

Values and Media Literacy: Exploring the Relationship Between the Values People Prioritize in Their Life and Their Attitudes Toward Media Literacy

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Media literacy is often described as an approach that can be used to address pressing public concerns ranging from combating misinformation to supporting citizens' full participation in society. What is little understood, however, is the importance people give to the role of media literacy in their own lives. Drawing on data from a representative survey of Australian adults, this article examines the importance given to 14 media literacy abilities that are often the focus of media literacy programs. Incorporating Schwartz's framework of motivational values into our analysis, we find that the specific media literacy abilities people identify as important are generally closely aligned with the underlying values they prioritize in their lives. Furthermore, people's values offer more predictive power than sociodemographic characteristics when it comes to understanding the importance people place on specific media literacy outcomes. The article argues that by understanding how and why people respond differently to the goals of media literacy, educators can design more appealing and effective media literacy interventions.

Keywords: media literacy, values, education, attitudes, demographics, Australia

Around the world, governments, policy makers, public institutions, and educators have called for increased support for media literacy as a way to address pressing public concerns about a range of issues such as supporting social justice, increasing civic participation, developing creative competencies, challenging radicalization and hate speech, and combating misinformation (Carlsson, 2019; Carson &

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Fallon, 2021; European Audiovisual Observatory, 2016). Media literacy is defined in various ways around the world, but common to its purpose is developing the knowledge, skills, and competencies to successfully engage with various media formats and providing a key means by which citizens participate in society (Livingstone, 2004). These desired outcomes, in turn, form the basis for the development of media literacy policies and education initiatives.

Media literacy education is constituted in a range of ways: as formal classroom curriculum, as after-school programs, as community-based programs (for instance, in libraries and community centers), and as self-directed learning in online contexts. While academic research has focused extensively on media literacy interventions—particularly in school classrooms (Hobbs, 2004)—the ways in which media literacy outcomes are perceived and understood by the people being targeted by media literacy programs rarely features as a concern. In research, it is more common to conceive of people in terms of their *levels* of media literacy—through various approaches to measurement (Livingstone & Thumim, 2003), by determining different capacities based on people’s ability to perform particular media tasks (e.g., Maksl, Ashley, & Craft, 2015), or by investigating the capacity of pedagogical interventions to improve literacy levels (e.g., Duran, Yousman, Walsh, & Longshore, 2008; Scharrer, 2006). To the extent that *attitudes* are addressed, it is typically in the context of people’s media uses and expectations around appropriate levels of media regulation (e.g., Ofcom, 2021), with little emphasis on considering people’s attitudes to media literacy itself.

As a result, whereas media literacy frameworks and programs are often very clear about the desired outcomes they seek to achieve, very little research has sought to assess how citizens perceive these predefined outcomes. While current research may define which groups in society have low levels of media literacy and should therefore be priority candidates for interventions (e.g., Notley, Chambers, Park, & Dezuanni, 2021), there is a gap in knowledge about the extent to which different aspects of media literacy are regarded as meaningful to people in their everyday lives. This article addresses this gap by investigating the varying levels of importance people give to different aims of media literacy programs. In doing so, it emphasizes the question of how the aims of media literacy—which have variously been conceived of as either a set of value-neutral skills or aligned to specific social outcomes—intersect with the values that people themselves prioritize in their lives.

Defining the Purpose of Media Literacy

Media literacy for social enhancement has its roots in competing historical sociopolitical discourses that respond to the relationship between emerging media cultures and society, particularly following the rise of the mechanization of society (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994). As early as the 1860s, in his book *Culture and Anarchy*, Mathew Arnold (1869) called for “the study of perfection” (p. 8) in response to competing social forces infused with religion, classical culture, and what he described as anarchistic social forces, which included aspects of industrialization, mechanization, and popular culture. Drawing directly on Arnold (1869), F. R. Leavis’ (1937) *Culture and Environment* argues that it is only through studying the benefits of reading literature and understanding the ineptitudes of popular culture that students can avoid “low” culture’s corrupting influence. As Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994) have shown, these socially and politically conservative perspectives were complemented by leftist/Marxist

scholarship, for instance, from within the “Frankfurt School.” Horkheimer and Adorno (1947/1972) argued that the “culture industries” and the production of popular culture were at the heart of “mass deception” and a threat to freedom, creativity, and happiness.

These foundational studies of the perceived roles of media and popular culture in social processes, including in the formation of individual and collective values, provide insights into the presumed role of media literacy education. It was expected that media literacy would provide protection against the media’s assumed corrosive influences and/or provide critical skills to enable individuals to understand media powers of influence and ultimately the threat of capitalism to humanity. Therefore, the social and political contexts from which media literacy efforts historically emerged ensured that these efforts never merely aimed to provide individuals with a set of instrumental skills to access and use various media forms.

Scholars such as Bennett, McDougall, and Potter (2020), Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994), and Turnbull (1998) have drawn attention to the difficulties and inherent contradictions associated with media literacy approaches that are underpinned by social, cultural, and political agendas. Drawing on sociocultural and poststructuralist theories, the key criticisms are that media audiences and consumers are not as vulnerable to the media’s influences as might be assumed (Dezuanni, 2017); that there is little evidence to suggest that popular culture is an inherently corrupting social influence; and that it is not the role of state, academics, or cultural institutions to decide what is a positive or negative social or cultural influence (Buckingham, 2003). Scholars have also drawn attention to the question of whether media literacy leads to social change or increased agency, or if it remains an academic exercise (Mihailidis, 2018; Turnbull, 1998). Posthumanist accounts of media literacy, for instance, have argued that agency is possible only through the assemblage of what Bennett (2010) calls “distributive agency” enabled through relationships between human and nonhuman elements, including technological elements. It follows then that if individual agency is the ability to act in and on the world—with, through, and in response to media—media concepts are just one set of resources that need to be deployed (Dezuanni, 2017; Lewis, 2021). Barad (2007) argues that the linguistic “representationalism” at the center of critical thinking needs to be complemented by a focus on “practices, doings, and actions” (p. 135). Therefore, critical thinking, which is central to media literacy pedagogy, is not enough on its own. In media contexts, agency is made up not just of “thinking” about how the media portray or construct reality but is constructed through application of conceptual and material resources in everyday life for individually meaningful purposes.

In responding to these issues, Mihailidis (2018) turns to the question of values to address questions about the role of media literacy in society and its potential to promote concrete positive social change. In *Civic Media Literacies*, Mihailidis (2018) argues that media literacy education should be seen as a way to not only teach people “how to employ critical thinking and critical making” (p. xii) but also to do this in a way that advances social well-being in material terms. Mihailidis (2018) stresses that his proposition is not driven by a particular political ideology but rather is informed by an assessment about what is required for meaningful engagement in modern daily civic life. He makes the argument that popular approaches to media literacy that emphasize critical distance, where learners are asked to step away and engage and analyze texts from objective points of view, are born of the mass media age and

are reminiscent of the early focus of much media education to protect citizens from harmful effects, as outlined above. This approach is now problematic, he argues, since it emphasizes a value-neutral analysis that assumes people can separate their own personal experiences, backgrounds, and ideologies to rationally deconstruct texts. Instead, he argues a more relational and values-oriented approach to media literacy offers a productive provocation for thinking about citizens' motivations for engaging both with media and media literacy education and for considering the kinds of media literacy experiences they should therefore be offered.

The idea that media literacy education should seek to explicitly foreground and engage with people's values is also found among researchers working in contexts of primary and secondary schools (e.g., Renes-Arellano & Barral-Aramburu, 2016; Schmidt & Palliotet, 2008). From this perspective, the increasing role played by communication media in young people's socialization means that media literacy education becomes a critical site in which students cannot only negotiate and affirm their own values but also develop an appreciation and understanding of the values held by others. Media literacy, therefore, fits well with the civic ideals of values-based education, which Renes-Arellano and Barral-Aramburu (2016) argue aims "to create cohabitation habits based on democratic values through dialogue and participation of all the students" (p. 82).

Motivational Values

The concept of values and how they apply to individuals has been extensively explored by Schwartz (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz et al., 2012), whose research identifies a set of 10 universal values—found across cultural and national settings—that people prioritize differently in their lives. In contrast with attitudes, which can be said to reflect how we feel about something in a specific context, values instead speak to more stable and generally held "criteria which people use to justify actions, people, and events" (Schwartz, 1992, p. 1). In this respect, values can be considered as motivational and have been hypothesized to shape people's lower-order attitudes and behaviors (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003).

While the precise enumeration of values has been subject to minor revisions, Figure 1 shows how the various formulations share a common circular structure of congruent and conflicting interrelationships among constituent values. Pursuing the value of power, for example, is aligned with behaviors associated with the neighboring value of achievement but will typically be in conflict with actions motivated by universalism's concern for the welfare and tolerance of others. This congruent/conflict structure is used by Schwartz (1992) to organize his 10 values into higher-order value types of self-transcendence opposing self-enhancement and openness to change opposing conservation. While the circumplex aspect of the model has been shown to vary in how consistently it is reproduced in intraindividual value rankings of people from different countries (Gollan & Witte, 2014), the broader validity of the model has received extensive validation in its application to the analysis of individuals' values (Knafo, Roccas, & Sagiv, 2011).

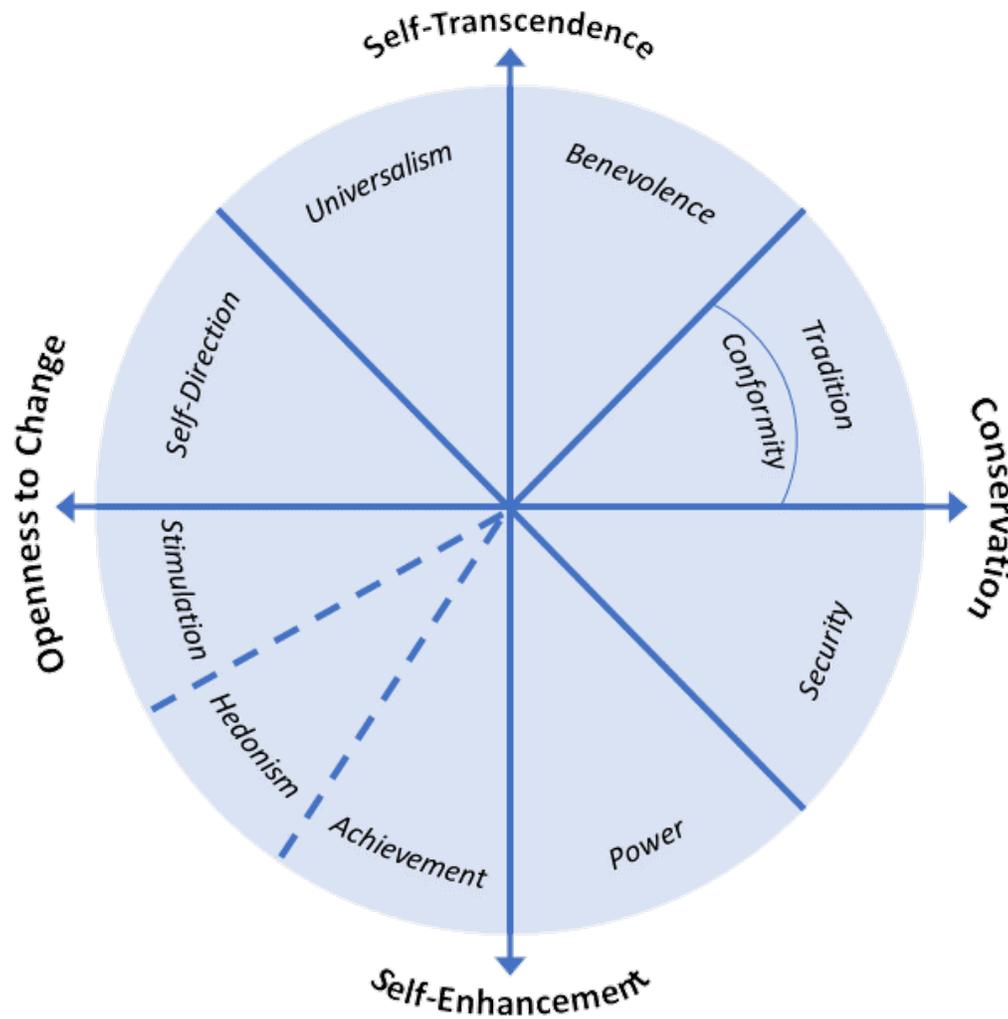


Figure 1. Theoretical model of relations among motivational values and higher-order value types (adapted from Schwartz, 1992, p. 45).

Schwartz's (1992) framework has found application across a range of domains, including in media and communication research. It has been used to identify the dominant values that underpin media codes of ethics (Roberts, 2012) and strategic communication campaigns (Dennison, 2020) and has also been used to examine how different individual values are associated with distinct patterns of media behaviors (e.g., Nikolinakou & Phua, 2020). Research by Crompton et al. (2014) examined how people's willingness to support social causes can be influenced by using language that evokes particular values, which has parallels with the current study's interest in the potential to draw on values in the design of media literacy initiatives.

In the context of this article's focus on people's attitudes to media literacy, the incorporation of Schwartz's (1992) concept of values makes two important contributions. First, it permits an exploration of the antecedents to the variation observed among attitudes that goes beyond sociodemographic variables. Whereas sociodemographic variables are typically a primary concern in analyzing *levels* of media literacy, the concept of values suggests an alternative lens through which we might understand variation in *attitudes*. Second, it provides a connecting point to the previously discussed debates about how values should fit into the formulation of media literacy programs.

Research Questions

To respond to gaps in knowledge about the relationship between the values people prioritize in their lives and the importance they give to the goals of media literacy programs, we devised three related research questions.

RQ1: To what extent do people consider the aims of media literacy programs are relevant and important to their own lives?

Knowing which media literacy outcomes and the associated abilities citizens prioritize is useful as this information can be used to inform the design and implementation of media literacy policies, programs, and activities. Knowing, for example, that possessing one type of media ability resonates with people much more than another can be used to inform the design of initiatives or shape the way these initiatives are designed and are promoted to the public. Furthermore, insights into people's attitudes toward media literacy outcomes can help identify and address any misalignments between the priorities of governments, policy makers, researchers, and practitioners, and those of the broader population. For example, if a primary aim of practitioners is to support citizens to critically reflect on the media they consume, but this is found to be of little concern to the general public, practitioners need to change public attitudes, reframe the way they describe their programs or activities, or otherwise consider the implications of this misalignment.

RQ2: Are media literacy programs that embed and express particular values more likely to be regarded as important by people who prioritize those same underlying values in their lives?

Investigating how the values people prioritize influences the importance they give to the goals of media literacy programs permits a greater dialogue with the previously discussed debates about the underlying aims of those advocating for media literacy initiatives. Significantly, this approach avoids the media literacy conundrum that typically starts with a set of assumed desired outcomes, including those that are value-laden, and instead places existing values at the center of our consideration. This approach aligns with Mihailidis's (2018) thinking in that we see promise in aiming to center people's existing media relations and experience alongside the values that drive their own aspirations for media engagement. By understanding people's existing values and how this relates to which media abilities they want to have, we can get closer to understanding the kinds of media literacy interventions and education they are likely to want to actively engage with. This is particularly important for adult media literacy since, unlike children

and young people who receive school-delivered media literacy education, adults need to be highly motivated if they are to take part in informal media literacy activities.

RQ3: To what extent do people's values offer more or less predictive power than sociodemographic characteristics in explaining the importance people give to the aims of media literacy programs?

The final research question aims to contrast a values-centric approach to media literacy research with the more traditional approach of using sociodemographic characteristics as the lens through which to understand variation in people's level of media literacy. Whereas media literacy deficits and needs are commonly analyzed in terms of group characteristics, the current article's focus on attitudes suggests that values—which are theorized to shape attitudes and behaviors—may offer a more useful perspective from which to understand variation in our participants' attitudes.

Methodology

The data in this analysis are taken from a national online survey of Australian adults ($N = 3,510$) conducted in November and December 2020 as part of a broader project examining adult media literacy (Notley et al., 2021). The survey sample was selected to be representative of the Australian population by using demographic quotas set according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) census data for age, gender, state and territory, and education level. Once data collection was complete, the final set of responses was weighted to ensure the sample was representative across these four sociodemographic characteristics (see Table 1). This article draws on three sets of questions from the survey to investigate our research questions by exploring the relationship among: (1) people's values, (2) their attitudes toward media literacy outcomes, and (3) sociodemographic characteristics.

Table 1. Survey Sample Characteristics.

Characteristic	Raw Sample	Weighted Sample
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	55.5	50.8
Male	44.2	48.7
Gender diverse	0.3	0.5
<i>Age</i>		
18–24	9.2	11.1
25–34	19.4	19.2
35–44	19.0	18.5
45–54	15.9	15.1
55–64	17.6	17.5
65+	18.9	18.6
<i>Education Level</i> (see Table 4 for coding)		
Low	13.7	21.5
Medium	47.0	53.5
High	39.3	25.0

Identifying the Values People Prioritize in Their Lives

To obtain a measure of the motivational values participants prioritize in their lives, we draw on the set of 10 universal values identified by Schwartz (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003; Schwartz, 1992). The measurement of respondents' underlying values used a best-worst scaling design based on the approach developed by Lee, Soutar, and Louviere (2008) to operationalize Schwartz's (1992) framework. Participants were presented with 11 questions that listed either five or six of the 10 values. A balanced incomplete block design was achieved in which each individual value was seen six times and each unique pair of values was seen together three times. Following the approach taken by Lee and colleagues (2019b), we presented each value to participants in the form of a short statement (see Table 2). In each question, participants were asked to "Choose which is the MOST and LEAST important principle that guides your life."

For each respondent, the prioritization given to each of the 10 values was calculated using standardized best-worst scores. As described by Aizaki and Fogarty (2021), standardized best-worst scores are calculated using the formula $BW_{in} = \frac{B_{in} - W_{in}}{r}$, whereby the frequency with which a value (i) is selected as the most important item (B_{in}) by a respondent (n) is subtracted from the frequency of its selection as the least important (W_{in}) and divided by the number of times i appears as an option across all questions (r).

Table 2. Motivational Values and Value Statements.

Value	Value Statement
Achievement	Being ambitious and successful
Benevolence	Helping and caring for the well-being of those who are close
Conformity	Obedying all rules and laws
Hedonism	Taking advantage of every opportunity to enjoy life's pleasures
Power	Having the power that money and possessions can bring
Security	Living in a safe and stable society
Self-Direction	Being free to act independently
Stimulation	Having all sorts of new and exciting experiences
Tradition	Following cultural, family, or religious practices
Universalism	Caring and seeking justice for everyone, especially the weak and vulnerable in society

Measuring Attitudes to Media Literacy Outcomes

The second set of survey questions included in our analysis relates to the importance people give to possessing different media literacy abilities. A set of 14 statements was developed to reflect the core desired outcomes of media literacy programs (see Table 3). The development of these statements was informed by and mapped to the key competencies articulated in the media literacy framework developed by the Australian Media Literacy Alliance (AMLA, 2020). This framework was informed by internationally successful approaches to media literacy (c.f. Mediawijzer, 2021) and comprises a set of 10 competencies underpinned by six core competencies. We acknowledge that the framework is specific to the Australian

context. However, since it was developed by drawing on the well-established international core concepts approach (Buckingham, 2019), we are confident that its components will be familiar to and relevant across international contexts.

The framework's 10 competencies were used as our starting point and were adapted to be more readily understood by our general survey audience. This included connecting the competencies with more tangible learning outcomes that are frequently the focus of media and digital literacy programs. The 14 resulting statements are therefore not a replication of the AMLA framework, but they are aligned to it. A five-point response scale (1 = "Not important at all"; 5 = "Extremely important"; with an additional option of "Don't know") was used to measure how important participants regarded each of the 14 media literacy outcomes.

Table 3. Media Literacy Outcome Statements.

Statement
To understand how media impact and influence society
To know how to recognize and prevent the flow of misinformation
To use media to maximize your access to entertainment
To know how to think critically about the media you consume
To use media to support your cultural practices and beliefs
To use media to be successful in your life
To use media to stay connected with your friends and family
To use media to influence people
To be challenged with new ideas and perspectives when you use media
To use media to increase your understanding of different cultural groups
To think about and reflect on your own media use
To understand the relevant laws and policies for media use
To know how to protect yourself from scams and predators online
To use media to express your creativity and individual identity

In addition to raw response scores, the data were also analyzed by converting responses to individual mean adjusted scores. This approach involves taking the mean score for a respondent across all 14 items and subtracting this from each of their 14 raw response scores. The result is, in effect, similar to a Z-score but is expressed in the original units of measurement. While the interval distance between scores remains the same at the level of individual respondents, the overall data set is able to capture greater variability in the relative importance afforded to each item. This individual mean adjusted scoring method is of particular use in analyzing data with otherwise low variability—as is the case with the limited 5-point response scale and high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha of .91) observed in the attitudinal block of questions.

Sociodemographic Characteristics

The final set of questions provided information on the sociodemographic characteristics of respondents. Six dimensions are considered in this analysis: gender, age, income, education level, education level of most educated parent (as an indicator of social class), and parenthood. Details on how each of these attributes were measured are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Sociodemographic Characteristics, Measures, and Recodings.

Characteristic	Measure	Recoding
Gender	Female, male, gender diverse	None
Age	Exact age	None
Income	Sextile of household income	Low (bottom two sextiles), medium (middle two sextiles), and high (top two sextiles)
Education Level	Highest level of achievement from nine options	Low (did not complete secondary school), medium (completed secondary school and/or a certificate/diploma/associate degree), and high (bachelor degree or higher)
Education Level of Most Educated Parent	As above	As above
Parenthood	Whether the respondent has any children, and whether they have any at each of five different stages of education	None

Results and Analysis

First, we present how the 10 basic motivational values are prioritized by Australian adults. We then address RQ1 through an overview of the varying levels of importance that respondents gave to each of the 14 statements reflecting the outcomes of media literacy programs. RQ2 is then examined through an analysis of the extent to which the priority participants give to different values correlates with the importance they give to different media literacy outcomes. The analysis concludes by examining RQ3 through a comparison of the relative explanatory power of values and sociodemographic characteristics to understand attitudes to media literacy.

From Benevolence to Power: The Prioritization of Values

Overall, the relative importance of each of the 10 motivational values across all respondents follows a similar pattern to previous Australian studies (e.g., Lee, Evers, Sneddon, Rahn, & Schwartz, 2019a), with benevolence (a motivation to promote the welfare of family and friends) regarded as the most important and power (associated with a concern for social status, control, and dominance over people and resources) regarded as the least important. The results shown in Table 5 include each value's

aggregate standardized best-worst score (higher scores indicate a value was more frequently rated as important), its ranking among the 10 values, and the ranking in the recent study by Lee and colleagues. (2019a). The high rank correlation between the two studies ($\rho = .98$) validates the reliability of our simplified survey instrument when compared with the latter study's use of a 21-question survey administered to a larger sample of 7,461 adult Australians.

Table 5. Ranking of Motivational Values.

Value	Std. BW Score	Ranking	Ranking (Lee et al., 2019a)
Benevolence	0.42	1	1
Security	0.35	2	2
Self-Direction	0.19	3	4
Universalism	0.09	4	3
Hedonism	0.03	5	5
Conformity	-0.03	6	7
Stimulation	-0.07	7	6
Tradition	-0.26	8	8
Achievement	-0.30	9	9
Power	-0.42	10	10

Figure 2 shows the position of each motivational value in terms of the mean and standard deviation of its standardized best-worst scores. This highlights that the three lowest scoring values—power, achievement, and tradition—also have the most variability in terms of how they are prioritized by respondents. The fact that low-ranked values may nevertheless be prioritized by smaller sections of the population is reinforced when considering the data in terms of how frequently each of the 10 motivational values featured as people's most important value. Figure 3 shows that one-third of participants prioritize benevolence as the most important guiding principle in their lives. While achievement is far less common and is ninth-ranked in terms of best-worst scores, it nevertheless remains the most important value for 7% of respondents and elevates its position to fifth-ranked when assessed from this perspective.

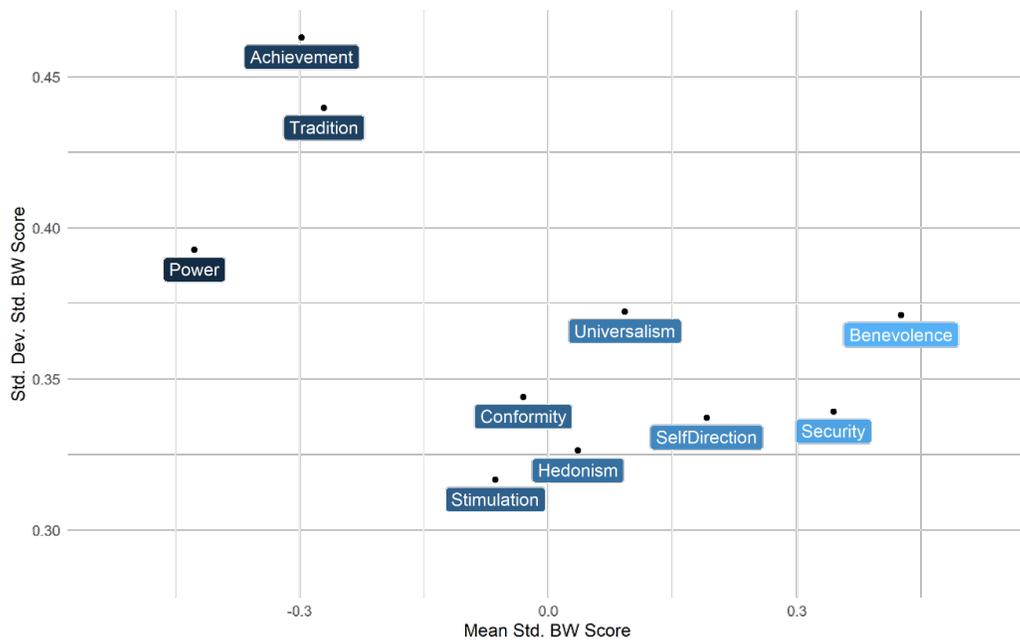


Figure 2. Mean and standard deviation for each motivational value (standardized best-worst scores).

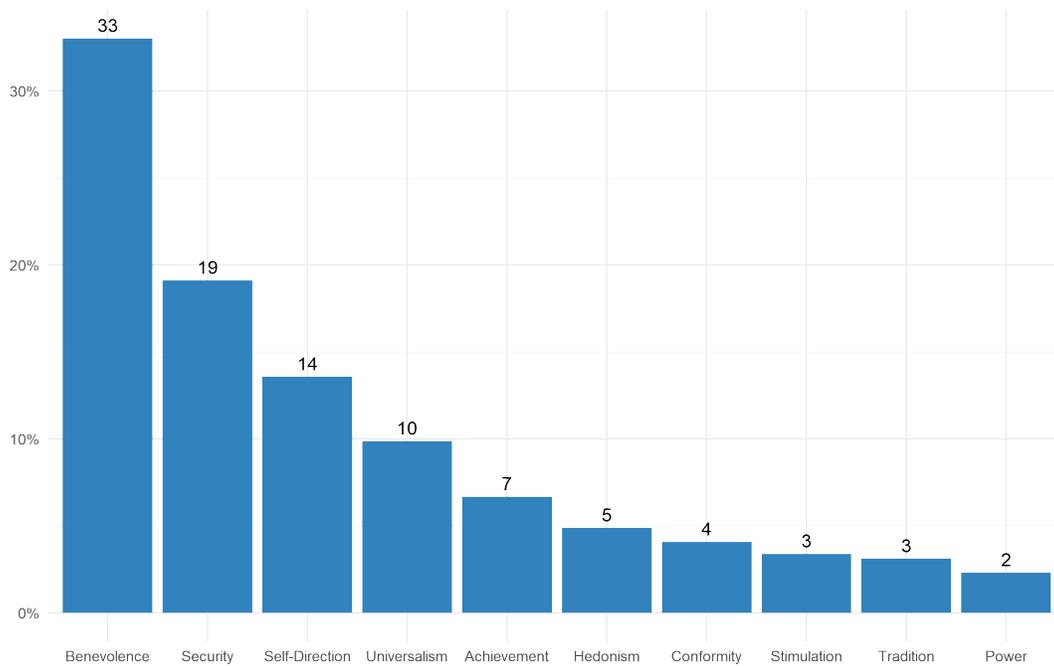


Figure 3. Proportion of respondents having each value as their highest priority.

People's Attitudes Toward Media Literacy Outcomes

Participants generally regarded the 14 media literacy outcomes we included in the survey as important in their lives. As shown in Table 6, for 12 of the 14 items the mean importance score (1 = "Not important at all"; 5 = "Extremely important") was above the scale's midpoint of 3. Aggregating participants' importance scores across all 14 media literacy outcomes gives an indication of the overall importance participants gave to media literacy outcomes and yielded an average of 49.0 (*SD* 10.03). This equates to an average overall importance of 3.5 on our 5-point scale, which, in terms of our first research question, indicates a moderate overall positive sentiment to the importance of media literacy outcomes in the lives of Australian adults.

Significantly, the importance of individual outcomes was observed to vary considerably, with mean importance scores ranging from 4.31 (knowing how to protect yourself from scams and predators online) to 2.76 (using media to influence people). Table 6 also shows the mean of the individual mean adjusted scores, which reflects the degree to which participants regarded an outcome as important relative to all other outcomes. These adjusted scores emphasize that the top four and bottom four items scored significantly higher and lower, respectively, than participants' average responses.

Table 6. Mean Importance Scores for Media Literacy Outcomes (1 = Not Important at All; 5 = Extremely Important): Raw and Individual Mean Adjusted Scores.

Media Literacy Outcome	Raw Mean Score	Adj. Mean Score
To know how to protect yourself from scams and predators online	4.31	0.81
To use media to stay connected with your friends and family	3.96	0.47
To know how to think critically about the media you consume	3.87	0.37
To know how to recognize and prevent the flow of misinformation	3.80	0.30
To understand how media impact and influence society	3.58	0.08
To understand the relevant laws and policies for media use	3.57	0.08
To think about and reflect on your own media use	3.54	0.04
To use media to maximize your access to entertainment	3.51	0.03
To use media to increase your understanding of different cultural groups	3.42	-0.08
To be challenged with new ideas and perspectives when you use media	3.36	-0.13
To use media to express your creativity and individual identity	3.23	-0.27
To use media to support your cultural practices and beliefs	3.07	-0.42
To use media to be successful in your life	2.92	-0.55
To use media to influence people	2.76	-0.73

The Relationship Between People's Values and Their Attitudes Toward Media Literacy Outcomes

Having established the overall profile of our sample's motivational values and attitudes toward media literacy outcomes, our second research question sought to understand whether people who

prioritize particular values in their lives are more likely to regard different media literacy outcomes as important. To investigate this, we conducted a series of regressions that sought to predict the importance assigned to each media literacy outcome (individual mean adjusted importance scores) as a linear function of the prioritization given to the 10 motivational values (standardized best-worst scores). While the use of individual Likert response items as dependent variables in parametric regression is a contested practice, Norman (2010) provides a defense of the robustness of the approach taken here. Given the theoretical basis for the research question, all 10 motivational values were considered as candidate independent variables. Model parameter selection was achieved using repeated 10-fold cross-validated backward elimination, with average prediction error (calculated as root mean square error) used to identify the optimal model. Cross-validation minimizes the potential for overfitting, which is a common criticism of backward elimination, and the approach adopted here was also found to produce better performing models than alternative techniques such as the least absolute shrinkage selection operator.

The results of the linear regressions are shown in Table 7. Significant model parameters are listed in order of their β coefficients, with positive predictors listed first followed by negative predictors. Positive predictors correspond with motivational values whose increased prioritization is associated with higher levels of importance being given to the corresponding media literacy outcome. Conversely, negative predictors indicate values whose increasing prioritization is associated with lower levels of importance.

A significant pattern can be observed in these results, whereby the strongest positive predictors for each media literacy outcome are frequently motivational values whose underlying principles are expressed or embedded in the corresponding outcome. The importance given to "using media to stay connected with friends and family," for example, can readily be understood as expressing the value of benevolence and its concern for the welfare of people we are in frequent contact with. The degree to which benevolence is prioritized as a value in a person's life is predictive of how important they will regard this media literacy outcome.

Similar relationships, whereby the importance given to media literacy outcomes is most strongly predicted by motivational values that are embodied or expressed in those outcomes, can be observed for 11 of the 14 surveyed items. These positive correlations are shown in the bold and underlined model parameters in Table 7 and encompass all motivational values with the exception of hedonism. While values such as universalism and self-direction are more commonly found among the 14 media literacy outcomes identified for our survey, it suggests that corresponding media literacy outcomes can be constructed that provide an expression of people's strongly held values and are more likely to be regarded as important by them. Even though values such as power and achievement have low levels of prioritization among participants, the results show that people who do give priority to these guiding principles in their lives are more likely to regard media literacy outcomes associated with "using media to be successful in life" and "using media to influence people" as important.

While each model includes predictors with high levels of statistical significance, the generally small proportion of observed variance explained by the models (as reported in Table 7 as adjusted R^2 values) warrants attention. These small effect sizes should be understood in the context of the narrow scale of measurement that applies to the dependent variables (a 5-point scale of importance) and the restricted

applicability of linear regressions to such coarse-grained data. This is confirmed in the high correlation ($r = .85$) between effect size and the standard deviation of mean adjusted attitude scores, whereby attitudinal statements with less variability have less capacity for large effect sizes to be identified.

Table 7. Significant Motivational Values in the Prediction of the Importance Given to Media Literacy Outcomes.

Media Literacy Outcome (Dependent Variable)	Model Parameters						
	Parameter ¹	β	Std. Error	T-Value	Sig.	Adj. R^2	AIC
To know how to protect yourself from scams and predators online	(Intercept)	0.31	0.03	10.69		.14	6944
	Self-Direction	0.40	0.06	6.94	***		
	Benevolence	0.30	0.06	5.43	***		
	Security	0.30	0.06	4.98	***		
	Power	-0.28	0.06	-4.86	***		
	Tradition	-0.17	0.05	-3.32	**		
	Achievement	-0.14	0.05	-2.66	**		
	Universalism	-0.13	0.05	-2.34	*		
To use media to be successful in your life	(Intercept)	-0.21	0.03	-6.93		0.11	7591
	Power	0.35	0.05	7.66	***		
	Achievement	0.24	0.04	6.08	***		
	Self-Direction	-0.26	0.05	-5.49	***		
	Universalism	-0.22	0.05	-4.58	***		
	Stimulation	-0.14	0.05	-2.73	**		
	Benevolence	-0.14	0.05	-2.90	**		
To use media to influence people	(Intercept)	-0.28	0.03	-9.64		.11	7613
	Power	0.46	0.04	10.69	***		
	Achievement	0.23	0.04	6.30	***		
	Tradition	0.19	0.04	4.93	***		
	Self-Direction	-0.31	0.05	-6.29	***		
	Benevolence	-0.18	0.04	-3.94	***		
To know how to think critically about the media you consume	(Intercept)	0.15	0.02	6.32		.07	6181
	Self-Direction	0.39	0.04	9.89	***		
	Benevolence	0.17	0.04	4.57	***		
	Universalism	0.13	0.04	3.44	**		
	Security	0.09	0.04	2.29	*		
	Achievement	-0.07	0.03	-2.32	*		

¹ Model parameters underlined in bold represent positive motivational value predictors, which are expressed by or embedded in the corresponding media literacy outcome.

To use media to support your cultural practices and beliefs	(Intercept)	-0.12	0.03	-4.25		.07	6916
	Tradition	0.26	0.04	5.99	***		
	Power	0.09	0.04	2.05	*		
	Self-Direction	-0.29	0.05	-5.99	***		
	Benevolence	-0.18	0.05	-3.85	***		
	Security	-0.14	0.05	-2.84	**		
To use media to stay connected with your friends and family	(Intercept)	0.16	0.03	5.44		.06	7390
	Benevolence	0.26	0.04	5.80	***		
	Power	-0.33	0.04	-7.32	***		
	Universalism	-0.29	0.04	-6.54	***		
	Achievement	-0.22	0.04	-5.64	***		
	Conformity	-0.20	0.05	-4.25	***		
	Self-Direction	-0.17	0.05	-3.26	**		
	Tradition	-0.16	0.04	-4.25	***		
To know how to recognize and prevent the flow of misinformation	(Intercept)	0.08	0.02	3.54		.05	6106
	Self-Direction	0.26	0.04	6.93	***		
	Security	0.14	0.04	3.92	***		
	Conformity	0.13	0.04	3.71	***		
	Universalism	0.12	0.03	3.58	***		
	Benevolence	0.12	0.03	3.35	**		
	Power	-0.16	0.04	-4.52	***		
To use media to express your creativity and individual identity	(Intercept)	-0.13	0.03	-4.97		.04	6522
	Self-Direction	-0.26	0.04	-6.69	***		
	Security	-0.19	0.04	-5.10	***		
	Benevolence	-0.18	0.03	-5.13	***		
	Conformity	-0.14	0.04	-3.80	***		
	Tradition	-0.12	0.03	-4.12	***		
	Universalism	-0.11	0.03	-3.06	**		
To use media to increase your understanding of different cultural groups	(Intercept)	0.02	0.02	0.82		.03	6254
	Universalism	0.27	0.04	7.37	***		
	Stimulation	0.17	0.05	3.44	**		
To understand how media impacts and influences society	(Intercept)	0.01	0.02	0.47		.03	5814
	Universalism	0.19	0.03	5.85	***		
	Self-Direction	0.19	0.03	5.49	***		
	Power	-0.08	0.03	-2.48	*		
To use media to maximize your access	(Intercept)	0.02	0.03	0.91		.02	6584
	Universalism	-0.24	0.04	-6.43	***		

to entertainment	Tradition	-0.19	0.03	-5.89	***		
	Achievement	-0.14	0.04	-3.72	***		
	Self-Direction	-0.11	0.04	-2.61	**		
	Conformity	-0.10	0.04	-2.61	**		
	Benevolence	-0.10	0.04	-2.69	**		
	Security	-0.08	0.04	-2.00	*		
To understand the relevant laws and policies for media use	(Intercept)	0.03	0.02	1.80		.02	5969
	Conformity	0.20	0.03	5.95	***		
	Universalism	0.16	0.03	5.03	***		
	Self-Direction	0.12	0.04	3.44	**		
	Security	0.09	0.03	2.45	*		
	Tradition	0.07	0.03	2.45	*		
To be challenged with new ideas and perspectives when you use media	(Intercept)	0.00	0.03	-0.17		.02	6199
	Stimulation	0.23	0.05	4.62	***		
	Power	0.14	0.04	3.43	**		
	Universalism	0.14	0.04	3.41	**		
	Self-Direction	0.09	0.04	2.19	*		
To think about and reflect on your own media use	(Intercept)	-0.04	0.02	-1.94		.02	7189
	Conformity	0.15	0.04	3.47	**		
	Power	-0.16	0.04	-4.21	***		
	Achievement	-0.10	0.03	-3.17	**		

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Which Predicts People's Attitudes Toward Media Literacy Outcomes the Most: Their Values or Their Sociodemographic Characteristics?

Our analysis concludes by addressing the concern expressed in our third research question, which asks if motivational values offer more or less predictive power than sociodemographic characteristics in explaining the importance people give to particular outcomes associated with media literacy programs. We carried out this research since media literacy programs are often designed around people's sociodemographic attributes, particularly their ages and education levels.

Rather than combining both motivational values and sociodemographic characteristics into a single model and observing different effect sizes, the approach taken was to compare the performance of regression models that separately incorporate each of these two sets of candidate independent variables. By doing so, the analysis focuses on the overall predictive power of each set of predictors. This approach avoids complications that would otherwise arise from comparing variables of different types (categorical, ordinal, and continuous) and scales of measurement. Furthermore, a consideration of any collinearity between values and sociodemographic characteristics was beyond the scope of the current analysis.

A set of models using sociodemographic characteristics to predict the importance of all 14 media literacy outcomes was developed using the same repeated 10-fold cross-validated backward elimination technique as was for the values-based models presented in Table 7 above. With the exception of parent education level, all sociodemographic variables (age, gender, education level, income level, parenthood status) were significant predictors in at least one model. Age was the most reliable predictor (significant in 13 of the 14 models), followed by gender (8), parenthood status (7), education level (2), and income (1).

To compare the relative performance of the two sets of models, the adjusted R^2 value was used to measure the amount of variance explained by the linear regressions. For all 14 media literacy outcomes, models using motivational values as predictors were able to account for more variation in the observed importance scores than the models based on sociodemographic characteristics. The level of improved variance accounted for ranged from 20% in the model for predicting the importance of "using media to express your creativity and individual identity" to 504% for "understanding how media impacts and influences society." On average, the models based on motivational values accounted for 164% more variation than those based on sociodemographic characteristics. When comparing pairs of models using the Akaike information criterion (AIC), models using motivational values as predictors performed better than their sociodemographic counterparts for 12 of the 14 statements. For the average prediction error (RMSE) measured across repeated 10-fold cross-validation, the values-based models performed better across all 14 media outcome statements.

These results provide strong evidence that motivational values offer more predictive power than sociodemographic characteristics when it comes to understanding the importance that people place on specific media literacy outcomes. Significantly, however, the opposite result is observed when considering the aggregate importance given by participants to all 14 media literacy outcomes. When modeling this aggregate importance score, a model that predicts aggregate importance using sociodemographic characteristics was able to account for 33% more variation than a corresponding model using motivational values as predictors (see Tables 8 and 9). At an aggregate level, being younger, having a higher level of education, and having children living at home all contribute to giving more overall importance to media literacy outcomes. While this sociodemographic description corresponds with typical understandings of audiences that are likely to place more importance on having a higher level of media literacy abilities (Notley et al., 2021; Ofcom, 2021), it overlooks the variation that is observed in the importance people give to specific media literacy outcomes. Motivational values have been shown to offer a useful lens from which to understand this variation. Not only can media literacy outcomes embed and express different underlying values, but by doing so they also provide a means for increasing the relevance of media literacy initiatives to different audiences.

Table 8. Model Predicting Aggregate Importance Given to 14 Media Literacy Outcomes Using Motivational Values.

Parameter	β	Std. Error	T-Statistic	Sig.
(Intercept)	51.61	0.32	161.39	
Universalism	4.64	0.51	9.11	***
Achievement	4.25	0.49	8.62	***
Tradition	2.03	0.47	4.29	***
Stimulation	1.89	0.67	2.83	**
Self-Direction	-2.52	0.60	-4.21	***

Adjusted R^2 of .08; AIC of 22,709.*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.**Table 9. Model Predicting Aggregate Importance Given to 14 Media Literacy Outcomes Using Sociodemographic Characteristics.**

Parameter	β	Std. Error	T-Statistic	Sig.
(Intercept)	51.61	0.32	161.39	
Education Level—High	4.64	0.51	9.11	***
Education Level—Medium	53.15	0.49	8.62	***
Age	4.02	0.47	4.29	***
Has Children at Home	1.65	0.67	2.83	**

Adjusted R^2 of .11; AIC of 22,554.

Education-level coefficients are against a base contrast of low.

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Conclusion

In addressing each of our three research questions, our findings point to a range of implications for how adult media literacy education may be successfully implemented in Australian society. Our first research question sought to address a gap in our understanding of how important people regarded the goals of media literacy outcomes in their everyday lives. At an aggregate level, participants attributed only a moderate overall positive importance to the role of the 14 media literacy outcomes. Significantly, however, there was considerable variation in the importance given to different outcomes. The highest rated of these, "To know how to protect yourself from scams and predators online" (4.31), and the next most important, "To use media to stay connected with your friends and family" (3.96), also express participants' most prioritized motivational values—security and benevolence—in their connections with people's desire to feel safe and be connected to family and community. The three next most important media literacy outcomes are focused on being critically reflective about the media: "To know how to think critically about the media you consume" (3.87), "To know how to recognize and prevent the flow of misinformation" (3.80), and "To understand how media impacts and influences society" (3.85). Respondents placed the least importance on media abilities that are self-serving or self-promotional (most closely reflecting the motivational values of power and achievement): "To use media to be successful in your life" (2.92) and "To use media to influence people" (2.76). Therefore, adult Australians' attitudes to media literacy abilities appear to be broadly aligned with the prevalence of motivational values found in Australian society.

This is reinforced by our findings related to our second research question—whether media literacy programs that embed and express particular values are more likely to be regarded as important by people who prioritize those same underlying values in their lives. The study's results confirm Schwartz's (1992) theorization of values shaping lower-order attitudes. When media literacy outcomes are viewed in the context of expressing or embedding different higher-order motivational values, the degrees to which people prioritize those values across their lives are associated with the importance they give to the corresponding media literacy outcomes. This makes sense and may appear self-evident, but it is nonetheless an important reminder that if a fledgling concept like media literacy education is to succeed in society, it will need to be implemented in ways that connect with citizens' motivational values.

Finally, while sociodemographic characteristics—particularly age and education level—explained more variance in the overall importance people gave to media literacy outcomes, motivational values were shown to have greater explanatory power in understanding the importance given to individual outcomes. In this way, the study shows that sociodemographic characteristics and values offer contrasting perspectives from which to understand the importance people give to media literacy outcomes. This is particularly significant as, rather than understanding people's interest in media literacy outcomes being primarily determined by their sociodemographic characteristics, our findings demonstrate that media literacy programs that speak to different motivational values can successfully engage with broader sections of the population. In this way, by combining socioeconomic and values analysis, initiatives can better understand both media literacy needs and people's motivations to learn.

In affirming the significance of these findings, we also believe they point to opportunities for further research. Having identified a relationship between values and attitudes to media literacy outcomes in the context of a self-reported online survey, there is a need to complement this with qualitative approaches that can develop a richer understanding of the nature of this relationship and how it manifests itself in practice. Qualitative research can also examine how values can be appropriately and effectively embedded into the design of media literacy programs. Furthermore, having used motivational values as a higher-order dimension to inform our understanding of people's attitudes, our findings also raise questions as to what antecedents—be they personal experiences, psychological traits, and/or social structures—might themselves be implicated in the formulation of values.

Taken together, our findings provide important insights into how media literacy advocates may be able to design and promote successful media literacy interventions through the lens of motivational values as important complements to sociodemographic considerations. Repeated studies from Australia and from around the world show that benevolence is the most commonly held value that is most prioritized by people. In addition to this, there are ways in which benevolence aligns to media literacy's aim to promote citizenship and social justice approaches to thinking critically about the media (Mihailidis, 2018; Ramasubramanian & Darzabi, 2020). Therefore, media literacy advocates may appeal to the value of benevolence to promote a more media literate citizenry.

Such an approach to media literacy education is not without its risks. As we have argued, predominant social and cultural values in different historical eras have been criticized for limiting media literacy education's democratic potential. Leavis' (1937) 1930s version of media literacy education, for

instance, promoted a version of Anglophile elitism that devalued popular and media culture and ridiculed the people who enjoyed it. In this case, media literacy did not set out to benefit all citizens, but only those willing to agree that media and popular culture were corrupting forces with no inherent value. It is not difficult to imagine versions of media literacy programs based around the values of benevolence or security that might be equally problematic. The point is not that motivational values should determine the content and approaches of media literacy programs, but rather that media literacy programs might be designed in ways that appeal to motivational values, but perhaps also to challenge them. For instance, a media literacy program might appeal to citizens' concerns for safety and security but approach the topic of online safety in a balanced manner that avoids the sense of moral panic that informs the worst kinds of cybersafety education (Facer, 2012).

Despite the risk that a values approach to media literacy education might be misinterpreted, we believe these findings provide important insights for policy makers and for those who are designing and providing media literacy programs. Our findings show that people will be attracted to media literacy programs that reflect the values they hold as most important in their lives. In the context of aiming to raise the profile of media literacy in Australian society, it is therefore an important first step to find ways to appeal to people's underlying motivational values. In doing so, however, it will be important to promote versions of media literacy that balance the priorities and rights of all citizens to participate and benefit from media participation.

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