative study showed that while teachers could think critically about their own level of understanding of media literacy, they rarely critiqued the media sources they were using in their own instruction. This demonstrates an all-thought, no-action approach to media literacy from educators.

Effective instructors are, therefore, aware of their own biases, educated in how to recognize bias and reliability of both digital and traditional media texts, and seek out ways to incorporate media literacy in to their classes through thorough critiques of their own materials (Dezuanni, 2014; Schmidt, 2013; Simons, Meeus, & T 'sas, 2017). An effective response to a lack of student grasp of media literacy skills and terminology is by first examining the instructors through which we expect our students to gain this skill-set.

Parental bias as a hindrance. The more political socialization (discussion about specific political beliefs) that occurs at home during adolescence, the more actively involved those adolescents will be in those same political belief structures as adults (Dinas, 2014). According to Dinas' (2014) quantitative study, political bias from home does erode slowly over multiple generations but may cloud cognizance of outside bias. There is a measurable level of transmission of political ideology from one generation in a family to the next (Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009). It may be difficult to gauge whether student understanding of media bias and reliability is a product of their exposure to social and digital media, or a product of their home and family environment.

Kahne and Bowyer (2016) conclude that a person's motivations and prior ideological standpoint has a direct impact on our ability to recognize bias or accuracy of media texts. If an article or piece of digital information supports the ideology of the observer, their judgement will deem is accurate. If a student's personal ideology is swayed by parental ideology (Jennings, Stoke, & Bowers, 2009), there may be groups of students with politically active parents who have less access to the media literacy curricula, based on this finding. In order to consider this influence, the media literacy curriculum should include instruction that addresses how students' internal goals may reflect the want for digital information to be true.

Educators must be mindful of student demographics and recognize that familial ideological influence exists. Social cognitive theory suggests that both personal and environmental factors deeply influence adolescent ideological identities (Austin & Nelson, 1993). The curricula to address this underlying bias must develop student cognizance of both their own ideological bias, as well as the bias of the media they are observing.

Objectivity as an impossibility. Horn (2010) brings attention to the media stereotypes and biases regarding education and those educators who deliver traditional education. He suggests that media literacy in the classroom can contribute to a lesser impact of these stereotypes on our classroom successes. Often, the curricular approach we take in media literacy education assumes that there is a definitive line between objective and subjective media. We assume that through thorough evaluation of a source students can determine its credibility and reliability. Guiding us toward a list of websites and media sources that should be avoided, Buckingham (2007) suggests that it is nearly impossible to find a piece of media that is objective, or without ideological bias. They suggest that we

should be guiding students in a way that aids them in understanding how political, economic and social ideologies can be seen in digital texts; we should be teaching students *recognize* bias and reliability, not seek to eliminate the use of biased, or perceived as unreliable, sources. Given the subjective nature of any media, a digital media literacy curriculum must come to terms with the unattainable unbiased materials. Instead, it must instruct students to navigate between the reliable and unreliable, while being cognizant of the level of bias a particular piece of media is presenting (Buckingham, 2007; Horn, 2010).

Media Literacy Education in Summary

Media literacy education has shifted from traditional news or print media critiques to a more modern analysis of digital texts and dialogue. Educators are now focused not only on alphabetic literacy but must consign themselves to instructing techniques and vocabulary that can be used to decipher the unreliable from the reliable, the biased from the less biased, and the ideological from the objective.

This review of literature has established a basis for the problem of practice. There is significant evidence to support the argument that secondary high school students are often hindered by their substantial access to online social and digital media texts. Though it has been expressed that their having come of age in an era where general conversations have the ability to become global dialogue is quite propitious to their civic engagement. Likewise, other researchers have discussed how limited access to technology for specific socio-economic groups may place some students at a disadvantage when it comes to learning the digital media literacy skills of the twenty-first century. Social media usage has had a substantial impact on digital media literacy and student cognizance of bias and reliability of digital texts, over the last fifteen years. As a result of this shift toward mass

production of digital content the goals of new media literacy have started to include evaluation of both the curation and production of a students' own online media. Developing a digital media literacy curriculum in a social studies classroom that provides evidence of improvement of student cognizance of bias and reliability may be a challenging endeavor. As stated by Buckingham (2007), there is no such thing as objective digital media.

This review of literature has also acknowledged the many obstacles that the research could have potentially encountered; these obstacles include limited access to digital technologies, educator bias and apathy, parental bias as an impact on media literacy reception, and objectivity as an impossibility. In the course of examining new digital media literacy practices, it is important for an educator to be both cognizant of their own level of understanding of media bias and reliability, but also the technological backgrounds and usage levels of their students. With past practice as a guide, the following chapter will outline the methodology of a research study in which a new digital media literacy lesson series was created and instructional techniques for delivery were explored.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this dissertation in practice was to both develop effective curricular materials that support digital media literacy among high school students while better understanding how teachers who are attempting to develop curricula for social media literacy reflect on and use student data that is generated in the classroom. Through a qualitative action research design, I collected data during the processes of a collaborative Lesson Study (Dudley, 2015; Lewis et al., 2006) on the development of a new digital media literacy lesson series. Samples of student performance through digital media formative assessments and field notes on observations of the new curriculum being implemented by members of my social studies department were analyzed to further develop an appropriate digital media lesson series. Additionally, the data collected provided both an analysis and critique the values and pitfalls of a collaborative approach to lesson design. The questions this research seeks to answer are: How do specific instructional strategies contribute to the development of digital media literacy among secondary students and how does the development of digital media literacy amongst secondary students influence teacher decisions during lesson study?

This chapter provides a thorough description of the context and participants of the study, my positionality and how it changed over the course of the study, the qualitative participatory action research design, the specific interventions that were implemented to

address the problem of practice, and the methods of data collection and analysis used to develop the results of the study.

Context and Participants

The practitioner focus of this study was two instructors within the four-person social studies department at a Connecticut Technical High school in eastern Connecticut. Schipper (et al., 2017) describe lesson study as a teaching and lesson development process that is typically carried out in small groups of educators. Educators work collaboratively to conduct cycles of planning and lesson refinement. In a lesson study, one teacher delivers the lesson while other collaborative team members, "observe the lesson with a focus on student learning" (Schipper, 2017, p290).

This research takes place in the social studies department at one of seventeen high schools in the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTECS). Due to their previous discussions about media literacy within the humanities, and the accessibility of their department given my current role in the CTE district, the social studies department was selected to carry out this research intervention and the corresponding lesson study. If the development of media literacy curricula demonstrated success in this area, the anticipation was that it may be used by any course within the humanities. The CTECS is in the process of revamping their social studies curricula to include digital source material that is both standards-aligned and relevant to the modern student. It is the belief of this researcher that the best practice for formulating new curriculum is through collaborative practitioner inquiry. As a new department head and instructional coach at Windham Technical High School, collaborative practice within my team of teachers is embedded into my occupational tasks.

This study observed and assessed the work of multiple students, comprising eight class sections of heterogeneously grouped fifteen to seventeen year old social studies students enrolled in Civics and Unites States History (USH) coursework. Eighty-one percent of adolescents that use social media fall between the ages of fifteen and seventeen years old (Len Rios et. al, 2016). The students in tenth and eleventh grade fall within this age population. The desire to create a digital media literacy curriculum that addresses multiple groups within the humanities provided an opportunity to compare the two grade levels in their response to the new lesson series. The students at Windham Technical High School, the sample school, come from a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, and social classes. Many of them come from working- and middle-class families with a history of trade-work; thus, their attraction to attending the CTE high school that served as the hub for this study. Approximately 34% of CTECS students at Windham are eligible for free or reduced cost lunch, 3.4% are not able to demonstrate fluency in English, and 30.5% identify as non-white. Connecticut schools have a combined graduation rate of 84.8%, the CTECS system demonstrates a graduation rate of 95.9%, while the school population at Windham Technical High School shows a graduation rate of 97.1% (EdSight, 2018) Graduation rates are mostly impacted in grades nine and ten, as students make initial decisions about trade choice or transfer to another local high school or middle-college within this timeframe.

The CTE high school system where this study took place operates in a 10-day cycle schedule, where students attend academic classes for ten days, then attend career technical trade classes for ten days, then return to academics cyclically. Teams of teachers have collaborative time embedded in their weekly schedules, but this is largely unstructured and

independently organized and assessed. The cyclical nature of the academic schedule at CTECS provides the impetus to create brief two to three-day units or lesson series to address curricular topics. Based on discourse and previously administered school surveys, it is evident that most of the students at the CTECS school in Windham have internet access from home. This translates to the initial problem of practice in that students often bring information they have encountered through their personal use of digital media into course discussions; this information is not always reliable or holds some level of media bias.

Researcher Positionality

Participatory action research (PAR) originated in the 1960's; within education it is designed to address inequities through collaborative research design (Jacobs, 2016). Traditional research includes a positivist approach, in which the researcher is deemed the lone producer of new knowledge. Educational PAR challenges this notion under the assumption that collaborative contributions from multiple practitioners can better address inequities or challenges within education (Jacobs, 2016). Within this research I am both a researcher and a collaborator with other practitioners. While the initial problem was identified through my own practice, collaboration with teacher-peers clarified the pervasiveness of need for digital media literacy curricula. The lesson study framework that was used to examine this problem of practice is inherently a form of PAR. The second question of this research study examines how specific instructional strategies contribute to the development of digital media literacy among secondary students.

Research Design

Action research is a participatory practice that lends itself to a natural collaboration between stakeholders (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Ivankova, 2013). Qualitative action

research in education utilizes researcher interpretations of data such as observations, qualitative assessments, and interviews to establish an opinion regarding the state of teaching and learning (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Qualitative analysis is a significant part of all teacher inquiry and reflection (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014); the transferability of this commonly held practitioner methodology into research about curriculum design and student response is natural. Howe (1985) suggests that qualitative research within education is often considered more *valid* when the interpretations of the observations of that research are agreed upon by multiple practitioners and stakeholders. Trainor and Graue (2014) state that qualitative research is effective when, "the examination of processes and phenomena where the perspectives of multiple stakeholders are, or are thought to be, central to our understanding and practice" (p 268). As this research employed DDDM within a collaborative practitioner team, this quality-check and practitioner perspective-seeking is embedded into its very design. Additionally, students are participants in the success of this new lesson series; they are considered to be contributing stakeholders in participatory action research, as well (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017).

The design of the research allows for an initial examination of the impact of instructional strategies on student outcomes. Upon creation of any lesson or unit via lesson study the next step is to assess instruction. It is important at this point to figure out what impact instructional design has on the students, not yet considering *why* the instructional decisions were made. The second stage of research, embedded within the second action research cycle, observes how those student outcomes effect the adjustments made to the instructional strategies (Figure 3.1). This is the stage of research where we consider why

teachers made the instructional decisions they have made and how instructional strategies are reflected in this decision making process.
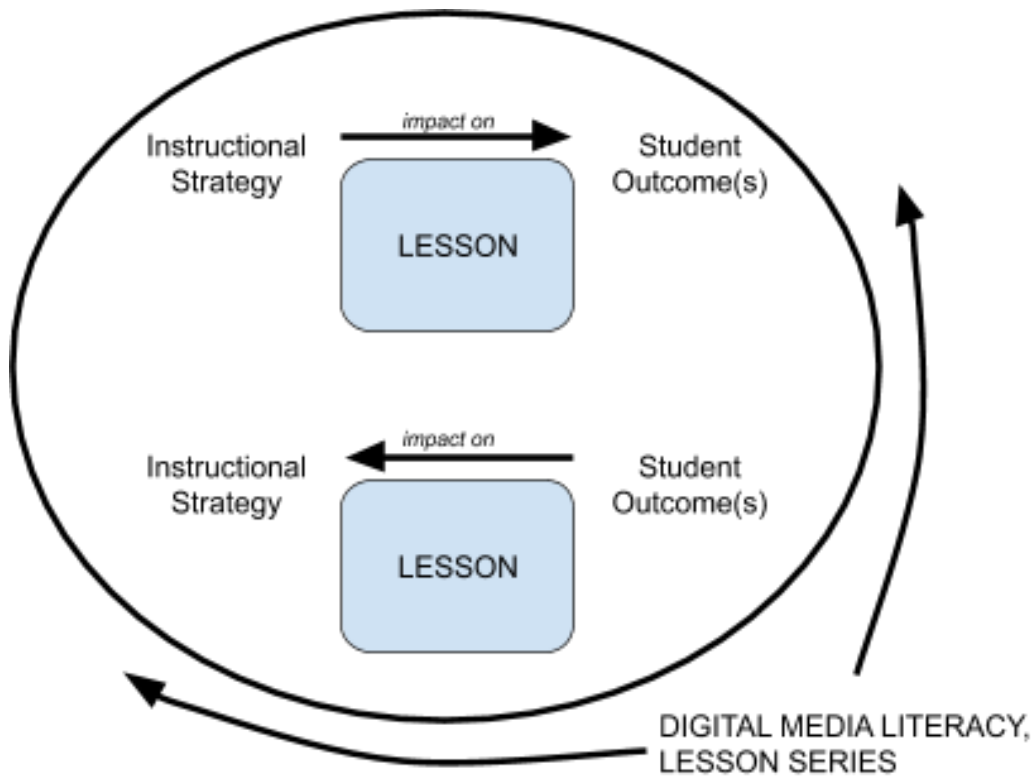

Figure 3.1: Research design to examine the relationship between IS & SO

Lesson Intervention. This participatory action research study was carried out over two action research cycles. Four steps comprise each action research cycle: collaborative inquiry and lesson creation, implementation of the new lesson, collection of qualitative student data, and examining and analyzing student formative and observational data (Figure 3.2). Within the two action research cycles the constructs of practitioner collaboration, student cognizance of bias and reliability of digital text, and use of digital media as a tool of instruction were investigated. Practitioner collaboration through lesson study lead to the production and adaptation of a lesson series that was implemented during each of the action research cycles. The desire throughout the collaborative practice was

that the results of the Lesson Study could guide the production of a curriculum that could be used in multiple courses throughout the humanities.

Given the desire to develop a lesson series that can be used across the humanities, the student sample groups were deliberately selected from two different grade and age levels within the social studies department. Each practitioner sought to improve digital media literacy within their content area, including and eleventh grade offering of Modern United States History (USH) and tenth grade civics. The two participating practitioners met before, between, and at the end of the two action research cycles to discuss student data in order to drive instruction and reflection. Field notes were taken during each class period and student formative assessment data was collected each day. At the culmination of each lesson-day each practitioner reflected on student learning and instructional needs. At the midpoint, between action research cycles, and end of lesson implementation the two practitioners met with the researcher to discuss areas for change within the lesson series, based on both observation and student formative data. This culminating data was the result of the cross-content collaboration between the two practitioners.

The lesson series utilized multiple forms of delivery including practitioner lecture, social media examples and exemplars, student discourse and debate, and student practice. Each practitioner elected to deliver content in a format reflective of their own teaching practice. In cycle one all content was delivered to students through Google Classroom and displayed during class discussions on the classroom SmartBoard. In cycle two, the practitioner elected to provide all content to students in either hard-copy form or displayed on the SmartBoard in the classroom. Both practitioners allowed students to utilize personal devices for the second lesson day and for the final (day 2) student assessment.
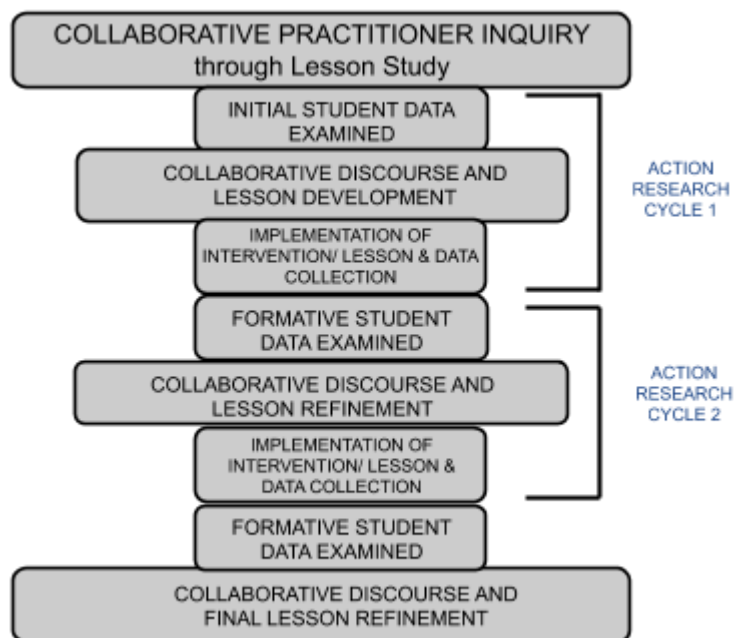
Figure 3.2: Intervention and Data Collection Plan

Data Collection Measures, Instruments and Tools

There were four forms of data collection that were used at different intervals within this study: entrance interviews and field notes about teacher demographics from one-on-one meetings with practitioners, recorded and transcribed meeting comments from practitioner collaboration time and meetings, classroom lesson observations and field notes with embedded researcher reflections, and student qualitative assessments.

Throughout the research I engaged in note taking through reflective field notes; this occurred during both during entrance interviews and during mid-research collaborative meetings. Field notes of both classroom observations and collaborative team meetings were maintained in a method consistent with the practices outlined as standard according to Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018). They suggest that while there are no specific guides on

how to take field notes, researchers must consider their theoretical framework as a template prior to initiating note-taking. Prior to beginning the observations, I considered the potential methods for coding of field notes and concluded that this must be considered in my practice of observation (Saldana, 2016). With this in mind, I focused on the three major components of research: instructional strategies, practitioner reflection, and the impact of each of these on student outcomes.

Data regarding practitioner collaboration and decision making was tracked during both independent and departmental meetings where lesson study was carried out. This tracking was done through transcription of meeting conversations, note-taking on individual teacher philosophies and contributions, and researcher journaling at intervals within the action research cycles. While field notes are an effective tool for research, transcripts of practitioner collaboration during the lesson study allowed for deeper analysis of practitioner motivations and perceptions of student data and the effectiveness of instructional tools (Tessier, 2012). Transcriptions provide clear qualitative data, including quotes, to express specific motivations for curricular change during the course of collaboration.

Students were issued qualitative formative assessments at the end of each of the two curricular lessons; in which they examined digital material and wrote an analysis of how they determined content validity and reliability. The questions that formed the basis for formative assessments were designed by Porter (2004) and utilized successfully by Ashley, Maksl, and Craft (2017). While the first qualitative assessment looks at general knowledge of bias in digital media text, the second assessment asks students utilize these new digital media sources as references to answer a curriculum-relevant prompt. This brief

formative assessment served as a benchmark for student growth and success of instructional methods. The final assignment was assessed based on both content accuracy and student analysis of traits that signal digital bias and reliability. Student qualitative formative assessments were created with guidance from curricula established by the Canadian Center for Digital and Media Literacy, *MediaSmarts* (2018) and through collaboration with the team of practitioners involved in the Lesson Study. Within each two-day action research cycle, students completed two formative qualitative assessments. These formative assessments utilized current textual and photographic examples from social media. This assessment was given during class meeting times, at the end of each day of the two-day lesson intervention. Data was collected via both Google Classroom and student handwritten responses. Student responses and outcomes during each action research cycle had a direct influence on both practitioner collaboration and future design of and quality of the formative assessment tool. As the researcher that was collaborating with practitioners, I carried out observations of each cycle of lesson implementation. I observed instructions, instructional strategies, and student perceptions and tracked this information through both field notes and reflective journaling.

This action research analysis sought to deduce conclusions not only about student cognizance of digital media, but also best practices for teacher collaboration. Assumptions must be made about each practitioners' teaching philosophy, based upon their contributions to the outcome of the curriculum design and Lesson Study. Beyond the examination of teaching philosophy, this research looked at student data as the driving force for lesson design. Through a collaborative examination of data, the researcher can see where each

practitioner places value in digital literacy learning; aiding in the understanding of individual teaching philosophies.

Research Procedure

As noted previously, this research and the embedded interventions took place over two participatory action research cycles. The first action research cycle outlined an initial lesson plan and examined student outcomes based on the instructional strategies that were embedded within that lesson plan. The second action research cycle further examined how practitioner collaboration through lesson study guides curricular change and best supports growth in student outcomes. Between these two cycles and at the culmination of research, all involved practitioners met to discuss student data and instructional changes that should be made to support students. As a proponent of having multiple qualitative data sets that contribute to a bigger picture within the paradigm of action research, this study embeds four significant data sources. Transcribed recordings from collaboration meetings provided specific feedback for the first research question, addressing whether or not collaboration facilitates better instruction of digital media literacy. Student data, both from school-based assessments and formative assessments embedded into the new curriculum, illustrated both the successes of the new lesson plan and the additional needs of the student population. Finally, researcher observation and reflection aided in triangulating data from collaboration and lesson implementation.

Finding a Lesson Study Team. In order to incite productive collaboration between the social studies team of teachers, it was important to get to know all members personal

philosophies on both teaching and learning. To facilitate the collection of this information, I met with each social studies instructor both collectively and in small instructional level teams to carry out field notes in order to develop a summary of their individual backgrounds and philosophies. These notes covered: professional background, years instructing social studies, current courses that they were instructing, where they believe both the school and their personal practice excels, the challenges they believe are facing the school or their practice, their thoughts on the current state of education, and finally, how they see social media and digital access affecting students their classes. The results of these interviews were combined to develop a broad summary on the social studies team at Windham Technical High School.

Collaborative Meetings for Intervention Refinement. Once professional connections were established, a new digital media literacy lesson series was presented to the team of two teachers, for feedback. Using existing student data, the team provided feedback for changes in the lesson plan that would best address the learning needs of their population of students. Each session of practitioner collaboration began with a recorded and transcribed sharing of suggestions and concerns with the lessons as they were presented at that interval. These ten to fifteen-minute meeting portions were transcribed and compared with other data sources at the sum of the research study.

In the first action research cycle, data included practitioners concerns and reflections on student performance and need, and qualitative analyses of what their students need in regard to media literacy support. Collaborative lesson design is done with the direct involvement and input of stakeholders; in this case, stakeholders were both the other members of the humanities department as well as the sample students. As is common with

action research, this study was completed on a micro rather than macro level; specifically, this research utilized a lesson study curriculum design strategy within a three-member social studies team and examined the outcomes of a group of secondary social studies students spread over two content-levels of social studies courses.

Through participatory action research, a new media literacy curriculum and lesson series was implemented. This lesson series intervention was developed through a combination of curricular resources and materials from Canada's *Media Smarts Centre for Digital Literacy* (2018) and Hobbs' (2010) action plan for the implementation of digital media literacy in the modern age. The intervention was adapted at three intervals through the use of student data and practitioner collaboration and Lesson Study. Access to digital media can promote inquiry-based learning, both promoting student media literacy as well demonstrating need for media literacy instruction (MacDonald, 2008). With this inquiry-approach as guidance, the new lesson series utilizes available digital resources and platforms to instruct students to be aware of the bias and purpose of the digital media with which they frequently interact.

The first action research cycle examined practitioner concerns and literacy data. The intervention was not carried out until March of the traditional school year. At this point in the year, the teachers had a valid gauge on student performance and instructional needs. Their perceptions of student learning styles, deficiencies, and need for enrichment was considered in the adaptation of the research-designed intervention. The second research cycle utilized practitioner observations and qualitative student assessments from the previous research cycle (Figure 3.1).

Enacting the Intervention. Each action research cycle was carried out over two course days for four class sections. The curricular intervention in this study was adapted over each research cycle; the intervention changes reflect the process of teacher collaboration through Lesson Study and specific changes will be addressed in the following chapter.

The initial planned intervention began with a schema activity to gauge student prior knowledge about media bias, reliability, and fake news. Students were shown screenshots of social media posts that included both an image and a piece of text, or a clip of text alone. They were instructed to hold up placards demonstrating whether or not they believed the image on the screen to be bias, unreliable, or fake. The practitioner then led class discussions after students selected their choice, to determine both prior knowledge and student reasoning. After each brief discussion, students were shown a second slide explaining the actual traits of the media post they examined.

The second activity on for the first day of the research cycle was a review of vocabulary. Students were given an opportunity to collectively define the different forms of media bias outlined by MediaSmarts (2018). As a final activity on day one of the research cycle, students utilized these new definitions of bias to critique three new samples from social media. This final activity was divided into a three-column graphic organizer. The social media post was shown in the left column, the middle column allowed students to select which form of bias they believed was being shown in the image, and the third column gave space for students to write a couple of sentences explaining their choice.

On the second day of each action research cycle students began with a review of key vocabulary and discussion of the key ideas from the previous lesson. The practitioners

reviewed school policies and classroom procedure regarding digital research, then students were provided with a graphic organizer, and instructed to spend the remainder of class researching a current curricular topic utilizing only social media as a resource. The topic selected by the practitioners before the intervention was, "Does North Korea pose a threat to US national security?" This topic was selected as it fit in to the current curricular theme of "The Global Role of the United States". The graphic organizer that was provided to students asked them to establish a brief thesis statement to address the prompt, find three pieces of evidence to support their thesis using only social media, and describe how they determined that their selected sources were reliable. This assessment was reviewed by the practitioners during the Lesson Study and collaboration time that followed.

Within each implementation of the lesson cycle I observed both practitioner instruction methods and student response to the new media literacy intervention. There were embedded qualitative formative assessments serving as *exit slips* for each day. Discussion about how formative assessments would be evaluated was addressed with practitioners and the student subjects prior to implementation. Schipper (2017) suggests that collaborative teacher practice is ineffective without student input and ownership of learning. A final cycle of practitioner collaboration will take place after the second implementation of the intervention.

Addressing Quality. Criteria for quality action research includes internal validity, creation of new learning, and appropriate methodological approaches. Internal validity is important as it addresses how the data represents the purpose of the action research study. Action research does not need to be generalizable to other populations but must at the very least address the problem (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Quality action research should result

in new learning for both the researcher and the participants (Herr & Anderson, 2015). This includes an action plan for future use on that particular community. As is the case for the students at this CTE school, this action research may frame future curricular decisions in regard to digital media literacy within the social studies. Finally, quality action research must use an appropriate research methodology for the problem presented (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) outline quality action research as including: a clearly identified problem and theoretical perspective; data collection in a way that honors the perspectives of both the researcher and the participants; and finally, reporting results in a way that aids in the development of social change (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Qualitative and participatory action research within education is the intersection of the researcher's interpretation of student interactions and views and the formative data that supports that view (Lichtman, 2013). Lichtman (2013) also cautions that practitioner lens must be factored into the interpretation of any qualitative action research in education.

Treatment, Processing and Analysis of Data

The first research question asked, how do specific instructional strategies contribute to the development of digital media literacy among secondary students? This question was analyzed through reflection on both student formative assessments and field notes from classroom observations. Aside from the collaborative evaluation, student scores on formative assessments will determine the effectiveness of individual instructional strategies and their impact on student cognizance of bias and reliability in digital text. The scores for formative assessments were grading standards established by a team of practitioners, through the lesson study. This component of the research also examined the

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forms of digital media available within the classroom and correlated this with the successes or failures of curriculum implementation. This portion of the research was established through researcher, practitioner, and student reflection. Upon observing curricular implementation, I reflected on the successes and failures of that specific lesson. When meeting in collaborative teams, the practitioners reflected on their own interpretations of student learning. Embedded with the qualitative assessments was the opportunity for students to reflect on the lesson and what questions they may still have regarding the topic of digital media literacy.

The second research question emphasizes the role of practitioner in the success of the implementation of digital media literacy lessons. It asks, how does the development of digital media literacy amongst secondary students influence teacher decisions during lesson study? A comparison of entrance interviews, transcribed meeting minutes from collaborative time, and the researcher reflection journal provided the needed data to assess this question. The collaborative team of practitioners reflected on student data; both existing school assessment data and information gained from formative assessments. As the researcher, I served as a facilitator during these collaborative meetings, but sought to understand the motivations and evaluative pieces that each practitioner brought to the discussion.

The cumulative data from these three areas were combined to contribute to a bigger analysis of effective digital media literacy practices; after which this could be applied to other subjects within the humanities. To better establish common trends all pieces were coded for which research questions they best assessed. Creswell & Poth (2018) break down ways in which qualitative data can be prepared and analyzed. They suggest that qualitative

data analysis must utilize a tool that best reflects the needs of the researcher and each qualitative study differs in its coding and analysis. For the purposes of this research, I sought out key terminology utilized by both instructors and students that denoted best practices for Lesson Study and curriculum design.

I looked for trends within the student qualitative formative assessments. Additionally, I examined for emergent trends in my own field notes and reflection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the first cycle of data analysis and coding a holistic approach was taken. Also referred to as "macro-level coding" (Saldana, 2016, p 166), the purpose of this form of initial coding is to group large amounts of data into overarching themes. Given the variance in the two research questions outlined herein, data was initially coded to reflect whether it was expressing data driven decision making on behalf of the instructors (coded: DDDM), if the information demonstrated an instructional strategy (coded: IS), or if it was an example of students using social media as a resource for research (coded: SMR).

The second cycle of coding focused in on student perspectives to address the first research question. In vivo coding, also known as literal or emic coding, utilizes the voice of the sample population with particular emphasis on participant-created cultural terms (Saldaña, 2016). Field notes and the second day of formative assessments for each action research cycle (ARC) were coded to note where student voice, written or verbal, expressed prior knowledge (PK), recognition of media bias (MB), recognition of media reliability (MB), student use of social media (SM), and student response to instructional strategy (SIS). Further notation was given to express whether the comment was positive or negative. An example of this positive versus negative student interpretation of instructional strategies and tools is: "I love competition. If this is any type of competition I'm going to rock it"

(positive) stated by a student on the first day of the first action research cycle while, "It is really difficult to not goof off while using social media" (negative) was stated by a student on day two of the first action research cycle.

Quality in Design and Analysis. The ability to replicate a study is a key component of quality any research. Quality qualitative action research requires a deliberate and systematic approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research procedure outlined in the following section provides clarity in the timing of each of the two action research cycles that comprise this study. A quality study leaves little or no room for spurious influences. One factor that could have had impact on the outcomes of this research was the use of two different content and age groups for each of the two research cycles. In consideration of the impact that this population variation may have on the outcomes of the instructor collaboration and assessment I included the *prior knowledge* code within the in vivo (Saldaña, 2016) coding. This coding created a means to evaluate the differences between the two populations while creating a lesson series that could potentially be used throughout the social studies.

Protection of sensitive information. As both practitioner and student data was stored and analyzed throughout an extended research process, it became important to outline the procedures for protecting participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Trainor & Graue, 2014). Student information was scrubbed from all final sources of student data, teacher entrance interviews, and formative assessments prior to the publishing of this dissertation. According to federal regulation on research, "information which has been provided for specific purposes by an individual and which the individual can reasonably expect will not be made public" (Protection of Human Subjects, 2009). The practitioners

were informed prior to their agreement to participate that there would be no identifiable information divulged during the analysis process.

In Summary

      This research sought to examine the impact of practitioner collaboration and digital media literacy interventions on student cognizance of bias and reliability in digital media texts. Through a qualitative participatory action research study, practitioners and I reflected on curricular impact on student understanding of digital media bias as well as the impact of incorporating digital media into social studies curricula to develop student media literacy. Alternating groups of social studies student participants received the curricular intervention in two action research cycles of two days each. Qualitative formative assessment, observation, and researcher reflection and journaling was used throughout the action research cycles to collaborate, evaluate, and adjust the intervention. Final data was compared to develop the analysis the proceeds this chapter. The impact of the curricular intervention on student success in recognizing digital media bias and use of social media in the classroom is addressed; ultimately providing a framework for a digital media literacy curriculum that can be applied across all areas of the humanities in which research and instruction of research methods are utilized.

CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS

Over the past few years, I have observed social media become a leading source of information for my students in grades nine through twelve. In light of this trend, it has become increasingly apparent to me that there is a need for instruction to support new digital media literacies, which includes strategies for students as they utilize social media sourcing. Over my teaching career I have become increasingly concerned by the inequalities in access to reliable news resources and student cognizance of bias within their more accessible news sources. Scharrer & Ramasubramanian (2015) note that, "…when one considers media literacy education as an 'intervention', the necessary underlying assumption is that there is a relationship between media use and some (undesirable) outcome that needs to be addressed" (p172). If students are receiving a significant portion of their news-media content via social media platforms, it is vital that education practitioners provide support and instruction in how to navigate these media sources to seek out bias and reliability. Both my experiences in the classroom and current shift in social studies education towards an emphasis on students being able to contribute to social discourse through new technological means have led me to design an action research study that examines both the impact of various instructional strategies on student digital literacy outcomes and the impact of student outcomes on practitioner decision making.

The purpose of this dissertation in practice was to both develop effective curricular materials that support digital media literacy among high school students while better understanding how teachers who are attempting to develop curricula for social media literacy reflect on and use student data that is generated in the classroom. The central tenet of this study was the creation of a digital media literacy lesson series through data-driven decision making in lesson study (Dudley, 2015; Lewis et al., 2006) and examines three levels of curricular design consideration: instructional coaching and facilitating, analysis of student data, and collaboration with peer educators. Data is an important tool for reflection within teaching practice. Data guides whether or not a lesson implementation is successful or if content needs to be readdressed with students. A significant amount of action research within education is qualitative in nature and multiple perspectives on qualitative data are vital to assess the success of a lesson plan.

There is not a single learning experience that can independently address the curricular need that media literacy presents (Tyler, 1949; Misco 2014). Modern interpretations of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) suggest that all new curricular design should consider the differentiation needs of diverse and exceptional learners (Howard, 2003). In the UDL model of curricular design there are multiple ways to both engage students as well as multiple representations of content (Howard, 2003; Misco, 2014). Given the multidimensional appearances of digital media, universal design through a lesson study may provide diverse populations with the means necessary to critically evaluate their digital world and gain democratic access to this newer news media source.

This research took place over two two-day participatory action research cycles. Two practitioners stepped forward to carry out the digital media literacy lessons within

their classes. While initial feedback to the lesson series and the collaborative activities was positive and enthusiastic, the positive outcome of this lesson study was the collaborative practice that led to instructional strategies that best support the students at this Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) school. Student participants were provided with a two-day digital media literacy lesson series in their social studies class. The two days of lessons within each action research cycle were comprised of multiple instructional strategies and methods.

This chapter will first outline the general findings of this research based on analysis of field notes, practitioner transcriptions, and student qualitative formative assessments. The analysis that follows will critically examine the data-driven decision-making processes and instructional strategies and tools that best assist secondary students in gaining literacy about new forms of digital and social media.

General Findings and Results

In the initial lesson plan for the first day of instruction students began by examining sample social media screenshots and held up plaques to reflect whether they believed the social media headlines were "bias", "unreliable", or "fake". Upon holding up their placard they were asked to defend their reasoning (APPENDIX A). Then, the practitioners reviewed different forms of media bias with examples; then students analyzed more social media screenshots for specific forms of bias and had to defend their response. Day two of the initial plans had students outlining an argumentative essay utilizing only evidence from social media sources. This gave students the opportunity to use a resource they felt comfortable navigating but that they are typically not encouraged to use within the classroom. At the culmination of the second day students were asked to explain how they

determined which sources most reliably supported their argument. The lesson plans were adjusted through the collaborative inquiry of the two practitioners and based on student data, both observed and in formative assessments.

The first action research cycle took place in four class sections of an eleventh grade modern United States history course, comprised of forty-nine students. The class sections were comprised of two honors class groups and two heterogeneously grouped class sections, comprised of forty-six students. Both throughout the implementation of the intervention and at the sum of the two-day cycle the lesson plans were re-evaluated and practitioner reflection and data analysis guided changes to the lesson series. The second action research cycle tracked four sections of tenth grade civics classes through their response to the modified unit. The four civics class sections were comprised of two honors groups and two heterogeneously grouped class sections.
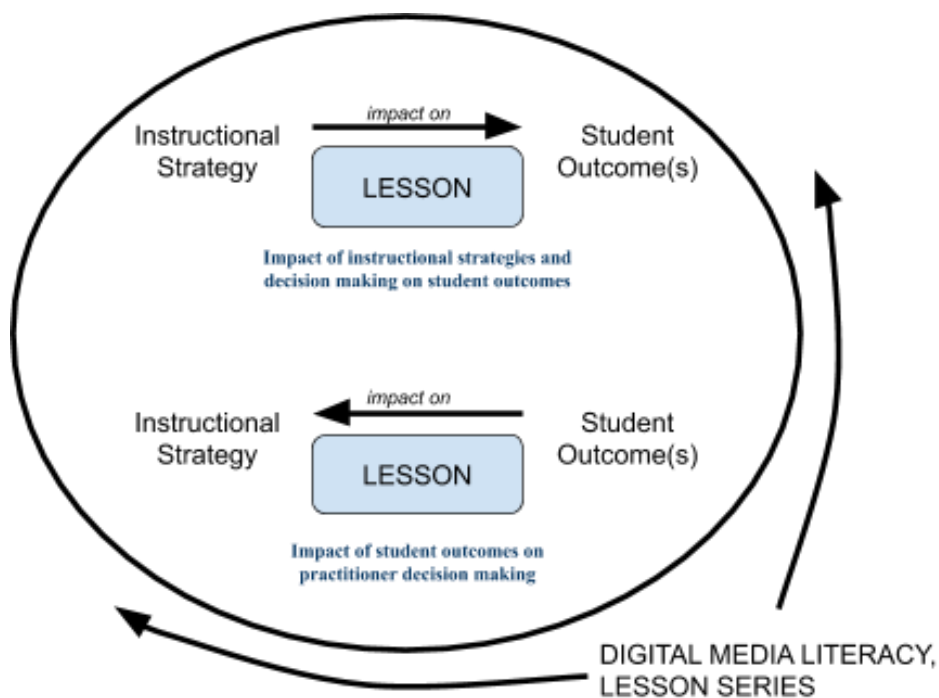

Figure 4.1 Diagram of the purpose for the research

The initial focus of data analysis more prominently assessed the impact of instructional strategies on student outcomes; seeking out data to support or dispute the use of specific strategies in the instruction of digital media literacy. In the first action research cycle the practitioner assessed student cognizance of digital media bias and reliability through multiple forms of formative assessment. Students participated in interactive classroom discourse, discussed digital literacy concepts through whole-group and small-group discussion, completed independent practice activities, and drafted an outline for an argumentative prompt that demonstrated their ability to navigate social media as a source for research while critiquing the reliability of each source.

Once the impact of instructional strategies on student learning outcomes had been established it became important to consider how student outcomes impacted the decision making that practitioners carried out regarding the effectiveness and use of specific instructional strategies. The lesson study components of this lesson design process took place at multiple intervals throughout the action research. Practitioners provided feedback prior to lesson implementation, briefly at the end of each class session, between action research cycles, and at the end of the second action research cycle. Lesson study provides multiple opportunities for practitioners to share ideas and reflect on both practice and student formative and summative data. The focus of much of the dialogue between the two practitioners was on instructional practice, pre-teaching vocabulary and concepts, and differentiation for different levels of student need and experience.

The initial holistic coding of field notes and transcriptions grouped large amounts of data into overarching themes (Saldana, 2016). The two research questions outlined herein helped in the development of a data coding structure that reflected whether content

was expressing data driven decision making on behalf of the instructors, if the information demonstrated an instructional strategy, or if it was an example of students using social media as a resource or tool within the classroom. The results of this coding expressed common terminology used by both instructors in their reflection and collaboration, and within the classroom observation field notes (Table 4.1). Within the first action research cycle, practitioner one (P1) provided significant feedback regarding potential adaptations to the lessons in order to meet the learning needs of their students. Two class sections were heterogeneously grouped while the other two were upper level honors courses. The practitioner adjusted instruction throughout each of the eight class sessions. The recommendations and lesson adaptations of practitioner two (P2) in the second action research cycle were more focused on the many facets of digital media literacy that could be added to the lesson series to create a more complete unit plan, and the technology access and needs of their sophomore students. While a significant amount of the vocabulary was common between practitioners, practitioner two added in social media concepts of *memes* and *clickbait* and further discussed the ways in which social media could be used as a positive source for current events and information.

In the second cycle of data analysis I considered student choices, reflection, and analysis of both biased media and instructional practice. With this as my framework I carried out in vivo coding of all classroom field notes and day two student formative assessments (Table 4.2). Field notes and the second day of formative assessments for each action research cycle were coded to note where student voice, written or verbal, expressed prior knowledge, recognition of media bias, recognition of media reliability, student use of social media, and student response to instructional strategy. Further notation was given to

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Table 4.1 *Holistic coding of field notes on classroom observations*

DDDM [Indicators of Data-Driven Decision Making]		
AR CYCLE 1 *Terms/ Ideas:*	*AR CYCLE 2* *Terms/ Ideas:*	*Lesson Study* *Terms/ Ideas:*
Pre-teaching Formative Assessment Questioning Additions for next class	Pre-teaching Formative Assessment Questioning Response to real-world prompts	Data Student work Exemplars; misunderstand Instructions; missed/skipped questions Concerns
IS [Instructional Strategy]		
AR CYCLE 1 *Terms/ Ideas:*	*AR CYCLE 2* *Terms/ Ideas:*	*Lesson Study* *Terms/ Ideas:*
Content Review Marzano Competition Whole-Group Instruction Discourse; Discussion Student Discourse Turn & Talk; Partners; Sharing Differentiation Independent Practice; Choice; Real-world Connections; Technology integration	Content Review; Vocabulary Marzano Competition; "With-It"-ness Whole-Group Instruction Discourse, Discussion Student Discourse Turn & Talk; Partners; Sharing Differentiation Pre-defining terminology; Independent Practice; Choice, Real-world Connections; Technology integration	Content Pre-teaching vocabulary; Content background info Marzano Competition; Cultural Relevance Differentiation Technology Integration; Use of personal devices; Use of social media Expansion of media literacy Use as a bigger unit; use in other content areas
SMR [Social Media as Resource]		
AR CYCLE 1 *Terms/ Ideas:*	*AR CYCLE 2* *Terms/ Ideas:*	*Lesson Study* *Terms/ Ideas:*
Social Media Platforms Facebook; Twitter Accessibility/ SM Uses Profit; News; Entertainment Digital Sourcing Dated documentation Cultural Relevance Buzzfeed; The Onion; Satire	Social Media Platforms Facebook; Twitter Accessibility/ SM Uses Profit; Clickbait; News; Entertainment; Connection to peers, Memes Digital Sourcing Dated documentation, pro/con, timelines Cultural Relevance SNL; Hoax; Buzzfeed; The Onion; Satire	Students with access Familial allowances Financial access Engagement

express whether the comment during student discourse was positive or negative. Positive statements suggest the student is comfortable with the specified content or tool, while negative comments suggest discomfort or unfamiliarity with the specified content or tool (APPENDIX B).

Table 4.2 *In vivo coding of student formative assessments and classroom discourse.*

	Classroom discourse *Day 1 of each action research cycle (ARC)*					Formative assessment *Day 2 of each action research cycle (ARC)*		
	ARC-1		ARC-2		% increase in positive feedback b/w ARCs	ARC-1	ARC-2	% change
Student Response	**+**	**-**	**+**	**-**				
PK *(prior knowledge)*	13	1	9	6	- 30.8%	23	10	-56.5%
Recognition of MB *(media bias)*	58	15	73	7	+ 26.9%	67	84	+25.3%
Recognition of MR *(media reliability)*	46	7	77	12	+ 67.4%	16	43	+168%
Use of SM for News *(social media)*	11	4	9	5	- 18.2%	42	33	-21.4%
SIS *(student response to instructional strategy)*	5	5	6	2	+ 16.7%	22	29	+31.8%

Student discourse during classroom observations reflected an increased positive response to instructional strategies, but more notable was the researcher observations of an increase in positive student responses to two specific instructional strategies. Questions presented in a scaffolded manner to induce student discourse and higher order thinking, and the use of social media as an instruction tool, were both effective instructional strategies. While classroom discourse was effective, it was guided through a scaffolded

questioning instructional strategy. The practitioner in action research cycle one asked questions in a way that both increased student response rates, but induced students to think more deeply about their understanding of bias and reliability in digital media. An example of this strategy can be seen in action research cycle one, day one:

Student One, "The author is a random person- I have never heard of her"

Practitioner, "Is she a blogger or a reporter?

Student One, "It appears she is a reporter"

Practitioner, "How do you know?"

Student Two, "It says 'Buzzfeed', so anyone writing for them is probably a reporter"

Student Three, "It's on Buzzfeed! That's not reliable"

Practitioner, "Is this a news source you are familiar with?"

Student One, "Yeah, but not for real news"

Practitioner, "What do you know about this news source?"

Discussion on the term "clickbait" noted in field notes

Practitioner, "Where did this reporter get her information from?"

Student Four, "There is no way to know"

Practitioner, "Do you believe this news source is reliable? Why?"

Student One, "They do not say where the information came from"

Student Five, "It looks like they want to sell something, not give you real news"

Practitioner, "Is there bias in this source?"

Student Three, " I think so, yes."

Practitioner, "How do you know? Give an example"

Student Three, "Because they talk about the police officer in the headline; like, they say the guy's job like it's bad"

Practitioner, "How could they have written this headline to make it appear less bias?"

Student Two, "If they just stated simple facts, or a source"

Students were able to pinpoint specific traits of bias and unreliable media and create a scenario in which a piece of digital media could be deemed less bias and more reliable than the one presented in class. The formulation of this analysis was a direct result of the instructional strategy used by the practitioner.

An additional instructional strategy used in this lesson series that had a significant impact on student outcomes was the use of social media as an instructional tool. Only a few students in each action research cycle did not have their own personal device or a social media account. The practitioners elected to have these students pair up with student-peers. While students completed the activity in which they researched using social media they made comments about how difficult it was to find reliable sources, that they felt that Twitter posts that were "verified" held more authority than others and held side conversations about their own use of social media for current events information. The final student formative data expressed that students were able to navigate social media, with instruction and support, to find research material. Students were also able to critically examine the source material they were using in their own personal social and digital media sourcing. Of the forty-nine students that turned in the final formative assessment in the second action research cycle, thirty-nine were able to accurately identify ways in which they could

determine if a digital media source was reliable; the remaining ten students either misunderstood the question or only have brief responses.

Analysis of Findings

Based on these general findings it can be concluded that there are specific instructional strategies that best support this sample of students in their cognizance of digital media literacy. Additionally, it can be deduced that practitioners are able to effectively use student learning outcomes to guide future instruction when given specific guidelines for lesson study and the time to implement this process.

Impact of Instructional Strategies on Student Outcomes. Research question one asks: how do specific instructional strategies contribute to the development of digital media literacy among secondary students? The lesson intervention utilized multiple methods of instruction; determination for the effectiveness of each of these strategies is drawn from both classroom observation, student voice, and student responses within the day two formative assessment. During the lesson study, the two practitioners expressed their belief that the interactive placard activity and the final formative assessment provided the best support for student outcomes. Upon analysis it became clear that student discourse, real-world connections, and hands-on experience with social media platforms were the best strategies for instruction social and digital media literacy.

In the first moments of the first action research cycle students expressed interest and excitement over the potential for what was being perceived as an in-class game. As a schoolwide initiative for instructional strategy, Marzano's "friendly competition" arose a few times within both classroom observations and the practitioner reflection after lesson implementation. The schema activator applies an excellent engagement strategy to begin

the two-day lesson. While this activity took much longer than anticipated in this first action research cycle, students were able to carry out whole-group discussions to address the meaning of the terms: bias, reliability, and "fake news". Five images were shown and students had to select whether they believed the image to be bias, reliable, or fake (APPENDIX A).

In one image the moon was depicted next to an enlarged image of the planet Mars. The caption stated the source was ScienceInfo.org and that on an upcoming date Mars would appear in the sky as large as the moon. A student stated, "I don't know if it's fake or not, but I'm not confident so I think unreliable"; a second student commented, "it says (date). I was here on that date and I don't remember that event". A third student pointed out that, "we don't have documentation from 35,000 years ago". The discussion that followed allowed students to consider other posts they have viewed on social media and how they may have previously determined whether a source was reliable. The students discussed how any source can try to name themselves in a way that eludes to credibility, but this may not always be an accurate measure. Another image depicted a headline from Fox News that stated, "Police officer charged in shooting death of unarmed neighbor". Students struggled to determine whether this headline was unreliable or biased. They discussed their preconceptions about Fox News and their lack of knowledge about this particular case. In the post-lesson collaboration meeting practitioner one stated, I think students may have struggled with the placard activity because they were lacking some background information. It should be written (in the lesson plans) that some of these can be substituted based on content being delivered in the curriculum, or that teachers can provide some supplemental, but not guiding, information as student analyze the various

pieces of social media." This suggestion, if implemented, may prevent students from struggling as much with the historical reference for many of the sources used as examples.

Perhaps the richest data source to address the second research question was the formative student assessments administered each day of both action research cycles. While the formative assessments did not frequently express student opinions about the instructional strategies, it did provide multiple examples of students utilizing the tools and strategies provided in class. In action research cycle one a student stated, "...how I determined if a source was reliable or not was by first examining the title, then skimming through to see if both sides were covered and there was no bias. After that I tried to check if the source was credible…". This same strategy had been noted by at least six students in the first action research cycle. The strategy had been introduced by practitioner one during a moment in which she made adaptations to her lesson mid-discussion. Students had been struggling with how to approach the final assignment and find valuable content. While their inability to find reliable content on social media served as its own lesson, the instructor took a moment to address the class and give them a strategy for research.

The second action research cycle saw in an increase of 168% of students accurately identifying and supporting why the sources used in their day two formative assessment were reliable or expressed some accuracy in their doubt about source reliability. Upon reviewing the field notes for the second action research cycle I found that the second instructor addressed the idea of *reliability* more frequently than the first instructor, though she did not express a significant increase her discussion about media *bias.* This likely led to a greater student cognizance of reliability and the process through which one can determine source reliability.

The field notes from classroom observations reflected some negative student and practitioner responses to instructional techniques. Most negative comments regarding instructional strategies used to introduce digital media bias stemmed from student's concern that there would be an argumentative essay that would follow lesson day two. This concern arose because the structure of the lesson was similar to ones used to frame argumentative essays with the same practitioner. Another concern, expressed by both the practitioners and the students, was the need for further background information on many of the examples used in class. This expressed need arose in the practitioner reflection and collaboration as well and the second practitioner attempted to provide more background information with any source used in class. During the summative discussion of the Lesson Study the practitioners agreed that for the lesson series to be utilized in another classroom the instructor would have to consider using examples that related to content covered in that course and provide more clarification on the format and purpose of the final formative assessment.

Within the second action research cycle there was a 26.9% increase in the number of students positively identifying media bias during classroom discourse. This can be attributed to a few changes in instructional practice that occurred between action research cycle one and action research cycle two. The practitioner in the second action research cycle included more elements of social media that she had overheard students discussing in the past: such as memes or the concept of *"Twitter verified"*. While both practitioners embraced teachable moments that arose in their classroom, the second practitioner was able to adapt her lessons to meet the needs of her students based on the outcomes of the

previous research cycle. Students appear to have become more cognizant of bias earlier in the lesson cycle as a result of these early additions.

At the culmination of day two of each action research cycle students were asked to write three to five sentences expressing how they would determine which social media sources most *reliably* addressed the prompt they were given in class. While this took some redirection on the part of the practitioner, many students tried to develop a conclusion for the prompt rather than address their sourcing; it also provided a rich qualitative data source on student response to the unit instructional strategies. Practitioner one had to redirect students a considerable amount more than practitioner two, guiding students to evaluate *how* they determined if their sources were bias or reliable. The instructional shift occurred in the second action research cycle to aid in a decrease in student inaccuracies for this prompt; per the guidance of practitioner one, the second practitioner reviewed the formative assessment and its purpose prior to delivering the day two lesson to students.

Social media as an Instructional Strategy. The first research question examined how students can develop the ability to use social media as a reliable resource for learning in social studies. On day one of each research cycle, students examined real social media screenshots for bias and reliability; on day two students carried out their own social media research on a topic suggested by the practitioners, North Korea and its potential threat to the United States. Results from the qualitative data express that students benefited from the use of common social media examples in class. The activities in which students discussed social media samples took much longer than the anticipated ten minutes, and ultimately became their own activity in the second action research cycle after practitioners identified the resulting discourse as valuable to student learning. The second day activity, where

students were to research a prompt using only social media, was more successful with each level of practitioner reflection; resulting in a group of students in action research cycle two who were able to not only seek out reliable source information on social media, but well articulate how they determined levels of bias and reliability within each source.

  Student Prior Knowledge. Both levels of coding analysis examined what prior knowledge students held regarding media literacy then assessed what instructional strategies both practitioners and students perceived as more effective in teaching about digital media bias. There was 30.8% decline in student comments denoting prior knowledge about social media literacy embedded within classroom discourse (Table 4.2). This may have been due to differences in instruction or due to the differences in student grade levels; the students observed in action research cycle two were tenth graders, versus the eleventh graders observed in cycle one. Most student prior knowledge came as the result of small instructional units they received in middle school or life experience from personal use of social media platforms. There was some overlap between student comments regarding their use of social media as a resource for learning about digital media literacy and students' comments about instructional strategy. Other prior knowledge was from students' personal interactions within social media networks. Nearly all students acknowledged that they have heard of Buzzfeed, and few noted that it was used for entertainment purposes more than as a source of reliable news. Awareness of student prior knowledge is important in the analysis of which tools were the most effective for instruction of this content. Students who had existing social media accounts and expressed a level of familiarity with the content therein needed more support in thinking critically about content they believed they were already familiar with. They appeared to be more apt

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to make broad statements about reliability and bias of specifics sources than their less experienced peers. A discussion in the second research cycle between two students illustrated the importance of both digital media literacy and utilizing social media to instruct modern digital literacy. The students were overheard discussing how often they check their social media posts and a recent post that had been circulating through the various social media platforms. One of the students expressed that he had not even considered that all media has an agenda, or that posts on social media from more popular sources could be equally biased to those that were obviously *clickbait*.

In their final formative assessment an honors-level student in action research cycle two expressed, "as I searched my social media platforms, the first thing I looked for was pictures that go with the article… if the pictures did not reflect the subject or appeared just a little too intriguing I would suspect they were *clickbait*". The term "clickbait" was used frequently in the instructional discourse of the second practitioner. While a couple of students in that same class section expressed that they understood that social media could be used a source of income, most were not familiar with the process of profiting from social media posts and the bias and reliability implications that come from that path for marketing. After some guidance on identifying for-profit posts student delved into their own social media accounts to draft an outline for an argumentative essay on a curriculum-guided question. One male student concluded that, "finding these sources were truly hard, there are a great number of media outlets which are biased" while another student countered that, "...a surprising number of social media posts came from *.org* and *.edu* websites, which means that they were probably more reliable than the posts looking for financial gain."

As the two practitioners reflected on student formative data and learning needs between the two research cycles they decided that there should be some notation on the purposes of social media added in to the first activity on day one. We adjusted the activity to reflect the many reasons a source may be bias, unreliable, or *fake*. Ultimately, the practitioners agreed that students benefited from utilizing social media to research topics, as this appears to be their primary source of current events information when they are not at school. It assists students with developing a critical lens to examine the media they consume on a daily basis.

Impact of Student Outcomes on Teacher Decision Making.

There are three primary structures within Communities of Practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991): domain, community, and practice. The domain of this study is a committed group of educators with similar ideals about public career technical education (CTE) and the academic programming that supports this structure. The community, a primary focus of this research, had to be established through the process of lesson study. Within the community there must be shared goals, ideals, and language established from the onset of discourse (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Finally, the discourse and collaboration of the community leads to shared practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This shared practice is based on the decisions of the total community and ultimately expressed through the final discourse during the lesson study that took place over two action research cycles.

A primary focus of this research was the use of collaborative lesson study design to formulate a cohesive lesson unit for the instruction of digital and social media literacies. The two practitioners who carried out this modified lesson series were familiar with each other and working collaboratively, but their previous collaboration had been focused on

content-specific lessons and they had not previously worked collaboratively to develop lessons that could be used in multiple curricular areas. It was important to establish a community in which the practitioners had shared goals and common language regarding digital media literacy (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Research question two asked: how does the development of digital media literacy amongst secondary students influence teacher decisions during lesson study?

As practitioner one carried out her lesson series she suggested multiple adjustments to instructional strategy and content that would better support her students or could be utilized by practitioner two within the second action research cycle. Each lesson day was comprised of four class periods. After the first class meeting, practitioner one elected to pre-teach vocabulary originally slated for day two of the lesson series, stating that she thought two attempts at teaching this same vocabulary would encode the information in students' memory. The terms *bias* and *reliability* were addressed in the first portion of the day one schema, prior to students developing their own value judgements on the provided social media samples. Practitioner one also adapted her instruction to add literacy support for one of her lower level courses. Their adaptations included the addition of a graphic organizer for key vocabulary and opportunities for students to utilize additional web resources to clarify social media posts.

In the second action research cycle the practitioner modified the day one schema and used the original schema as a full twenty to thirty-minute classroom activity. This led to a significant increase in student discourse regarding social media bias and reliability. When two teacher-practitioners met at the end of the two research cycles they discussed ways to adapt the lesson plan to include a different schema for day one and increase the

rigor of the placard activity (APPENDIX A). They also discussed ways in which the two-day lesson series could be adapted to be a full unit or support a full unit within any subject area within the humanities. Practitioner one stated, "...overall I think this is a lesson that would be best delivered at the very beginning of the school year, so I can refer back to the concepts and terms used in the lesson throughout the year"; while practitioner two added," it might even be good to work with our English teachers in developing and implementing the lesson early in the year, since this applies to them too." Further discussion took place regarding student data, and it was concluded that the lesson could easily be adapted for other areas within the humanities, but that cross-curricular collaboration would be beneficial for the delivery of the combination of media literacy and historical instruction. This newly established common practice could be utilized in a larger education community (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Summary

This research confirmed the need for new and reformed digital and social media literacy instruction. The resulting data expressed that while most students had received informal instruction on media literacy and digital literacy in their middle school and early high school coursework, they had not received significant formal instruction and still held misconceptions about social media source reliability and bias.

Upon examining the impact of specific instructional strategies on student digital literacy outcomes there were three primary instructional strategies that were found to provide the best support for student learning. Instructional strategies that best address digital and social media literacy included guided student discourse and questioning about bias and reliability of sources, inclusion of real-world examples in the instruction of digital

media literacy, and exploration of social media as a resource in the classroom. The latter instructional strategy proved most beneficial, as students were both highly engaged utilizing a socially familiar tool in the classroom and they were successfully able to use modern media sources to seek out answers to standards-based curricular questions. The benefits of explicit and planned questioning during open-inquiry student discourse is also well supported in research (Roth, 1996). This was substantiated via the field notes and scripting of the class sessions of both action research cycles. The inclusion of real-world examples of digital media sources, from the perspective of a classroom observer, was also a key tenet of the lesson series that support student outcomes. As students examined screenshots of actual social media posts they were able to connect their own digital media experiences with the new content presented by the practitioners, creating an opportunity for encoding new digital literacy information.

When I examined the impact of those student outcomes on practitioner decision making during lesson study it was found that practitioners beliefs about *best* practices were influenced most by classroom observation of student discourse, but also by student formative data that expressed the usefulness of social media as an instructional tool. Practitioners were able to identify student strengths and deficiencies through lesson study to support instructional change (Mertler, 2014). Prior to the beginning of the second action research cycle the practitioners met and adapted instructional strategies to increase discourse and provide further real-world connections and digital media use. These decisions led to further improvement in student outcomes.

CHAPTER 5
ACTION PLAN

Action research allows education practitioners to examine everyday classroom issues more in depth than typically afforded in our day-to-day schedules. It also affords a time to reflect critically on areas that may be neglected within current curricula. Digital and social media literacy, while addressed, has been a long-neglected topic within the social studies. The research outlined in the previous chapters was the culmination of a quest to both develop effective curricular materials that support digital media literacy among high school students while better understanding how teachers who are attempting to develop curricula for social media literacy reflect on and use student data that is generated in the classroom. This lesson series was expected to address commonly expressed concerns about student awareness of media bias and reliability, particularly as students appear to use social media outlets as their primary news source. The study examined two levels of curricular design consideration: the impact of digital literacy instructional strategies on student outcomes and the analysis of student data and outcomes as a decision-making tool for practitioners. The hope was to establish a two-day digital media literacy lesson series that reflected the needs and learning styles of students from a variety of demographic backgrounds. Collaboration, observations, and assessments took place at a secondary career-technical high school in Connecticut with four class sections of eleventh grade modern United States history and four class sections of tenth grade civics. The results of this action research study, outlined in the fourth chapter, expressed that the combination of practitioner collaboration in lesson design and the use of social media as an instructional tool were

effective practices for establishing a digital literacy lesson series within a social studies classroom. The culminating product of this research was a two-day lesson series that could be utilized by other humanities instructors within similar classroom settings.

This final chapter will address the results of the study as related to existing literature; including literature about student cognizance of their digital world, data driven decision making processes that lead to effective teaching practice, and how social media can be used as a tool within the classroom. It will also examine potential transferability and uses of this research for collaborative curriculum design at both the secondary and middle levels of education. Finally, it will develop recommendations for future research regarding both lesson study and the impact of collaborative lesson design on the instruction of social and digital media literacy within the secondary social studies classroom and beyond.

Results Related to Existing Literature

Trends expressed by prior research concurred with the outcomes of this study. Current literature about collaborative lesson design, student cognizance of digital media bias, and the benefits of utilizing new technology such as social media in the classroom align well with the results of observations and student formative assessments.

Developing instruction to address a modern problem. Social Efficiency theory was initially coined in the early 1900's in support of an educational practice that prepared students to become contributing citizens, particularly in the workforce. The Social Efficiency education theory is seeing its resurgence as a means to develop civic-minded and digitally conscious youth in an American era with more digital and virtual-social connection (Tyler, 1949; Hobbs, 2010; Tahirsylaj, 2017). There are two constructs to be

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reviewed within this research; whether deliberate collaborative practices, such as exists in Lesson Study, are the best means to designing a modern lesson or unit within the social studies, and whether social media can be used as a tool for instructing content to address the issue of new-age digital media literacy. Prior research concludes that there is a relationship between a student's media literacy and the various ways in which they may be politically engaged (Ashley & Maksl, 2017). This was evident by students' increasingly critical evaluations of the political and consumer motivations of the social media they examined during this lesson series.

Student cognizance of their digital world: a practitioner and curriculum leader's role in collaborative practice. The contingency theory of leadership suggests that good leadership is able to reflect on current situations and modern approaches (Zigarelli, 2013). A curriculum leader must adapt to new situations and change their approach accordingly. The problem of practice addressed in this paper discusses the need for secondary students to become more cognizant of bias and reliability of various digital or online texts. While media literacy curricula have existed for many years, the advent of an ever-growing list of social, digital, and online faux media sources has provided an updated need for new digital literacy curricula. Many media literacy curricula have been implemented over the years, each with mixed results. Educators are often ineffective or inaccurate when it comes to evaluating our curricula, often believing that there needs to be no change to curriculum or instruction despite a lack of statistical support for success (Oliva & Gordon, 2013). In initial discussions with the four practitioners in my department, as I set out to create a Lesson Study group, one practitioner spoke up that they did not believe it was the role of social studies to instruct students in the navigation of social or

digital media. They expressed discomfort with new methods of instruction, specifically the spoke out against the potential of allowing students to utilize social media as a classroom resource. Surveys and prior research have expressed our current methods of media literacy instruction are not as successful as we may have once thought (Lenhart, 2015). Practitioner buy-in is a key component of curricular success. The time constraints of this study only confirmed that Lesson Study as a practice for instructing social studies and media literacy content is an important ongoing process of collaboration, in which practitioners hear from other practitioners at all stages of their teaching career in order to find the best possible classroom methods to address current students. There was a noticeable difference in the four teachers' perceptions of the purpose of the social studies and the needs of the modern student. An effective curriculum leader is able to recognize this disconnect and offer suggestions for improvement through collaborative teaming.

In teaching practice, this means that school districts should consider the impact of modern concepts such as social and digital media literacy on their study body and adapt their curricula accordingly. Curriculum change best occurs with the input of all stakeholders, in this case veteran and new teachers alike. Collaborative practitioner inquiry is a reflective teaching practice and tool in which educators engage in discourse at frequent intervals with the goal of guiding practice in a way that best supports student needs in our modern society and learning environments (Souto-Manning, Mills, & O'keefe, 2010). To develop modern media literacy students must be taught how to do three things: find reliable information on the Internet, verify levels of bias and reliability, and avoid propaganda (Bartlett & Miller, 2012). Instructors working in teams can determine the best instructional strategies to deliver these three vital components to their own students.

Using social media and an instructional tool. Social media can actually be used to enhance classroom experiences while addressing digital and media literacy. It has been shown that despite their perceived disruptive nature, technology and social media tools in the classroom can create an engaged and aware student (Nowell, 2014; Shapiro, 2015). Prior studies regarding this use of *disruptive technology* advocate a return to using digital media in the classroom in order to increase digital literacy (Mihailidis, 2015; Nowell, 2014; Shapiro, 2015). The success that students demonstrated in their own content research on the second day of the second action research cycle supports this idea. There are multiple ways in which practitioners can incorporate new digital media into the classroom and address the challenges and that the internet and other digital media formats present to the modern student. The use of media in the classroom in a critical way can only aid in the discussion of media literacy (Buckingham, 2007).

Within the confines of this study it became apparent that students benefited from explicit instruction about digital media bias and reliability, that there was a significant connection between usage of digital media in instruction and student cognizance of media bias, and that students were more engaged when their passive input (both discourse and formative assessment) was considered in the design of lesson strategies. When teachers utilize digital media, such as social media, students begin to use those platforms for not only personal interaction, but also for academic discourse (Nowell, 2014).

Implementation Plan/ Practice Recommendations

There are eight roles that an education leader must take; these include: historian, anthropological sleuth, visionary, symbol, potter, poet, actor, and healer (Deal & Peterson, 2013). Each of these roles helps develop the bigger picture of curriculum success or

failure. A curriculum leader must understand the climate and history of their school or system and anticipate what the future might hold. My current role as a collaborator for district curricula and a humanities department leader has made it increasingly more important that I foster collaboration amongst practitioners to support teaching and learning within my school and district. Those who work on curricula must always be examining and anticipating the needs of their demographic of students. Anticipated learning within social studies education has taken a shift toward preparing students to contribute to social discourse utilizing new technological means. Through classroom discussion and observation of students over the last few years it has become apparent that there is a need for new media literacies that include social media sourcing. While it can be suggested that the cause of this misinformation has many roots, it signals the need for intervention.

Collaboration with students, teacher-peers, and the community. Sergiovanni (2007) suggests that quality leadership can create personal buy-in from their participants. In the case of the implementation of a new digital literacy curriculum, the *buy-in* must come from multiple sources: students, collaborating teachers, outside administration, and the parent community. Leaders and their constituents interact and collaborate through both verbal and non-verbal contexts, based on both historical elements and the combination of personalities (Gardener, 2013). For a curriculum to provide the results that an educator or administrator desires, there must be collaboration among the team of teachers that are implementing the curriculum. In the case of the problem of practice addressed here, all participating teachers must first be aware of the significant community need for digital media literacy.

The role of the curriculum leader in this problem of practice is not to instruct but guide professional practice. All stakeholders, particularly students and parents, must also be empowered to recognize their role in learning. Curriculum leaders must hold a level of expertise that guides both teachers and students toward success and quality education (Fink & Markholt, 2013). A quality educator not only collaborates for a common understanding but also articulates their process and examples to other educators and their students. One of the noted challenges in the practice of lesson study is poor implementation during the initial attempts amongst a team of instructors, often leading to poorly developed groups with little focus on student learning or specific instructional objectives (Choski & Fernandez, 2004). Noting this common difficulty, instructors must have guidance to create an explicit framework and norms for their collaborative practice.

Additionally, there is great importance in including student input in the learning process (Greene, 2007). Student learning styles, current levels of comfort with digital media, and cultural needs must be considered when developing digital media literacy curricula. Appropriate adjustments must be made throughout execution of the curriculum in order to address the needs of the specific student demographic. The students in the sample were vocal about their needs and desires in regard to instructional practices. They enjoyed the friendly competition posed by the placard activity in which students identified media bias, media unreliability, or fake media. Students expressed concern over the formatting of the second day activity and assessment. Most students enjoyed being able to navigate and critique media in the form they are most familiar with, social media. Each of these contributions was considered by a team of practitioners and supported by the final lesson plan. The research herein suggests that students must be encouraged to take an active

role and provide input into the strategies utilized in their education, particularly when the new learning is based on modern concepts such as digital technology.

Collaboration with the outside community, for the purpose of this study, refers to the parental support that is needed for successful curriculum implementation. Research suggests that a significant component of adolescent unfamiliarity with bias in digital text stems from familial bias and parental impact on student appreciation of that bias (Dinas, 2014). Shatkin and Gershberg (2007) suggest that school leaders appear to be one of the most significant factors that influence parental involvement, which has a direct impact on the success of any curriculum implementation. The literature surrounding adolescent cognizance of bias in media suggests that parents often play a significant role in teen awareness of media bias (Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009). Ultimately, the role of the curriculum leader is to develop support and guidance for the whole instructional network. A quality curriculum leader considers not only the statistical value of the curricula, but also all stakeholders on whom that curriculum will have an impact.

Professional development for the practitioners. Teacher-practitioners must take a lead role in collaboration for the design of the instruction of digital media literacy. Additionally, they must reflect upon their own literacies and deficiencies as they pertain to digital media bias and reliability (Fry, 2011). Educators must both instruct the literacy skills necessary to analyze digital and social media texts and self-reflect upon their own analyses of media. With a wide range in career stages within any school, it is important to address the professional development needs that veteran teachers may need in order to instruct students via a platform they are often more familiar with than their instructor. Additionally, all teachers and teacher-candidates are often unaware of their own media biases and may

benefit from professional development that supports self-reflection and best practices for instructing digital media literacy and digital etiquette (Filiz & Fisun, 2012; Brookfield, 2015; Taskin & Turin, 2012). The more media literate the instructors are the easier it is for them to instruct their students to be critical of media. (Dezuanni, 2014; Simons, Meeus, & T 'sas, 2017). There is a disconnect that many modern educators feel with their own awareness of bias in digital media (Simons, Meeus, & T 'sas, 2017). Leaders within education must guide professional development resources to support educator growth and collaboration in this area.

Transferability and Sharing the Results

Participatory action research is a practice of research that easily facilitates collaboration between stakeholders (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Ivankova, 2013). Qualitative action research in education embeds researcher interpretation of data such as observations, qualitative assessments, and interviews, to establish an opinion regarding the state of teaching and learning. Action research is typically not generalizable to a large population (Herr & Anderson, 2015), but this research may be transferable to other content areas and grade levels within education. Qualitative research within education is often considered more *valid* and effective when the interpretations of the observations of that research are agreed upon by multiple practitioners and the results reflect a shared interpretation of the (Howe, 1985; Trainor and Graue, 2014).

While a study in action research should be established as reliable and valid, it may not be completely transferable to all demographics of students. A curriculum leader must not only reflect upon the successes and failures of current curricula, but also on how those curriculum choices impact their specific students, teacher-peers, and the community at

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large (Singleton, 2012). Decisions about curricular change, however, must be data-driven and established through collaborative practice with all stakeholders. Early in my career I noted that my students struggled with recognizing fact from fiction, it took years of trial and error with lesson on evidence-based writing before I realized the significance of the impact of digital texts and social media on my students' ability to recognize truth and bias. Through collaborative practice with other practitioners it became easier to both identify and address modern student needs.

The results of this study may either lead to curricular changes or clarify the successes/failures of existing digital media literacy curricula. It is important that educators examine curricula through the use of tests and evaluations and seek to remedy shortfalls. This includes shortfalls that exist throughout the implementation and as a result of student needs. Occasionally, this may mean scrapping previously held beliefs about a current curriculum (Oliva & Gordon, 2013). Existing data supports the need for increased digital literacy (Lenhart, 2015). Beyond the existing foundations of social studies and media literacy curricula, this study must also examine the overall impact that student cognizance of bias and reliability in digital media plays in their ability to be productive citizens. Prior research has demonstrated a link between the media literacy practices and lessons of social studies educators and the civic growth and understanding of their students (Livingstone, 2003; Kahne, Lee, & Feezell, 2012; Gretter & Yadav, 2016). Ultimately, data from this study will be shared with all stakeholders with the hopeful goal of providing insight into the contributions of digital media literacy curricula to overall adolescent civic awareness. Both participants and stakeholders will be provided with feedback and results and asked to

contribute their thoughts. This collaborative approach to the results aligns with my personal leadership style.

Limitations and Suggestions

Perhaps the greatest limitation to this study's application to other classrooms is in its very action research design. The design of this research was developed with a particular population in mind and may not be transferable to all secondary student populations. As noted at the onset of this research, action research is inherently biased. Action research within the classroom seeks to examine students in our own classrooms based on our own practitioner interests and concerns. In traditional research, the researcher is not usually personally involved with their subjects, though equally committed to the outcome (Mertler, 2014). In action research the personal and frequent connections between the practitioner and their students creates an additional need for an established protocol and trust to exist prior to research (Bourke, 2014, p2). These prior connections may skew our interpretation of results.

Initial meetings to discuss the digital media lesson series were met with some resistance from a veteran social studies instructor. Conversely, some practitioners were conscious that while it is important to instruct students to think critically about media sources we must also acknowledge the positive contributions of new media toward student connection to their world and current events media. In the development of the lesson series there was some disagreement as to whether or not media bias could be a valuable tool for collecting multiple viewpoints on a set issue or topic. Additionally, one veteran practitioner struggled with the idea of instructing digital media literacy and expressed concern over her own familiarity with the topic. While the two participating practitioners did not share the

same concern, their silence does not equate with full comfort with instruction digital media literacy.

Within educational action research topics are developed based on personal experiences and observations. The positionality and motivations of the educator impact all facets of the study. Kirshner, Pozzoboni, and Jones (2011) suggest that if a researcher is unaware of their bias it can impact the interpretation of results. The practitioners who participated in the collaborative practice outlined in this study may hold pre-existing beliefs about student access to social media and the influence that this newer form of media plays on student media literacy. Practitioner and researcher positionality may have impacted the design of instruction and practitioner contributions to the Lesson Study meetings. In my own bias, field notes on classroom activities only express the part of classroom discourse that is important by researcher perceptions in a single moment. While I scripted much of the dialogue between the practitioners and their students, I may not have accounted for all instances of students discussing social media, bias, reliability, or successes of particular instructional strategies. The transcription process, while lengthy, may have provided for significantly more data than field notes alone can provide. This was a consideration during the Lesson Study meetings but would have been advantageous to use during observations as well.

Additionally, within this research there were multiple occasions where students noted the imbalances in both their own usage of social media and digital platforms as well as the use of technology by their teachers. A few students expressed that they had limited access to social media or that they did not own a cell phone. Political, economic and social status can impact both student access to technology and willingness to try new technology

(Buckingham, 2007; Radonovic, Hogan, & Lalic (2015). While social demographics and student access were accounted form in the analysis, it is unknown what impact this may have on the outcomes of this specific sample of students.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are three areas in which further research could be conducted in connection to this study. While this research examined a high school classroom, it may be beneficial to see the impact of digital technologies and curricular design on middle school aged students, aged 11-14. Future research may also examine the digital divide between affluent student communities and those of lower income; examining the impact of this economic divide on student access to new media and civic engagement. This research could also be expanded to look at other forms of collaborative practice for social studies practitioners, and the impact this has on formulating lesson plans the impact the modern student. Signs of each of these problems and divides existed through the research. An additional look at economic, educational, and social connections to students' ability to recognize media bias may further clarify or support the research outlined in previous chapters.

Future research on the instruction of social and digital media literacy within the social studies classroom could include further analysis of instructional tools that best address media literacy curricula or evaluate the transferability of this research design to a middle level school setting. With an increasingly larger number of middle school students engaging in digital and social media (Lenhart, 2015), future research could examine the impact of both digital literacy coursework and social media as an instructional tool to support the digital media literacy learning of a younger population. Gretter and Yadav (2016) suggest that there is a correlation between appropriate inclusion of digital literacy

in the classroom and the creation of a participatory youth. Perhaps earlier introduction to digital literacy concepts will further provide civic access for secondary students.

As noted at a few points throughout this research, a number of secondary students are lacking access to the digital and social media of their peers. This digital divide impacts effective use of digital technologies both within the classroom and for personal social use (Musu, 2018). In consideration of this, further research could be conducted to evaluate the impact of the economic divide in digital access on student cognizance of bias. If it is found that students with access to technological resources are more likely to be cognizant of bias and reliability in text and media, or become a more active citizenry, then reallocation of resources within schools could be made to accommodate those trends.

Additionally, while significant research exists on the successes of Lesson Study as a practice for collaborative data driven decision making within education, future research may also consider adaptations to the lesson study model that are more accessible for instructors at smaller institutions or with less time provided for collaboration. As a department head at a high school with a small social studies department it became difficult to find willing collaborators. In order for any curricular change to occur, staff buy-in and practitioner collaboration must exist, and time must be allocated for that collaborative practice (Raywid, 1993). If staffing is limited, it becomes more pressing to examine best practices for collaboration. Further analysis could appraise the efficacy of new tools for teacher collaboration in designing and evaluating new curricula to address modern technology and concerns.

Summary

Digital media literacy support in the classroom has a direct positive impact on creating exposure to diverse viewpoints (Gretter & Yadav, 2016). This research has expressed that students who are provided with explicit instruction utilizing social and digital media resources are able to articulate the signs of bias and reliability in the digital form they partake in most often. Educators play a vital role in developing the 21st century globally aware citizen. The importance of this study to my own practice has been immeasurable. Effective collaborative inquiry between practitioners in my department leads to successful instructional strategies that support positive student outcomes. Those positive student outcomes go beyond just my own classroom or my own school, they will assist my students with becoming digital citizens who can effectively navigate digital news in the many forms it may be presented.

The initial driving force of this research, a brief teachable moment in which students inaccurately cited social media sources as support for a classroom debate, has now become a lesson series that could be utilized in any humanities classroom in my CTE district. With further adaptation and classroom action research the short lesson series could easily become an entire unit on digital and social media literacy. The collaborative Lesson Study that served as a driving force behind the action research design has already become more consistent practice in my school building. The practitioners in the study are no aligned to share out this effective practice with others; to drive lesson reflection and modification within different departments in our building and district.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVENTION

Day 1 Lesson: *What is FAKE news, what is BIASED news?*

Purpose

Modern adolescents are faced with far more sources of world news and information than any other prior generation. It becomes increasingly more important for secondary students to be instructed in how to navigate this digital media world to both seek out reliable information and recognize the biases that are presented within those texts.

Bias in media is not a new concept, but the significant use of new forms of digital media make recognizing the traits of bias and unreliable sources increasingly more important. This lesson will help students navigate digital media to seek out reliable sources and identify the different forms of bias that are present in modern digital media.

C3 Standards

D2.His.6.9-12. Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced.

D2.His.7.9-12. Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past.

D2.His.17.9-12. Critique the central arguments in secondary works of history on related topics in multiple media in terms of their historical accuracy.

D3.2.9-12. Evaluate the credibility of a source by examining how experts value the source.

D4.3.9-12. Present adaptations of arguments and explanations that feature evocative ideas and perspectives on issues and topics to reach a range of audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).

D4.4.9-12. Critique the use of claims and evidence in arguments for credibility.

Objectives

- Students will utilize social media to respond to an in-class prompt.
- Students will cite reliable evidence to support a claim.
- Students will consider the validity of bias textual evidence.
- Students will identify a point of view based on word choice.
- Students will discuss the role of subjectivity and bias in the news media.

Materials Needed

- Projector or SMARTBoard
- Student 1:1 Chromebooks or computers
- Student Handouts (or digitally-posted handouts)

Key Vocabulary: bias, subjectivity, objectivity, evidence, reliability

Schema Activator

Show students Twitter & Facebook headlines about multiple current events topics. Have students express whether or not they believe the headline is "FAKE News", "Unreliable News", or "Biased News" by holding up the corresponding placard.

Discuss differences or where these terms may overlap.

Activities

1. Introduce the idea that ALL media has bias.
2. Hand out the student activity sheet (1a), "How to detect bias and reliability & Identifying 3 Types of Digital Media Bias", or post on digital classroom for student access.
   a. Review the concept of *media bias* with students.
   b. Discuss the ways they currently find out about what is going on in the world around them.
   c. Evaluate whether or not biased material can still help us learn about our world.
   d. Discuss the three main types of bias we can see in social media.
3. Hand out student assessment sheet (1b) or post on digital classroom for student access.

Assessment

Students will demonstrate mastery of today's content by successfully completing a formative assessment (student assessment sheet, 1b). This assessment asks students to examine five social media news headlines and determine which for of digital bias each headline/article utilizes.

Twitter and Facebook Headlines

PLACARDS

FAKE

BIASED

UNRELIABLE

Digital Media Literacy

Understanding Bias and Reliability of Digital Text

Schema / Warm-Up

Examine each of the following images and determine whether you think they are "fake", "unreliable", or "biased".

Hold up the corresponding card.

Be prepared to share your reasoning.

FAKE

While this appears real, because it is posted by a "science" source, this is a doctored photograph.

UNRELIABLE

BUZZFEED is an entertainment website with limited sources for reliable content; or, they create content based on interpretations of the work of other major news organizations.

They receive funding (like many news sources) from advertising based on the number of times people "click" on their articles. *THINK: clickbait*

Frequently, headlines lead to stories that difer from the headline.

Police officer charged in shooting death of unarmed neighbor

Dallas police officer Amber Guyger says she entered Botham Shem Jean's apartment by mistake at end of her shift; Casey Stegall reports.

Sep. 10, 2018 —Fox News

UNRELIABLE
OR
BIAS (BY HEADLINE)

The motives of the headline and the story differ.

The off-duty officer did shoot their neighbor, but this occurred because the officer was in the wrong apartment (the neighbor's apartment). The headline is misleading.

Jimmy Carter Concerned Desire For Fresh Faces In Democratic Party May Hurt His Chances In 2020

Today 11:49am · SEE MORE: JIMMY CARTER ⌄

PLAINS, GA—Admitting that current polling numbers caused him to rethink plans for the upcoming presidential election, 39th president Jimmy Carter told reporters Wednesday that he was concerned that the desire for fresh faces in the Democratic Party might hurt his chances in 2020. "I've definitely

Source: http://politics.theonion.com

FAKE

This headline comes from a commonly shared website, "The Onion".

This is a satirical website. Other similar sites include "Empire News" or "Cracked"

Trump attacks McCain again, saying he didn't get a 'thank you' for approving late senator's funeral

The president continued to viciously attack the late senator even as a growing number of Republican senators rose to McCain's defense.

By Alex Horton · 15 minutes ago

BIASED

This was not an opinion piece, but a news article embedded into a major news organizations "politics" section.

How to Detect Bias and Reliability &
Identifying 3 Types of Digital Media Bias

There are many different forms of bias, we will examine three different forms that frequently arise from social media news sources.

Bias by Omission

- *leaving one side out of an article or post*
- *ignoring facts that support an alternate view*
- *can occur either within a story, or over a series of articles/posts.*

How to recognize Bias by Omission:

1. *Be aware of the differing perspectives on current issues.*
2. *Check if more than one perspective is included in stories or headlines*
3. *Look through past articles or posts from the same source, do they all share the same perspective? If yes, this is bias by omission.*

Bias by Labeling

- *The article or post mentions or tags someone who is of one specific viewpoint*
- *Important to note: not all positive labeling is "bias". It is biased when the labeling takes place in a post that holds a specific viewpoint.*

How to recognize Bias by Labeling:

1. *The article or post mentions or tags someone who is of one specific viewpoint, but does not express that the person tagged in the article advocates toward a specific view.*
2. *The article of post fails to give someone credit for their viewpoint. For example: Labeling a person or group as an "expert" or "independent consumer group" on the topic being discussed.*
3. *Labels may be exaggerated; ie: "ultra-conservative", "far right", "far left", or "ultra-liberal")*

Bias by Spin

- *occurs when the article or post expresses only one interpretation of an event or idea*
- *The article or post makes subjective comments about otherwise objective facts or makes one ideological stance look better than another.*

How to recognize Bias by Spin:

1. *Check if the news article or post only represents one side of an argument.*
2. *Observe the language used, does it serve to convince you of one side of a story? If yes, it may be bias by spin.*

Materials adapted from lesson materials provided by http://mediasmarts.ca

3 Types of Bias
Day 1 Assessment

Complete the following chart. Select which form of bias each news sample utilizes to entice readers. Then, in the third column provide evidence for your selection.

News Source	What type of bias does this source contain? *(Circle one)*	What evidence tells you that this source contains bias?
Tweet — Reuters Top News @Reuters — U.N. rights expert: Israel depriving Palestinians of clean water reut.rs/2F9K6O3 — 12:38 PM · 3/18/19 · trueAnthem — 93 Retweets 95 Likes	Bias by Omission Bias by Labeling Bias by Spin	
NBCNEWS.COM — President Trump broke his promise to fix the debt. He'll blame Congress in 2020.	Bias by Omission Bias by Labeling Bias by Spin	
HUFFPOST — Trump Administration Won't Say If Deported Parents Can Ever Reunite With Their Kids	Bias by Omission Bias by Labeling Bias by Spin	

Day 2 Lesson: Using Social Media as a Source of Information

Purpose

Today's adolescent population obtains most of their news from non-traditional sources, including social media. This lesson will help students think more critically about their media consumption and support their understanding of digital media reliability and bias. Students will use various social media platforms to research a current events topic, develop a claim, and compile evidence to support that claim.

C3 Standards

D2.His.6.9-12. Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced.

D2.His.7.9-12. Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past.

D2.His.17.9-12. Critique the central arguments in secondary works of history on related topics in multiple media in terms of their historical accuracy.

D3.2.9-12. Evaluate the credibility of a source by examining how experts value the source.

D4.3.9-12. Present adaptations of arguments and explanations that feature evocative ideas and perspectives on issues and topics to reach a range of audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).

D4.4.9-12. Critique the use of claims and evidence in arguments for credibility.

Objectives

- Students will utilize social media to respond to an in-class prompt.
- Students will cite reliable evidence to support a claim.
- Students will consider the validity of bias textual evidence.

Materials Needed

- Projector or SMARTBoard
- Student 1:1 Chromebooks, computers, or other digital device *with access to social media*
- Student Handouts (or digitally-posted handouts)

Key Vocabulary: bias, subjectivity, objectivity, evidence, reliability

Schema Activator

1. Hand out the student activity sheet (2a), "Day 2 Schema Activator": or post on digital classroom for student access.

    a. Students will define any terms they "already know".

    b. Then, have student share out definitions. Have them add to their own definitions.

    c. The instructor can support students in any terms where inaccurate definitions shared.

Activities

1. Pair students off. If an odd number of students exists there can be one group of three students. *This activity will work best with partners/ smaller groups; at least one student must have access to a major social media platform.*
2. Hand out student activity sheet (2b), "Researching on Social Media", or post on digital classroom for student access.
3. Briefly address *appropriate use* of personal devices for research.
4. Students will collaboratively research and respond to the prompt: **"Is North Korea a threat to US national security?"** * using the provided graphic organizer

Assessment

Groups will turn in their graphic organizer as formative assessment.

* *This prompt could be replaced with any topic that the instructor feels may be relevant to current events and accessible through social media.*

Day 2 Schema Activator

Define any terms you are familiar with, below. Be prepared to share. As we discuss these definitions in class, add to your organizer and definitions.

TERM   **DEFINE**

TERM	DEFINE
bias	
subjectivity	
objectivity	
evidence	
reliability	

Researching on Social Media

You will use social media (Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter) to research the question, **"*Does North Korea pose a threat to US national security?*"**

Write a thesis statement that addresses the question:

List **three supporting arguments** for your thesis, referencing **at least three reliable sources** from the provided material.

Reason 1:

Evidence:

Source (be specific):

Reason 2:

Evidence:

Source (be specific):

Reason 3:

Evidence:

Source (be specific):

FINALLY, Write 3-5 sentences that **explains how you determined which information and sources most <u>reliably</u> supported your argument**

APPENDIX B
CODING GUIDE

Initial: Holistic Coding

Data-Driven Decision Making	DDDM	
Instructional Strategy	IS	
Social Media as a Resource for Learning	SMR	

Secondary: In Vivo Coding

Notation of student **prior knowledge** regarding digital media literacy	PK	
Student recognition of digital **media bias**	MB	
Student recognition of digital **media reliability**	MR	
Student **use of social media** as a resource	SM	
Student response to **instructional strategy**/tool	SIS	