

# MEDIA SALIENCE AND THE PROCESS OF FRAMING: COVERAGE OF THE COLUMBINE SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

By Hsiang Iris Chyi and Maxwell McCombs



*This study examines how the media can build a news event's salience by emphasizing different aspects of the event during its life span. A two-dimensional measurement scheme is proposed as a systematic way of examining media frames. This scheme yields cross-issue generalizability that liberates framing research from issue-specific boundaries. A content analysis examining the coverage of the Columbine school shootings in the New York Times documents the use of multiple frames on the time and space dimensions, visualizes framing as a process over time, and identifies certain frame-changing patterns in the coverage of this highly salient news event.*

Object salience, the relative importance of an object—a public issue, public figure, or any other topic—in the media or among the public, has been the central focus of agenda-setting research. An underlying assumption of agenda-setting theory is that once an object appears on the media agenda, the volume of cumulative news coverage increases its salience. Empirically, object salience on the media agenda typically is measured by the amount of media coverage over time. However, the dynamic process in which the news media build up the salience of a topic on the media agenda has received little attention.

During any news event's life span, the news media often reframe the event by emphasizing different attributes of the event—consciously or unconsciously—in order to keep the story alive and fresh. This journalistic practice—referred to as “frame-changing” in this study—is a dynamic process over time. As agenda-setting theory has evolved into inquiries about second-level effects (i.e., attribute agenda setting<sup>1</sup>), the specific attributes of an object that are selected for presentation in the media deserve a closer examination. To serve this end, this study examines how a specific “news event,” the Columbine school shootings, gained prominence on the media agenda and takes a close look at the specific attributes of the event that contributed to its salience on the media agenda. In other words, this study scrutinizes the process of frame-changing, by which media organizations build up the salience of objects on the media agenda. To facilitate the empirical examination of

---

this frame-changing process, this study proposes a generalizable measurement scheme applicable to the study of framing of any object in the news.

A news event narrowly circumscribed in time, the Columbine school shootings, was selected as the object for study in this initial exploration of frame-changing rather than a broad public issue to facilitate a comprehensive but manageable examination of its life span. The life span of the Columbine school shootings was essentially a month. By contrast, the average life span of the public issues frequently studied in agenda setting is 18.5 months.<sup>2</sup> This is not the first time that agenda-setting researchers have turned their attention to a news event rather than public issues,<sup>3</sup> and McCombs and Bell, among many others, have noted that agenda-setting theory is relevant to "any set of objects—or even a single object—competing for attention."<sup>4</sup>

---

## Literature Review

**Issue-Attention Cycle.** In an early attempt to conceptualize issue salience, Downs identified five stages of the "issue-attention cycle": (1) the pre-problem stage, (2) alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm, (3) realizing the cost of significant progress, (4) gradual decline of intense public interest, and (5) the post-problem stage.<sup>5</sup> This model, an illustration of the process in which problems are discovered by the media, gain prominence, and then fade from public attention, first introduced the "time" element to the study of issue salience. Downs also suggested that issues that have gone through each stage of the cycle tend to receive more attention. However, the focus of his model is public attention rather than salience in the news media. In addition, the unit of analysis is a broadly-defined social issue (e.g., concern about the environment) as opposed to specific news events.

**Attribute Agenda Setting.** Since the Chapel Hill study by McCombs and Shaw,<sup>6</sup> more than 350 empirical studies have been conducted to examine the agenda-setting influence of the news media.<sup>7</sup> In recent years, the theory has expanded to include the second level of agenda setting, where the unit of analysis shifts from an object, for example, an issue, to aspects or attributes of the object.<sup>8</sup>

Built upon earlier studies that dealt with the agenda of attributes for various public issues,<sup>9</sup> second-level agenda-setting research examines how media organizations select and present certain characteristics and properties of an object and how that selection and presentation influence the public's perception of an object and its attributes.<sup>10</sup> While the first level focuses on the transfer of object salience from the media agenda to the public agenda, the second level deals with attribute salience in the media and its impact on both object salience and attribute salience among the public. By examining shifting patterns of attribute salience in the media over time, this study analyzes how a specific news event gained salience on the media agenda through its cumulative coverage.

While the selection of attributes by the news media is identified as a powerful agenda-setting role,<sup>11</sup> there has been little agreement about which kinds of attributes to study and how to study them, a problem that attribute agenda setting shares with framing research. A recent develop-

ment in agenda-setting research is to view the selection of key attributes as framing.<sup>12</sup>

**Framing Research.** To frame, according to Entman, is "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described."<sup>13</sup> Tankard defined a media frame as "a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration."<sup>14</sup> When covering a news event, journalists decide which elements to include or exclude in a story. Therefore, a single news event can be framed in various ways, producing different versions containing different attributes.

Thinking of frames as attributes of an object provides the theoretical link between agenda-setting and framing research. As suggested by McCombs and Ghanem, the convergence of framing and agenda setting may advance both theories by focusing the former and expanding the latter.<sup>15</sup> This theoretical convergence is particularly helpful here because the focus of this study is how the media build a news event's salience by emphasizing different aspects of the event during its life span. Salience is, of course, the central concept in agenda-setting theory.

But disagreement exists as to exactly which aspects of an event constitute a media frame. Previous studies have conceptualized "frames" in very different ways,<sup>16</sup> so that almost every characteristic found in news coverage can be identified as a certain kind of frame. Ghanem identified four dimensions of media frames: the topic of a news item (what content is included in the frame), presentation (size and placement), cognitive attributes (details of what is included in the frame), and affective attributes (tone).<sup>17</sup>

Ghanem also pointed out that the attributes of one object often are not generalizable to other objects. Since most researchers have adopted an object-specific approach when studying framing, cross-object comparisons are impossible.<sup>18</sup> In addition, researchers have found it difficult to develop mutually exclusive as well as exhaustive frames for objects.<sup>19</sup>

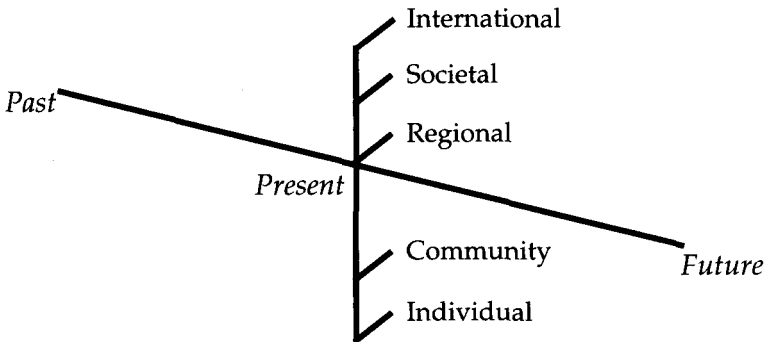
One of the few approaches that does allow higher cross-object generalizability is found in a series of studies on television newscasts where Iyengar examined the consequential effects associated with the episodic and thematic framing of public issues.<sup>20</sup> Episodic framing highlights concrete instances that illustrate issues, while thematic framing addresses public issues in more general context. This approach yields cross-issue generalizability, but the episodic-versus-thematic dichotomy may not be sensitive enough to capture the diversity and finer details of news frames needed to investigate the role of framing in building object salience on the media agenda.

---

## ***A Measurement Scheme***

In search of a framing scheme with cross-object generalizability, this study goes back to the fundamental question: "What is news?" Inherent in the definition of news, "space" and "time" are two of the most important dimensions pertinent to the coverage of any news events. One may argue that time and space alone may not account for everything

**FIGURE 1**  
*The Two-Dimensional Measurement Scheme*



contained in a news story, yet these two dimensions represent central organizing ideas in journalistic practice. As “time” corresponds to the “when” in the five W’s of journalism, “space” refers to the “where” and may also include the “who,” the “what,” and even the “why.” Therefore, the proposed measurement scheme for media frames is grounded in the time and space dimensions.

The first dimension, space, consists of five levels, ranging from the micro (individual) to the macro (international). These levels can be interpreted as intervals on a continuum: (1) *Individual level*: A news event is framed within a scope limited to the individuals involved in an event (e.g., a crime story featuring the particulars about the perpetrator); (2) *Community level*: A news event is framed as relevant to a particular community (e.g., a story on a recent tuition increase focusing on students’ reactions); (3) *Regional level*: A news event is framed as relevant to a more general population, such as residents of a metropolitan area or a state (e.g., a debate about the location of a new airport in a city); (4) *Societal level*: A news event is framed in terms of social or national significance (e.g., a story associating the O.J. Simpson case with racism); (5) *International level*: A news event is framed from an international perspective (e.g., military action in a foreign country analyzed in terms of power relationships among different countries).

The second dimension is time. Although conventional wisdom is that news deals with present happenings, news stories may focus on the past—providing historical background or tracing related events in the past—or the future—making predictions about further developments, proposing actions to be taken, or evaluating the impact of the event in the future.

Combining these two dimensions, this measurement scheme sorts frames by space and time (Figure 1). Imposing only minimal constraints on specific substantive content while simultaneously capturing major aspects of the news, this measurement scheme solves the cross-object generalizability problem inherent in object-specific approaches while

increasing sensitivity to a variety of news perspectives. It also provides an exhaustive and mutually exclusive list of frames on the time and space dimensions that is applicable to any news event or object in the news.

To empirically study framing as a process over time, one can trace the use of these various space and time frames during a news event's life span. For example, a kidnapping case, when first reported by the media, could be framed at the individual level. The same event could be framed at the community level when the case is associated with the issue of neighborhood security. Eventually, the societal frame could dominate if this particular event triggers a discussion about crime as a social problem. In this case, an upward frame-changing pattern on the space dimension can be traced.

When applied to multiple news events in the same category, this scheme may help identify certain frame-changing patterns (if there are any) pertinent to that specific news category. For example, did the media use similar framing strategies to cover the Rodney King verdict and the O.J. Simpson case? Did the media frame the death of Princess Diana and the death of J. F. Kennedy Jr. in the same way?

One also can compare highly salient news events with not-so-salient ones and examine whether their frame-changing patterns differ, and if so, how. For example, is the level of salience related to the number of different frames used across the space and time dimensions? This scheme may also help identify the frame-changing patterns across news categories or issues—for example, how politics and the economy are framed differently.

---

## **Columbine School Shootings**

For an empirical test of this framework, a content analysis examined the coverage of a highly salient but relatively parsimonious news event—the Columbine school shootings. A more complicated news event where multiple subevents come into play over time is not ideal for preliminary tests because it is often difficult to distinguish which frames are associated with which subevents. For example, the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal evolved over time as a highly complicated set of related events, with numerous intertwined aspects including gossip, denial, confession, and impeachment.

On 20 April 1999, two young gunmen in Littleton, Colorado, killed twelve fellow students and a teacher before turning their guns on themselves—the worst school shooting in U.S. history. The annual Associated Press poll of American newspaper editors and broadcast executives ranked this event the year's number-two news story behind Bill Clinton's impeachment trial.<sup>21</sup> This tragedy also attracted the most public interest of any news story of 1999. According to the Pew Research Center's monthly surveys of public attentiveness to domestic and international developments, 68% of Americans followed the shootings very closely, making the event the third most closely followed story of the 1990s behind only the 1992 Rodney King verdict and the 1996 crash of TWA flight 800.<sup>22</sup>

To understand the framing process which built the salience of the Columbine event, coverage in the *New York Times* was content analyzed.

---

This leading national news source was selected because of its role as an intermedia agenda setter acknowledged by previous researchers.<sup>23</sup>

**Research Questions.** This pilot study, exploratory by nature, was guided by these research questions:

- How many news stories about this event were published, and how were they distributed across this event's life span?
- What is the distribution of the space frames across the five levels—i.e., individual, community, regional, societal, and international? Is any frame-changing pattern identifiable among the space frames during this event's life span?
- What is the distribution of the time frames across the three levels—i.e., past, present, and future? Is any frame-changing pattern identifiable among the time frames during this event's life span?
- What is the relationship between the use of space frames and the use of time frames?

---

All articles related to the Columbine school shootings published in the *New York Times* during a one-month period between 21 April 1999 and 20 May 1999 were retrieved from the Lexis-Nexis database. Full-text keyword searches ("Columbine" and "Littleton" were the keywords) yielded 226 items related to the incident, of which more than 70% concentrated during the first two weeks. The amount of coverage diminished rapidly during the third week, with only 12% during the last week of this one-month period. After 21 May 1999, coverage of another school shooting in Conyers, Georgia, could confound subsequent framing of the Columbine case.

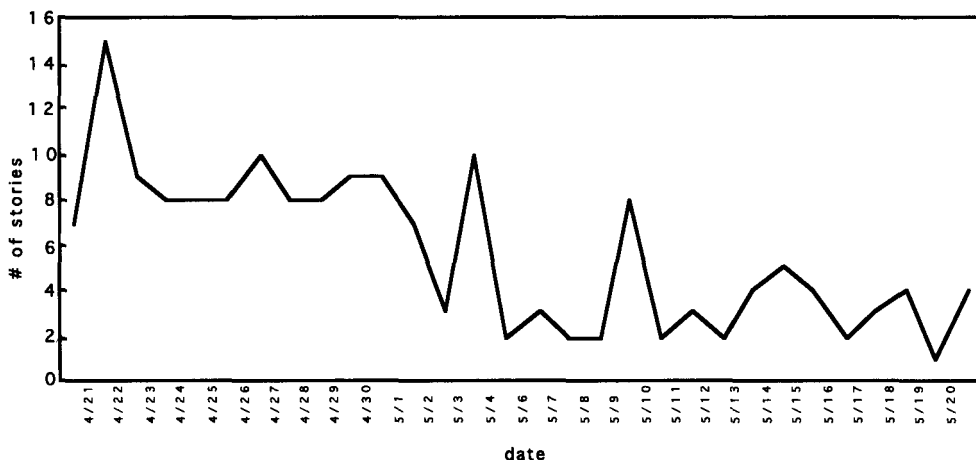
Among the 226 items, 56 were letters to the editor. As the "letter to the editor" category reflects the interplay between the media agenda and the public agenda, the letters were excluded. The final data set contained 170 news stories and editorials.

**Coding.** Each article was coded on three variables: date of publication, space frame, and time frame. Coding categories for the "space" variable are (1) *Individual*: If the story focuses on individuals (e.g., the gunmen, victims, their family members, or others), the interaction among them, or descriptions of their acts, reactions, or background information. Editorial pieces telling personal stories also are in this category. (2) *Community*: If the story focuses on Columbine High School, or the town of Littleton, or any other single community. (3) *Regional*: If the story focuses on the Denver area, the state of Colorado, or any other state or region. (4) *Societal*: If the story focuses on concerns, events, or discussions with nation-wide interests. (5) *International*: If the story focuses on related phenomena or social problems seen in other countries, or the interaction between multiple countries.

---

## Method

**FIGURE 2**  
*Coverage of the Columbine School Shootings in the New York Times*  
(21 April 1999 to 20 May 1999)



Coding categories for the "time" variable are: (1) *Past*: If the story focuses on previous events with no direct linkage to the key event (e.g., school shootings in the past; the gunmen's school life history), analysis with a historical perspective, or editorial pieces based on past experiences. (2) *Present*: If the story focuses on events/developments surrounding the key event in time (which might have happened or would happen soon for sure), immediate consequences of the event, or current social phenomena. (3) *Future*: If the story focuses on the long-term effects of the event, suggestions for solutions, or actions to be taken.

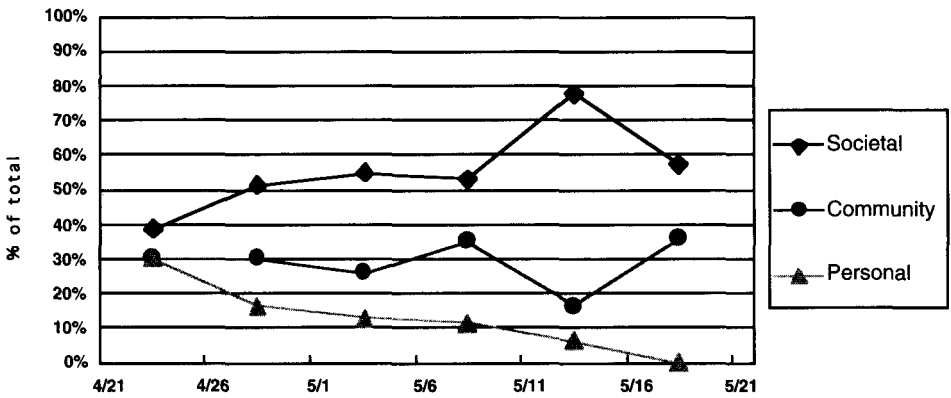
Two coders, both graduate students in communication, performed the content analysis. When a story contained multiple attributes, the coder identified the dominant frame, based on the headline, the lead, or the central organizing idea. To ensure intercoder reliability, several pretests were conducted till Scott's *pi* reached .86 across the two key variables: "space" and "time."<sup>24</sup>

## Findings

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of the 170 news stories about the Columbine school shootings between 21 April and 20 May 1999. The amount of coverage reached its peak on 22 April, immediately after the incident first appeared in the news, with 15 articles appearing in the paper on the same day. After the first two weeks, the amount of coverage diminished rapidly, but continuing coverage kept this news event on the media agenda throughout the month.

The next research questions concern the distribution of frames across all five levels on the space dimension, ranging from individual to international. Of the 170 articles, 52% adopted a societal frame, 29% adopted a community frame, and 17% adopted an individual frame, indicating substantial frame-changing among these categories on the space dimension. Only 2% of the articles used a regional frame and only

**FIGURE 3**  
*Frame-Changing on the Space Dimension*



1% an international frame. The societal frame dominated; that is, more often than not, the school shootings were discussed in the larger social context where issues such as gun control received lots of attention.

Further analysis examined this framing as a dynamic process. A close look at the use of the three leading frames on the space dimension found that the percentage of societal frames steadily increased—from 38% to 78% during the first twenty-five days. In the meantime, the percentage of individual frames decreased—continuously dropping from 30% to 0 (Figure 3). This frame-changing pattern indicates a shift in focus from the specific to the general—from reports on personal details to discussion of violence as a social problem.

To address the third set of research questions, the use of frames on the time dimension was examined. The vast majority of the coverage, 71% of the stories, adopted the present frame, while 16% dealt with the past and 13% focused on the future.

Some frame-changing also existed on the time dimension. Figure 4 shows that, throughout this one-month period, use of the present frame was consistently high—more than 50% on most of the days, while the use of the past and future frames seemed to complement each other. During the first week, about 30% of the stories adopted the past frame, while the percentage using the future frame was relatively low. As the future frame began gaining in prominence after 11 May and briefly became nearly as dominant as the present frame, the past frame disappeared. This frame-changing pattern indicates a shift in focus from the past to the future; reports of historical background were replaced by discussion about preventive measures.

To address the final research question, cross-tabulation analysis explored the relationship between the use of space frames and the use of time frames. Table 1 shows that the “societal plus present” combination (39%) dominated the framing of this particular news event, while only 24% of the stories were framed at the community level with a focus on current developments.



**FIGURE 4**  
*Frame-Changing on the Time Dimension*

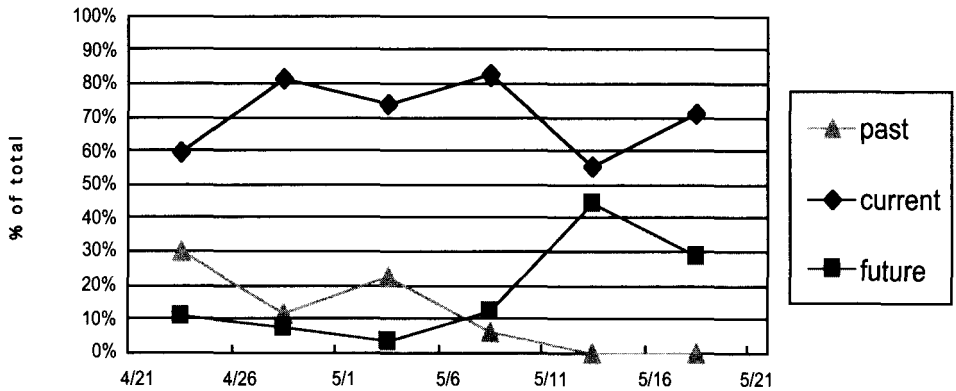


Table 1 also documents the following two relationships: First, the past frame tended to concur with the individual frame. A review of the text found many such stories focused on the life history of the gunmen or the victims.<sup>25</sup>

Second, the future frame was closely associated with the societal frame. Most of such stories dealt with gun control or future preventive measures.<sup>26</sup>

## Discussion

A total of 170 articles adopting various kinds of frames on the space and time dimensions successfully kept the Columbine story alive in the newspaper for thirty days (and beyond) and contributed to its salience on the media agenda. By inference from the vast body of agenda-setting studies, this extensive coverage also contributed to the salience of this event among the public. Recall that the dominant predictor of public salience for an object is the cumulative volume of coverage that it has received in the news during the preceding month.<sup>27</sup>

The *New York Times* built the salience of the Columbine case by emphasizing different aspects of this incident over time, a journalistic strategy of using a shifting variety of frames over time—frame-changing—to keep the story moving and fresh. For example, the future frame gained more ground over time and so did the societal frame. Overall, this event was framed mostly at the societal level, as opposed to the community level. This deviation from the specific nature of the incident deserves further analysis.

While any event can be framed in multiple ways, some frames are arguably more relevant to the nature of the event than others. In the Columbine case, the combination of “community” and “present” on the space and time dimensions, respectively, is the most pertinent to the nature of the school shootings.<sup>28</sup> After all, the fundamental elements that constituted this incident were: “On 20 April 1999, two gunmen in Littleton, Colorado, killed twelve fellow students and a teacher before turning their guns on themselves.”

**TABLE 1**  
*Space Frame by Time Frame*

		Time		
		Past	Present	Future
Space	Societal	2%	39%	13%
	Community	4%	24%	1%
	Individual	10%	7%	0%

\* Cell entries are percent of total. ( $n = 165$ )  
 $\chi^2 = 56.52$ , d.f. = 4,  $p < .001$

In this case, if the “core” frame that made this a news event is the “community plus present” combination, all the other combinations then constitute “extended” frames. The distinction between the core frame from the extended ones is useful because extended frames provide more flexibility in the construction of the news.<sup>29</sup> With only 24% of Columbine stories adopting the core frame, the vast majority of the coverage was actually grounded in extended frames. It is these extended frames (especially the societal frame) that are the major component of this event’s salience on the media agenda.

This use of extended frames needs further exploration. How is it related to an event’s salience on the media agenda, and, most important, to its subsequent salience among the public? These questions also take the discussion back to the question of “who sets the media agenda” as well as to the concept of newsworthiness. One can hypothesize that journalists (and many of their sources) enhance issue salience on the media agenda through frame-changing. It may well be that the social significance inherent in the nature of the news event makes framing at multiple levels possible.

Of course, the core framing of a news event, issue, or other object in the news is likely to be different from topic to topic. Recent coverage of SARS, for example, probably has a very different core frame: regional and present or perhaps international and present. Be that as it may, objects on the news are likely to have a core framing—defined as the framing that initially propelled the object into the news—and that core framing is likely to be complemented by a changing pattern of extended frames over time.

The primary purpose of this study is not to describe the specific details of the Columbine coverage, but to apply the two-dimensional measurement scheme to examine framing as a process in journalistic practice. Framing is not about every aspect or attribute of an object, only its dominant characteristics.<sup>30</sup> After all, the specific details of news stories obviously change from day to day and from event to event. But the narrative strategies employed in journalistic storytelling are enduring. In his classic essay, “Writing News and Telling Stories,” Robert Darnton noted metaphorically that much of journalism is “like making cookies

from an antique cookie cutter."<sup>31</sup> This research has identified a set of strategic cookie cutters based on the traditional news dimensions of time and space.

Beyond the value of these metaphorical cookie cookers for the analysis of journalistic practice, this scheme for measuring frame-changing identifies important elements in the news pertinent to agenda-setting effects. Overall, a major contribution of agenda-setting theory is to link media effects with specific content in the media. These effects are the result, in part, of the sheer volume of news about an object, and understanding the media strategies that build that volume of coverage is important. However, agenda-setting effects also are the result of media emphasis on specific attributes of the objects in the news. This study's measurement scheme has identified two sets of attributes in journalistic practice that are likely to have differential agenda-setting effects among the public. Mapping these narrative strategies and their impact on the public is an important goal for continuing research to enhance our understanding of journalism and of agenda setting.

---

## NOTES

1. Maxwell E. McCombs and Tamara Bell, "The Agenda-Setting Role of Mass Communication," in *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research*, ed. Michael Salwen and Donald Stacks (NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996), 93-110; Maxwell E. McCombs and Amy Reynolds, "News Influence on Our Pictures of the World," in *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*, 2d ed., ed. Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillmann (NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002), 1-18.

2. Maxwell E. McCombs and Jian-Hua Zhu, "Capacity, Diversity, and Volatility of the Public Agenda: Trends from 1954 to 1994," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 59 (winter 1995): 495-525.

3. See, for example, Lynda Lee Kaid, Katherine Hale, and Jo Ann Williams, "Media Agenda-Setting of a Specific Political Event," *Journalism Quarterly* 54 (autumn 1977): 584-87.

4. McCombs and Bell, "The Agenda-Setting Role of Mass Communication," 105.

5. Anthony Downs, "Up and Down with Ecology: The 'Issue-Attention Cycle,'" *The Public Interest* 28 (spring 1972): 38-50.

6. Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36 (summer 1972): 176-87.

7. James W. Dearing and Everett M. Rogers, *Agenda Setting* (CA: Sage, 1996).

8. McCombs and Bell, "The Agenda-Setting Role of Mass Communication"; Maxwell E. McCombs and George Estrada, "The News Media and the Pictures in Our Heads," in *Do the Media Govern? Politicians, Voters, and Reporters in America*, ed. Shanto Iyengar and Richard Reeves (CA: Sage, 1997), 237-47; McCombs and Reynolds, "News Influence on Our Pictures of the World."

9. L. Erwin Atwood, Ardyth B. Sohn, and Harold Sohn, "Daily

Newspaper Contributions to Community Discussion," *Journalism Quarterly* 55 (autumn 1978): 570-76; Marc Benton and P. Jean Frazier, "The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media at Three Levels of 'Information Holding,'" *Communication Research* 3 (July 1976): 261-74; David Cohen, "A Report on a Non-Election Agenda Setting Study" (paper presented at the annual conferences of AEJ, Ottawa, Canada, 1975); David H. Weaver, Doris Graber, Maxwell E. McCombs, and Chaim H. Eyal, *Media Agenda Setting in a Presidential Election: Issues, Images and Interest* (NY: Praeger, 1981).

10. Salma I. Ghanem, "Filling in the Tapestry: The Second Level of Agenda Setting," in *Communication and Democracy*, ed. Maxwell E. McCombs, Donald L. Shaw, and David H. Weaver (NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997), 3-14; McCombs and Reynolds, "News Influence on Our Pictures of the World."

11. McCombs and Estrada, "The News Media and the Pictures in Our Heads"; McCombs and Reynolds, "News Influence on Our Pictures of the World."

12. Ghanem, "Filling in the Tapestry"; McCombs and Reynolds, "News Influence on Our Pictures of the World"; Maxwell E. McCombs and Salma I. Ghanem, "The Convergence of Agenda Setting and Framing," in *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*, ed. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy Jr., and August E. Grant (NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001), 67-81.

13. Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43 (autumn 1993): 52.

14. James W. Tankard, Jr., "The Empirical Approach to the Study of Media Framing," in *Framing Public Life*, ed. Reese, Gandy, and Grant, 100-101.

15. McCombs and Ghanem, "The Convergence of Agenda Setting and Framing."

16. Joel J. Davis, "The Effects of Message Framing on Response to Environmental Communications," *Journalism Quarterly* 72 (summer 1995): 285-99; William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani, "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach," *American Journal of Sociology* 95 (July 1989): 1-37; Shanto Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues* (IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Shanto Iyengar and Adam Simon, "New Coverage of the Gulf Crisis and Public Opinion: A Study of Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing," *Communication Research* 20 (June 1993): 365-83; J. William Spencer and Elizabeth Triche, "Media Construction of Risk and Safety: Differential Framings of Hazard Events," *Sociological Inquiry* 64 (May 1994): 199-213; Tankard, "The Empirical Approach to the Study of Media Framing."

17. Ghanem, "Filling in the Tapestry," 10.

18. Ghanem, "Filling in the Tapestry."

19. Tankard, "The Empirical Approach to the Study of Media Framing."

20. Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible?*

21. Arlene Levinson, "Clinton Trial, Colorado Massacre Voted Top '99 Stories," *San Angelo Standard-Times*, 27 December 1999.

22. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "Columbine Shooting Biggest News Draw of 1999," 28 December 1999, <<http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=48>>.

23. Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching* (CA: University of California Press, 1980); Allen Mazur, "Putting Radon on the Public Risk Agenda," *Science, Technology and Human Values* 12 (summer/fall 1987): 86-93; Stephen D. Reese and Lucig H. Danielian, "Intermedia Influence and the Drug Issue: Converging on Cocaine," in *Communication Campaigns about Drugs: Government, Media, and the Public*, ed. Pamela J. Shoemaker (NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1989), 29-45.

24. Scott's pi as a reliability index takes into account the extent of inter-coder agreement which results from chance. See Ole R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (MA: Addison-Wesley, 1969), 140-41.

25. Regarding this "past and individual" association, here are two example quotes:

The father of a victim in the Colorado shooting said yesterday that his son had "had a conflict" with the presumed gunmen last year and believed that his son was a target of the rampage at Columbine High School ("Terror in Littleton: The Dead; Father of Victim Says Son Had Dispute With Suspect," *New York Times*, 22 April 1999).

It was just 11 weeks ago that a court officer released Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold early from a juvenile diversion program, saying they had learned the intended lessons in the months since their arrest and had promising futures ("Terror in Littleton: The Suspects; Sketch of Killers: Contradictions and Confusion," *New York Times*, 23 April 1999).

26. Regarding this "future and societal" association, here are two example quotes:

Seizing what they hoped was new momentum for gun control after the shootings in Littleton, Colo., Senate Democrats today unveiled a broad package of proposals that Republicans, though skeptical, did not dismiss out of hand ("Democrats in Senate Offer Measures to Control Guns," *New York Times*, 7 May 1999).

President Clinton today urged the entertainment industry to voluntarily limit the glorification of guns in movie advertisements and previews and to consider whether movies rated PG-13 contain excessive and gratuitous violence ("Clinton Urges Film Industry to Limit Violence on Screen," *New York Times*, 16 May 1999).

27. James P. Winter and Chaim H. Eyal, "Agenda-Setting for the Civil Rights Issue," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 45 (autumn 1981): 376-83.

---

28. This is an example quote from a story using the core, "community plus present" frame:

After a long day of agony for victims' parents and anxiety for police officers searching for explosives, the authorities this evening removed the bodies of 15 people killed in a massacre at Columbine High School on Tuesday ("Terror in Littleton: The Overview; 15 Bodies Are Removed From School in Colorado," *New York Times*, 22 April 1999).

29. This is an example quote from a story using the extended, "individual plus past" frame:

Propelled by grief, Ms. Wilson has spent the last year trying to make sense of the carnage in playgrounds and libraries over the last 18 months. She lost her own daughter, Brittheny, to a pair of middle school-age killers in Jonesboro, Ark., last year ("Terror in Littleton: The Reasons; Violence by Youths: Looking for Answers," *New York Times*, 22 April 1999).

This is another example quote from a story using the extended, "societal plus future" frame:

At Pelham Memorial High School in Pelham, N.Y., the principal, Robert G. Shillito, distributed a letter to teachers today asking them to "pause to consider whether such an event could happen here in Pelham" ("Terror in Littleton: Other Schools; Can It Happen Here? Across U.S., Schools Wonder," *New York Times*, 22 April 1999).

30. McCombs and Ghanem, "The Convergence of Agenda Setting and Framing."

31. Robert Darnton, "Writing News and Telling Stories," *Daedalus* 104 (spring 1975): 175-94.