Re: Beyond Fake News

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ABSTRACT

A student success librarian with a Ph.D. in mass communication and an information literacy librarian with an M.A. in secondary English education describe their efforts to innovate in the field of news literacy by incorporating the media effects research tradition. By highlighting the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive elements of information processing, the authors hope to show students how professional norms, institutional and market pressures shape the news while their own predispositions influence how they interpret the news they consume. The authors emphasize agenda-setting and framing, two fundamental media effects paradigms, and report on their effort to develop news literacy classes informed by the media effects research tradition. Finally, they share resources and a step-by-step guide for two news literacy lessons.

Keywords: information literacy, media effects, media literacy, news literacy.
INTRODUCTION

In “Beyond ‘Fake News’: Opportunities and Constraints for Teaching News Literacy,” media studies professor Judith E. Rosenbaum, subject librarian Jennifer L. Bonnet, and media literacy expert R. Alan Berry described a news literacy workshop inspired by their cross-disciplinary collaboration (2021). In their “Voices in the Field” article published by the Journal of Media Literacy Education, they wrote about the ambiguity of fake news, the weaponization of fake news by political elites, and the binary construction of real versus fake news as significant challenges to teaching news literacy skills. In this article, a student success librarian with a Ph.D. in mass communication and an information literacy librarian with an M.A. in secondary English education, report on their attempt to innovate in the field of news literacy by drawing on the media effects research tradition. We introduce the media effects research tradition and discuss the affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions of information processing in the context of news literacy. Then, we highlight agenda-setting and framing, two important media effects paradigms, and report on our cross-disciplinary effort to create news literacy lessons informed by the media effects research tradition. Finally, we share materials and a step-by-step guide for both of our media effects news literacy lessons.

We want students to be aware of the kinds of mediating factors that can make it more challenging for them to assess news or determine political reality, and we want them to be conscious of particular media practices that serve as a catalyst for media effects. Our work is inspired by important stakeholders in the world of media and information literacy. The National Association for Media Literacy Education (2021) wants to prepare students for a modern media and information ecosystem that addresses us “on a multi-sensory level, affecting the way we think, feel, and behave” (para. 7) and the Association of College and Research Libraries (2015) writes about “the behavioral, affective, cognitive, and metacognitive engagement with the information ecosystem” necessary for students to achieve metaliteracy in its Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (p. 8). Both organizations understand that addressing these dimensions of information processing is critical to their missions. We aim to address the concerns shared by these key organizations while building on the momentum initiated by Rosenbaum et al. (2021).

Media effects

Similar to Rosenbaum et al. (2021), we want to move beyond fake news. To do so, we harness the predictive and explanatory power of the media effects research tradition. Valkenburg and Oliver (2020) wrote that media effects theories attempt “to explain the uses and effects of media on individuals, groups, or societies as a whole” and “conceptualize media use and the potential changes that this media use can bring about in individuals, groups, or societies (i.e., the media effect)” (p. 17). The media could include cartoons, radio, music, TV, movies, magazines, social media, podcasts, and so on. The effects are the “changes in cognitions, emotions, attitudes, and behavior that results from media use” (Valkenburg & Oliver, 2020, p. 17). In the context of news literacy, media effects put the spotlight on the norms and practices of journalists and the institutional and market pressures that shape the news. At the same time, media effects help us understand how our own preferences and predispositions influence how we interpret the news.

The media effects research tradition belongs to the field of mass communication but it emerged in more established social science fields such as psychology, sociology, and political science. The earliest media effects research programs in the United States were focused on the rise of radio and state propaganda and relied on social science research methods such as surveys (a hot topic in the 1930s) to assess audience interests, motivation, and engagement (Park & Pooley, 2008). Some contemporary media effects researchers consider the social and cultural effects of social media, the internet, film, and television, while others investigate the media’s influence on public knowledge, public opinion, and the broader political process (McQuail, 2010). Whether investigating the social and cultural effects of popular culture or exploring the media’s role in democracy, media effects researchers explore how media is produced, disseminated, and received.

As shown in Table 1, the history of media effects can be broken down into four eras in which the field garnered a general consensus on the strength or magnitude of media effects (Baran et al., 2012; McQuail, 2010; Vorderer et al., 2020). First, from World War I to World War II, many assumed that the media possessed unlimited power (Baran et al., 2012; McQuail, 2010; Vorderer et al., 2020). The hypodermic needle model of media effects suggested the recipient of a media message directly received and fully accepted the
message as it was intended. From advertising to political rhetoric, many believed mere exposure to a media message would produce the desired effect in the individual. However, the next generation of scholars proved this simplistic understanding of media effects to be lacking and ushered in the second era of media effects research. Lasting from World War II until the late 1960s, the era of weak media effects was defined by quantitative social science research methods and is probably best distilled in the work of sociologist Joseph Klapper, who demonstrated that the media mostly confirmed individuals’ prior beliefs but did not change their attitudes (Klapper, 1960). The third era of media effects began in the early 1970s when scholars began to narrow their focus to newspapers (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), public opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), and television (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). The moderate effects era has since given way to a fourth era of media effects, whereby the media presents its image of reality, but that version of reality must compete with other opinion-forming sources, including personal experience, social, and demographic factors (Vorderer et al., 2020). The contemporary era of negotiated media effects positions both the media and the individual as powerful (Baran et al., 2012; McQuail, 2010; Vorderer et al., 2020).

Table 1. Four eras of media effects research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media effects</th>
<th>Eras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>1920s–1930s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>1940s–1960s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiated</td>
<td>Late 1970s to Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now coming to types of media effects, scholars have documented three categories that are particularly useful in the context of news literacy: affective, behavioral, and cognitive (Table 2). These categories are not mutually exclusive, and much of the literature reflects debates about whether cognitive or affective mechanisms best explain or predict particular media effects. Affective media effects are concerned with the “formation of attitudes, or positive or negative evaluations about something” (Perse & Lambe, 2016, p. 3). Mutz (2007) wrote about affective media effects and linked close-up broadcast of incivility, which is common to political discourse on television, with the emotional reactions of viewers. Namkoong et al. (2012) found that the capacity for television news to affect political participation was due in part to the strong emotional reactions it evoked in viewers. Behavioral media effects document a link between exposure to media messages and behavior. The relationship between media exposure and electoral activism (e.g., donating to political campaigns, volunteering in political campaigns, and attending campaign events) is well documented (Dilliplane, 2011; Wojcieszak et al., 2016). Cognitive media effects are concerned with “the acquisition of information – what people learn,” how much they learn, whether their need for information is satisfied or not (Perse & Lambe, 2016, p. 3). The hostile media effect, for example, explores how political partisans interpret neutral news reporting as biased against their favored candidate or policy position (Perloff, 2015; Vallone et al., 1985). Altogether, this body of research suggests a complex relationship between media use and its effect on individuals.

Media effects research recognizes that an individual’s predispositions mediate or intervene between media use and media outcomes, and that is what so many other news literacy interventions are missing (Valkenburg & Oliver, 2020). We want to make students aware of the type of mediating variables that can make it more difficult for them to evaluate news or ascertain political reality. While news literacy interventions and lessons that rely on mnemonic devices and fake news pedagogies can be helpful, there is much more to account for in the predispositions of our students and the news media ecosystems they inhabit. Furthermore, these same predispositions might also make it difficult for highly partisan individuals to implement the news literacy strategies they have been taught.

We created two news literacy lessons inspired by two prominent media effects theories – agenda-setting and framing. Foundational studies for both agenda-setting and framing have over 10,000 Google citations each and both theories are among the most written about phenomena in communication journals since 2000 (Chung et al., 2013; Walter et al., 2018). Agenda-setting describes “how news media can influence the salience of topics on the public agenda” (Valkenburg & Oliver, 2020, p. 20). Framing explores “how the media draws attention to certain topics and places them within a field of meaning (i.e., frame) which in turn influences audience perception” (Valkenburg & Oliver, 2020, p. 20). We discuss key aspects of both agenda-setting and framing in the next two sections and report on our media effects news literacy lessons.
AGENDA-SETTING

When communication scholars refer to “agenda” in the context of news and journalism, they are referencing the policy issues or controversies that receive the most coverage in the media. Dearing and Rogers (1996) defined the media agenda as a set of issues communicated in a hierarchy of importance. When communication scholars write about “agenda-building,” they are talking about the process by which media outlets and journalists highlight, emphasize, and choose to cover some events, subjects, or sources over others (Nisbet, 2008). Journalists make decisions everyday about what the public ought to know, and competing news outlets make very different decisions based on their news values and other institutional, corporate, and/or market pressures (Harcup & O’Neill, 2017). Not every story gets its own Twitter thread, lands on the front page, or gets the breaking news treatment on cable television; some stories get buried, and some never get reported at all. Voters in turn infer the importance of issues based on how much attention they get from the news outlets they follow. This dynamic is at the heart of agenda-setting.

When scholars talk about “agenda-setting,” they are talking about the media’s ability to influence how voters rank the most important problems or issues facing the country (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Political scientist Bernard Cohen (1963) was not the first to document the agenda-setting function of the mass media, but he effectively captured the dynamics of agenda-setting when he wrote that the press might not be able to tell people what to think, but it does tell people what to think about.

Cohen (1963) asserted that the world would look different to different people depending “on the map that is drawn for them by the writers, editors, and publishers of the papers they read” (p. 13). McCombs and Shaw (1972) tested Cohen’s assertion in their study of the 1968 presidential election and found a correlation between the issues covered most in the media and the issues voters believed to be most important in the final days of the campaign. They observed that when voters read a newspaper article, watch a television report, or hear a radio news update, they learn not only about the issue being reported but also how much importance to attribute to the issue, based on the amount of space and attention it receives in the overall news report.

For example, when the Pew Research Center asked survey respondents about the biggest problems facing the United States in the spring of 2022, they found that Democrats and Republicans held significantly different views (Doherty & Gómez, 2022). For instance, 63% Democrats said climate change was a very big problem compared to 16% of Republicans, and on immigration, 65% of Republicans said the issue was a very big problem compared to 19% of Democrats (Doherty & Gómez, 2022). The agenda-setting theory of mass media suggests that these differences might arise due to the media diets of each partisan group.

Chinn et al. (2020) supported the claim by examining climate change articles published in major American newspapers from 1985 to 2017. They found that reporting on climate change became increasingly politicized, with political actors taking center stage and scientists receiving less attention. At the same time, the issue became increasingly polarized, with distinct differences between Democratic and Republican discourses. Changes in public opinion in the United States over the same period pointed to these aspects of news coverage as divisive factors in views toward climate change.

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**Table 2. Media effects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media effects</th>
<th>Affective</th>
<th>Behavioral</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affective</strong></td>
<td>Attitudes, emotions, positive or negative feelings about an issue, a candidate, etc.</td>
<td>Political engagement, electoral activism, voter turnout, etc.</td>
<td>Selective exposure, selective categorization, selective recall, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Real-world example:</strong></td>
<td>Television news evokes strong emotional reactions to politicians and political institutions (Mutz, 2007; Namkoong et al., 2012)</td>
<td>Exposure to partisan news affects political involvement, especially during election seasons (Dilliplane, 2011; Wojcieszak et al., 2016)</td>
<td>Highly partisan individuals believe media coverage is unfairly biased against their side (Perloff, 2015; Vallone et al., 1985)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Agenda-Setting lesson plan

1. **Prior to Class:** Students read about agenda-setting and complete a survey to help them with their reading comprehension. The survey also activates students’ prior knowledge by asking them about current topics they prioritize. Students’ responses from this survey are later used in the reflection activity during the class session.

2. **During Class:** At the beginning of the class, facilitators and students discuss the reading comprehension questions from the survey and address any knowledge gaps students have regarding the chapter they read for class.

3. **Mini Lecture:** Facilitators present a mini-lesson on media effects, including its definition and foundation. They specifically discuss cognitive media effects, introducing how political communication is shared through media, and explain agenda-setting with real-world examples.

4. **Group Activity:** In small groups, students are asked to test agenda-setting by looking at a recent poll from Pew Research Center on the top issues for midterm voters and identify if the top issues presented in the poll are represented on the front pages in the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*. For this activity, students look at the front pages to see how much space and attention is given to issues from the poll. To help them with this activity, students are given a worksheet that explains how to code the newspaper front pages. Students use different colored markers to identify voter issues and rank which issues were given the most attention.

5. **Whole Group Discussion:** After identifying the top issues presented on the front pages, students compare their findings with the top issues presented in the Pew Research Center poll. Facilitators and students share their findings with the class. By participating in the group activity, students are able to make real-world connections to agenda-setting and discover its role in the news.

6. **Reflection Activity:** Students re-examine the top issues they identified in the pre-class survey and test agenda-setting with their own information diets. For this activity, students report on the news stories they would typically encounter and reflect on whether they are representative of the top issues they care the most about.

**Agenda-Setting lesson plan feedback**

In their discussion on news production, one student commented that even under the best of circumstances, news organizations must choose what to cover and that by choosing which issues to cover, the media establishes a hierarchy of issues. Another student commented on the competitive environment in which the news is produced, noting that news organizations try to attract viewers by covering various issues that might not actually be crucial. While reflecting on their own news consumption, one student noted that their reliance on news aggregators provides them with similar news stories and that they needed to actively look for different news sources to get a complete picture of current events. Another student commented that they did not want to become too consumed by attention-drawing news stories and wanted to look for reliable news more strategically.

**FRAMING**

When it comes to political controversies, news frames help set the terms of debate (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2020). A news frame is the “central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events […] The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, p. 143). News frames guide audience interpretation of a problem the same way a picture frame focuses our attention on a painting or image. Some scholars study frame-building or, in other words, how journalists’ norms and political actors create news frames (Scheufele, 1999; Brüggemann, 2014; Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2020). The same processes that contribute to agenda-building also play a role in frame-building. Shoemaker and Reese (2013) understood frame-building as a byproduct of restrictions imposed by media organizations, journalistic standards, and audience expectations of the format and content of news.

Other scholars study frame-setting or, in other words, how news frames affect individuals or groups of people (Scheufele, 1999; Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2020). Some scholars, such as Stanford’s political scientist Shanto Iyengar, incorporate the study of both
frame-building and frame-setting. Iyengar (1991) wrote about two common news frames and how they lead individuals to attribute causal responsibility for certain issues. He found that journalists tend to present the news in either episodic or thematic frames. Episodic news frames focus on specific events and individual actors, whereas thematic news frames focus on a broader perspective and the larger context of an issue (Iyengar, 1991). Moreover, he found that the majority of news frames are episodic. This is significant because when people consume episodic news frames, they blame individuals for problems and let elected officials off the hook for bad policy outcomes. In contrast, when people consume thematic news frames, they are more likely to hold elected officials accountable.

For example, consider Los Angeles television station KTLA’s headline, “Video shows homeless man attack woman with scissors in North Hollywood; suspect arrested” (Quednow, 2022). The reporting in this story is episodic and based on a specific event. It describes a series of random, unprovoked attacks by a “homeless man” who stabbed one person and assaulted another with a jar of pickles. We learn the location of the two incidents, a bit about the victims, and that the assailant has been booked on suspicion of murder. Now consider this story from the Los Angeles Times, “California taxed millionaires to fix its mental health crisis. Why it’s fallen so short” (Garrison et al., 2022). This story’s reporting is thematic and links failed policies to actual outcomes. It reports on the systematic underfunding of social and mental health programs, erratic revenue fluctuations, petty squabbles among state and local bureaucrats, and a shortage of mental health workers. Shields (2001) found prevalence of an episodic pattern after completing a content analysis of 14 years of television news reporting on homelessness, noting that most coverage ignored important socioeconomic causes of homelessness. Over the course of his 14-year study, 80% of news stories about homelessness were episodic in nature, while the remaining 20% offered broader, thematic framing around homelessness.

Framing lesson plan

1. **Prior to Class:** Students read about framing theory and framing effects. To help with comprehension of the readings, they are asked to complete a survey to explain framing in their own words and ask any questions they have about the materials.

2. **During Class:** Facilitators and students discuss the readings using student responses from the survey. Facilitators clarify questions students have about the readings.

3. **Mini Lecture:** Facilitators present a mini-lesson on framing and share real-world examples in the news. They share examples of specific framing devices, both thematic and episodic, and model how to identify them in news headlines.

4. **Group Activity:** In small groups, students are given an online document with hyperlinks to thematic and episodic news articles on the housing crisis and climate change. Students choose the topic they want to examine and identify two examples each of episodic framing and thematic framing. By analyzing the news stories they identified, students consider the potential effects the two framing devices could have on readers.

5. **Whole Group Discussion:** Students discuss their takeaways with the whole class and explain how episodic and thematic framing devices represent their topic in news stories.

6. **Reflection Activity:** Reflecting on their findings from the group activity, students respond to the following question: Does having an understanding of the framing effects of mass media change the way you interpret news? If so, how?

Framing lesson plan feedback

In their explanation of framing, one student commented on how easily the frames we use to make sense of the world are reinforced, and even exploited, by the information we consume. Students also discussed how important it is to understand the context of events in the news.

A student noted that if they read only episodic news stories about the housing crisis, they may only get stereotypes about people who are homeless instead of the larger underlying societal issues. Another student stated that learning about the framing media effect will help them better analyze news stories in the future to determine whether an article describes a single event or offers a broader perspective on an issue. All students shared their plans to continue to look for episodic and thematic frames in the news, one expressing that it helps to get a fuller understanding of what is happening in the world.
CONCLUSION

The key finding of media effects research is that individual predispositions mediate or intervene between media use and media outcomes (Valkenburg & Oliver, 2020). Our media effects pedagogy aligns with the emphasis put on the affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions of information processing by the National Association for Media Literacy Education and the Association of College and Research Libraries. We argue that media effects pedagogy in information and media literacy instruction aligns with their mission. Like Rosenbaum et al. (2021), we hope our news literacy lessons will complement existing methods and approaches. Our news literacy lessons can be taught in workshops, one-shot instructional sessions, or as part of semester-long courses. We have described how the media effects research tradition addresses the three important aspects of information processing in the context of news literacy. We focused on two key media effects paradigms, agenda-setting and framing, and provided resources as well as step-by-step lesson plans for both of our media effects news literacy lessons. Finally, all of the students who participated in our sessions felt that comprehending these concepts was essential and pledged to apply them in the future.

REFERENCES

National Association for Media Literacy Education. (2021). Media literacy defined. https://namle.net/resources/media-literacy-defined/


APPENDIX A
Agenda-Setting pre-class survey

Reading/Watching/Listening this week:
- from Baran and Davis: Agenda-setting
- from The Daily Show: Investigating the Summer of the Shark

1. A famous political scientist once said, "[the press] may not be successful in telling readers what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about." What do you think about this statement? How would you describe this statement in your own words?

2. In your own words, what is agenda-setting?

3. Do you have a specific question about agenda-setting that you would like instructors to answer or clarify?

4. What's going on in the Daily Show clip from 2002? How does it relate to agenda-setting?

5. Where do you usually get your news? Check all that apply.
   Social Media
   - News Feeds (like Google News or Apple News)
   - News Websites
   - TV
   - Radio
   - Email Newsletters
   - Newspapers (printed or online)
   - Other:

6. In your opinion, what are the top 5 voting issues you think are most important leading up to the midterm elections? (Examples include gun policy, economy, education, health care, crime, abortion, immigration, climate change, foreign policy, etc.) List them below:
APPENDIX B
Agenda-Setting group activity worksheet

**Directions:** In pairs, analyze the front page of each newspaper. Use the color-coding scheme to identify top issues. Rank the issues in order of importance for each newspaper front page.

**Which newspaper is your group using?**
- New York Times (October 10-16)
- Wall Street Journal (October 10-16)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Date: October 14, 2022</th>
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</thead>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
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<table>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>5.</td>
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</table>

Date: October 13, 2022
1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

Comments/Questions:
APPENDIX C

Agenda-Setting group activity coding worksheet

The economy remains the top issue for voters in the midterms

% of registered voters who say each is very important to their vote in the
upcoming congressional elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Democratic candidate supporters</th>
<th>Republican candidate supporters</th>
<th>All voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The future of democracy in the country</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy policy</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent crime</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies about how elections and voting work in the country</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun policy</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Court appointments</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign policy</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size and scope of the federal government</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Climate change</td>
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<td>68</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issues around race and ethnicity</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigations into Donald Trump and his administration</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The coronavirus outbreak</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Pew Research Center Top Issues October 2022

Top 12 Issues for voters leading up to the 2022 midterm elections, Oct. 10-16:

Is there a connection between the issues on the newspaper front pages and public opinion?

Color Map:

- Economy = Red
- Future of Democracy = Orange
- Education = Brown
- Health care = Purple
- Energy policy = Dark green
- Violent crime = Light blue
- Policies about elections = Gray
- Gun policy = Light green
- Abortion = Yellow
- Supreme court = Black
- Immigration = Pink
- Foreign policy = Dark blue
- Miscellaneous = Leave blank, but take note

Figure 2. Color Key
APPENDIX D
Agenda-Setting reflection survey

1. What’s a new-to-you word, term, or idea you heard today?

2. Were you familiar with the agenda-setting theory before today?
   - Yes
   - No

3. How does understanding the agenda-setting function of the mass media change the way you interpret the news? Does it?

4. Have you ever had an information literacy or media literacy class?
   - Yes
   - No

5. After analyzing your own news source (or social media feed), what were some of the top issues in your media diet?

6. Do you think there is a correlation between YOUR top 5 priorities leading up to the midterm elections (as you reported in pre-class Ticket) and YOUR media diet?

7. Please explain the answer to the previous question (i.e. Do you think there is a correlation between YOUR top 5 priorities leading up to the midterm elections (as you reported in pre-class Ticket) and YOUR media diet?).

8. After learning about agenda-setting, what are ideas you have (or what do you already do) to make sure you are getting as full a picture as you can about current events?
APPENDIX E
Framing pre-class survey

Reading/Watching/Listening this week:
- from BrainFacts.org: Why Do We Fall for the Framing Effect?
- from Communication Theory: Framing Theory

1. In your own words, what are frames?

2. In your own words, what are framing effects?

3. In the BrainFacts.org video, "Why Do We Fall for the Framing Effect," the speaker discusses gains and losses. What are they talking about?

4. In the "Framing Theory" article from Communication Studies, the author discusses episodic/thematic frames. What are episodic/thematic frames and why should we care about them?

5. Do you have a specific question about framing that you would like instructors to answer or clarify?

6. Propose one discussion question related to framing.
**APPENDIX F**

**Framing group activity worksheet**

**Directions:** In pairs, identify at least two examples of episodic framing and two examples of thematic framing on the topic of the housing crisis or climate change to analyze. (Find the stories here: [https://bit.ly/3NDcECq](https://bit.ly/3NDcECq)).

**Episodic Framing:** Focuses on a single event; refers to the portrayal and presentation of issues through either a specific event that serves as an anecdotal exemplification of the broader issue or the story of an affected person who could put a human face on the issue.

**Thematic Framing:** Focuses on trends over time; applies a wide-angle lens to the coverage of the issue – focusing on trends over time, and highlighting contexts and environments.

1. Which topic did your group read about?
   - Housing Crisis
   - Climate change

2. Write down two headlines from the Google Doc that are examples of episodic framing. What kind of information do they provide?

3. Write down two headlines from the Google Doc that are examples of thematic framing. What kind of information do they provide?

4. What do you think readers would think about this topic if they were only reading the articles with episodic news frames?

5. How do you think readers would think about this topic if they were also reading articles with thematic news frames?
APPENDIX G
Framing reflection survey

1. What’s a new-to-you word, term, or idea you heard today?

2. Why is it important to know about episodic/thematic news frames when reading news stories?

3. What do you notice about the news sources in your media diet? Are the news sources you typically see more episodic or thematic?

4. Were you familiar with media framing before today?

5. Does having an understanding of the framing effects of mass media change the way you interpret news? If so, how?