CIVIC MEDIA LITERACY AND DEBATE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF JOURNALISM

BY

KATHERINE BOLINGER

DR. ROBIN BLOM - ADVISOR

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

JULY 2020
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 3  
2. LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................... 6  
3. METHOD (PRE-TRIAL) ............................................................................................. 13  
4. RESULTS (PRE-TRIAL) ........................................................................................... 16  
5. DISCUSSION (PRE-TRIAL) ..................................................................................... 19  
6. METHOD (MAIN STUDY) ......................................................................................... 19  
7. RESULTS (MAIN STUDY) ....................................................................................... 20  
8. DISCUSSION (MAIN STUDY) .................................................................................. 20  
9. REFERENCES ............................................................................................................ 24
Civic Media Literacy and Debate

Critical Consciousness (Conscientização) “refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and then to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.”

Paulo Freire, “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (1921)

Introduction

Despite the current era of political polarization, 88% of Americans do agree about one thing - misinformation and disinformation (also colloquially known as fake news) are sowing confusion in society regarding the basic facts surrounding important issues (Pew Research, 2016). Social media platforms accelerate the spread of fake news through algorithms that lead to increased bias, polarization and hyper-partisanship. The biggest difference between information, misinformation, and disinformation is the question of truth (Stahl, 2006). A shared foundation of facts is critical for a healthy democracy and researchers are seeking solutions that discourage the sharing of and belief in false information (Pennycook & Rand, 2019). Educational standards must adjust to better prepare students to be well-informed citizens within a democracy, in the technological era.

The ability to distinguish between information, misinformation and disinformation is a critical thinking skill that must be taught. When processing information most people cannot distinguish the
difference between fake news stories and those grounded in facts. Consequently, misinformation or false information can encourage citizens to hold inaccurate beliefs. These inaccurate beliefs or misperceptions have dire consequences for global health, social harmony, and civic life. “Misinformation is concerning because of its potential to unduly influence attitudes and behaviors, leading people to think and act differently than they would if they were correctly informed” (Southwell, et al., 2018, p. 2). Citizens must be educated with the civic media literacy skills to avoid mis/disinformation. Information can be manipulated to appear more truthful than it is and this misinformation or disinformation is dangerous to democracy.

“People are susceptible to influence from misinformation even if it blatantly contradicts what they already know” (Marsh & Yang, 2018, p. 27). Weeks (2018) found that partisan news media can promote misinformation by omitting facts in coverage, create confusion and misunderstanding regarding expert conclusions, or even discredit the accuracy of scientifically valid work. Studies have found that, “if a source is trustworthy, one’s own lack of knowledge is unimportant” (Marsh, et al., p.18). The news is expected to inform society, acting as a shortcut for an individual’s civic decision making (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim & Wrigley, 2001). This type of knowledge shortcut is a process known as heuristics and often influential leaders also act as heuristic guides. Inaccurate information gains credibility when it comes from influential leaders like the President of the United States. Wildly inaccurate statements by Donald Trump, like “the noise (from windmills) causes cancer” (PolitiFact, 2019), are perceived as a factual statement and cause inaccurate beliefs.

Swire, Berinsky and, Lewandowsky (2017) found that citizens use influential leaders as heuristic guides to determine what is true or false. In addition, most people do not reflect on the accuracy of the information provided by those leaders. Citizens may accept misinformation and unknowingly hold misperceptions about important policy issues by accepting influential leaders as a heuristic guide to what is true or false – leaders who may have an incentive to endorse misinformation (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010, p.
These misperceptions have dire consequences for global issues like climate change or vaccination health (Southwell et al., 2018). Educational measures must be taken to ensure citizens are better prepared to identify information from misinformation and disinformation.

This thesis began with the question: How can we educate citizens to avoid the effects of mis/disinformation?

An education system focused on standardized testing with high-stakes accountability, does not prepare students to think critically about the problems of the world and how to solve them (Mirra, 2018). Scholars have long called for an education approach, grounded in dialogue and problem-posing inquiry, which reflects on social injustices to find democratic solutions to oppression (Paulo Freire, 1921). “Communication is not a precondition for democracy—the process embodies democracy itself” (Mirra, 2018, p. 42). The purpose of media literacy education has been to develop “informed, reflective and engaged participants essential for a democratic society” (NAMLE, 2007). Scholars have been calling for a civic approach to media literacy combining the critical analysis skills involved in media literacy with the dialogical and problem-solving approach of critical consciousness or civic agency (Mihaidis, 2018; Freire, 1921). This thesis proposed that structured dialogue like debate will increase student’s civic media literacy skills, as well as important social skills like empathy.

Students in four sections of an introductory journalism course received a two-week civic media literacy intervention. Using media literacy skills, students began to identify the difference between commentary and fact-based news stories, as well as, how to identify credible sources of information. Inquiring into the role of the mass media and the impact messages have on a democratic society, students explored the historical and social role of the mass media system within a democracy. They analyzed and evaluated various news organizations for biased content. The debate teams were organized between news organizations, each team defending the credibility of their news organization. Inquiry and dialogue between the teacher and the classroom occurred naturally as questions were posed about mass media
effects. Students developed critical thinking skills reflecting on the mass media and how information, misinformation and disinformation influence society. By analyzing media content for bias, students refine media literacy skills to access information and avoid misinformation and disinformation.

By evaluating research across multiple fields this thesis attempted to bring cohesion to the idea that civic media literacy is a democratic right. Media literacy interventions must refocus in an era of technological polarization. Through critical inquiry and media literacy research skills a curriculum can foster empathy and civic literacy through debate. Because this research was built from a diverse range of fields, it will be valuable to many: education, communications, literacy, media literacy, political science and social sciences as well as psychology, like emotional intelligence and personal development. This lesson plan is well suited for anyone seeking to prepare a group of people to be engaged citizens within a democratic society.

**Literature Review**

**Media Literacy**

Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, and produce both print and digital media (Aufderheide, 1993; Hobbs, 2010). An expansion of traditional literacy, media literacy is “essential to empower citizenries all around the world to have the full benefits of this fundamental right” (UNESCO 2011, p. 4). It requires a critically conscious approach to literacy that encourages social transformation (Mirra, 2018). Fundamentally, as a democratic tool, media literacy education can empower students to be critical thinkers, communicators, and active citizens (NAMLE, n.d.; Mihailidis, 2018). The objective of media literacy is for citizens to have an autonomous relationship with all forms of media (Aufderheide, 1992). Citizens must understand the role that the mass media play within society, while encouraging students to be competent and critical in their media consumption (Boyd & Dobrow, 2011).

In an era of polarization, media literacy interventions can train students to detect and avoid misinformation, disinformation, and the misperceptions that come with false beliefs. Hyper-polarization
has pushed many media literacy scholars to call for interventions grounded in civic awareness and
designed to develop social dialogue in support of problem solving. This problem-solving dialogue
engenders a sense of community, working toward a common good. Media literacy interventions must
teach, “in a way that enables the critical understanding and awareness of the media's responsibilities in
democracy and roles in civil society” (Milhaidis, 2008, para. 65).

**Disinformation/Misinformation**

Misinformation is concerning because of its potential to negatively influence attitudes and
behaviors, which leads people to think or act differently than if they were factually informed (Southwell
et al., 2018). The spread of fake news is accelerated on social media platforms disrupting the relationship
between citizens, social democracy, and the media. In essence, “media literacy is in a fight for civic
relevance” (Mihailidis, 2018, p. 152). Scholars are particularly concerned about misinformation that is
spread for political gain (De Keersmaecker & Roets, 2019). Whistleblowers like Brittany Kaiser (2019)
warn of data driven companies, like Cambridge Analytica, which act as manipulators of information,
target persuadable audiences by promoting dis/misinformation and influencing election outcomes across
the world.

Society becomes hyper-polarized when fake news is perpetuated by influential people, fringe
groups, and the mainstream media (Mihailidis, 2018). Misinformation causes people to hold
misperceptions or a belief in inaccurate information (Ahler & Sood, 2018). Partisan media strengthens
these misperceptions when they repeat the reductionist rhetoric of misinformation and disinformation
(Weeks et. al., 2018). Most notably, conservative news media use is correlated to decreased trust in
scientists and thus misperceptions about the certainty of global warming (Hmeielowski, et. al., 2014).

**Dissemination of Information**
Gatekeeping describes how people can manipulate information by selecting or rejecting certain parts to filter through the various media channels (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, & Wrigley, 2001). With the advent of social media, we can all act as gatekeepers influencing an audience of followers (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). However, some people have more influence over the flow of information because of a larger audience reach (Hemsley, 2018). Through gatekeeping news media and influential leaders can act as heuristic guides, selecting and filtering information to shape social reality (Shoemaker et al., 2001).

For decades researchers have studied how the media emphasize certain topics over others. Known as agenda-setting theory, scholars have found that the media often choose which topics to feature, influencing what issues the public perceive as most important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Dunaway, Branton & Abrajano, 2010). Agenda setting happens through two levels, first-level agenda-setting examines the time and attention given to specific news stories (Weaver, 2007, p., 142). Issues that receive more coverage are perceived by audiences as most important (McCombs, Shaw & Weaver, 2009). Dunaway (2010) found that increased media coverage of immigration, “heightened perception among the public that immigration is a major world problem” (p. 375).

In recent years scholars have identified that a second layer of agenda setting occurs through rhetoric. Melek & Ulucay (2019) found that how stories are reported can also influence public opinion, which is considered second-level agenda-setting theory—focusing on how stories, people and objects are characterized or described. They found that Turkish attitudes about Syrian refugees can be influenced simply through a positive media emphasis. This positive media message on Syrian refugees led to a “positive impact on public opinion and caused an overall attitude change in public” (pg. 389). Rhetoric can influence audiences by activating heuristics that encourage the audience to think, feel, or decide in a specific way (Entman, 2007).

**Media Effects**
Messages can have a shaping effect on society (Gerbner, 1967). Cultivation theory explains how messages curated by the mass media can shape social reality, individual beliefs and world views (Alitavoli & Kaveh, 2018). Audiences absorb information from the mass media cultivating attitudes and beliefs they may not have had. This cultivation of ideas and theories causes problematic consequences like loss of political diversity and normalizing violence (Stein, Krause & Ohler, 2019).

When the mass media or influential leaders endorse misinformation, they give credibility to inaccurate information. People use leaders or organizations as heuristic guides developing misperceptions and these strongly held beliefs are hard to correct (Southwell et al., 2018). The mass media often serve and propagandize on behalf of the powerful elite interests that control and finance them (Chomsky, 1988). Alitavolia and Kaveh (2018) found that for people who watch high levels of television, the media shape reality and their views on the world. Exposure to these messages cause individuals to, “gradually adapt their views and beliefs on the issues around them based on these constant messages” (p., 2).

The internet and social media’s use of algorithms have increased the spread of disinformation and misinformation because they act like polarizing, ideological echo chambers (Difonzo, 2008; Southwell, Thorson & Sheble, 2018; Mirra, 2018). The continued influence effect of misinformation explains that, when misinformation is corrected, it continues to impact the heuristic processes involved with memory and thinking (Southwell et al., 2018). Even after people hear corrections, the misinformation continues to influence their thinking which can cause dangerous impacts on social welfare and democracy. This backfire-effect has been detected when attempting to correct dis/misinformation. In some instances, corrections have been found to increase misperceptions (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010). Corrections to misinformation are often ineffective because when the misinformation is repeated, it becomes more familiar. This backfire-effect seems to solidify belief in the very misperception that the correction attempted to clarify (Swire & Lewandowsky, 2017).
Biases like stereotyping, is one kind of misperception which is particularly resistant to change (Ahler & Sood, 2018). Polarizing biases are confirmed through algorithms which act like ideological echo chambers (Difonzo, 2008; Southwell et al., 2018; Mirra, 2018). An individual can unknowingly curate a range of misinformation that only reflects and reinforces their biases and stereotypes (Weeks, 2018). In such a complex media landscape it takes civic media literacy skills to decipher through information, misinformation and disinformation to form accurate ideas and beliefs.

Highly partisan citizens often view the media as biased against their own interests, known as the hostile media effect (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985). Vraga and Tully (2015) expanded on the hostile media effect when they found that when partisans judge the news, they often even rate neutral content as biased against their beliefs. However, Gunther and Schmitt (2004) found the hostile media effect holds true only when the content comes from the mass media. They noticed that the hostile media effect disappears when partisans receive information from sources outside of the mass media, such as a student-essay. It appears as though the hostile media effect could be mitigated during media literacy interventions. In order to overcome misperceptions and negative heuristics, media literacy interventions must merge the critical skill of media literacy with the dialogical, social awareness of critical consciousness (Mihailidis, 2018).

**Inoculation Theory**

Inoculation theory research has shown that you can warn people in advance that they will be exposed to mis/disinformation and by explaining the counter arguments as to why that information is not factual. Attitude theory research explores social influences and the resistance to persuasion or attitude changes. Research has found that repeated exposure to misinformation can help to work as ‘mental antibodies against fake news’ (Roozenbeek, Van Der Linden & Nygren, 2020). The immunization metaphor explains how small doses of something will build immunity towards it. Similarly, inoculation
theory explains how exposing individuals to misinformation can prepare them to avoid it in the future (McGuire, 1961).

Meta-analyses have shown that inoculation theory reduces vulnerability to persuasion (Banas & Rains, 2010). It can also work to ‘prebunk’ audiences to ensure individual resistance to persuasion (Roozenbeek, Van Der Linden & Nygren, 2020). However, inoculation can also work to confirm preexisting beliefs when used before a debate. An & Pfau (2004) found that, “attacks initiated in debates do not undermine participatory attitudes, muting inoculation’s effect” (p., 432). Therefore it is critical that this intervention begin with repeated exposure to various forms of mis/disinformation before the debate in order to fully prepare students to identify and avoid the effects of confirmation bias and fake news.

Models of Media Literacy

Media literacy education research has primarily focused on K-12 programs and the development of skills to access, analyze, and create media content (Hobbs, 2010). However, this approach failed to address the media’s influence in the everyday life of citizens (Mihailidis, 2018). Scholars agreed media literacy interventions must explore the connection between civic engagement and media literacy (Boyd & Dobrow, 2011; Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013; Kellner & Share, 2005; Mihailidis, 2017; Mihailidis, 2018; Mcdougall & Fraser, 2015). The increasing use of media and the potential to utilize media as a positive political force made media literacy a pivotal skill for a 21st century democratic citizen (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 253). Media literacy interventions must be grounded in the ability to not only analyze and create messages but also to, “gain the intellectual tools and capacities to fully participate in one’s culture and society” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p., 369).

Paul Mihailidis (2018) developed a model civic media literacy paralleling Freire’s (1921) pedagogy of critical consciousness, a problem-solving model of education fueled by dialogue. Developing civic agency or critical consciousness requires reflection on the relationship between the self and the
community. Critical consciousness reflects on rectifying social injustices through problem-solving dialogue. Historically media literacy interventions have shied away from engaging in political ideologies. However, our hyper-polarized society is in desperate need of an intervention in civic relevance. Media literacy interventions must be designed with a civic intention focused on challenging existing systems or structures of oppression which restrict individuals or communities, encouraging solidarity in pursuit of justice and equality.

Scholars have long claimed that media literacy must be more than just reading or creating content. It requires reflecting on how the media impacts the social, cultural and political aspects of society (Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013). Literacy programs must “use the power of text for social transformations” (Mirra, 2018, p. 9). There is mounting evidence that the media literacy interventions must work to shed light upon “the inequities and injustices of a society based on gender, race, and class inequalities and discrimination” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 370). Teachers have an important role, “mediating discourses about democracy and influencing how students think about themselves as civic agents” (Mirra, 2018, p. 9). Dialogue and social awareness are the foundations of civic media literacy.

**Media Literacy and Debate**

In an increasingly polarized society, debate can provide a dialogue structure founded in mutual respect and as well as a, “shared foundation of fact” (Mirra, 2018, p. 35). The practice of debate “can position young people as engaged and thoughtful citizens” (Mirra, 2018, p. 36). Little research exists regarding media literacy interventions and debate. However, debate is a teaching strategy encompassed within the category of roleplaying. The term roleplaying includes “everything from quick warm-up games to more extensive projects requiring weeks of preparation” (Sharpio & Leopold, 2012, p. 121).

The main objective for debate and any roleplay is to develop “communication skills, teach ethics and broaden students’ perspectives” (Doorn, & Kroesen, 2011, p. 1517). Educational researchers have
coined “critical roleplay” to describe the cognitive role in which students engage with course material reflecting on deeper personal and social meanings and consequences (Shapiro & Leopold, 2012, p. 123). Roleplaying a debate encourages open and reflective dialogue which can build, “relational trust and democratic community within classrooms and across schools and foster the development of critical civic empathy” (Mirra, 2018, p. 36). Research has shown that roleplaying strategies like debate are, “essential for teaching empathy and perspective taking” (Poorman, 2002, p. 33).

A debate about the extent to which individual news outlets are biased in its reporting increases civic media literacy (H1).

**Debate and Empathy**

In an era of extreme polarization, democratic citizens must develop empathy. A definition of empathy which is, “committed to grappling with the inequalities in our public life and engagement with democratic power structures” (Mirra, 2018, p., 7). Encouraging citizens to have “empathy beyond the golden rule and engages us in the messy arena of the political sphere in pursuit of quality and justice” (Mirra, 2018, p., 10). Interventions should, “establish the need to focus on bringing communities together in receptivity, relatedness, and where we care for and care with” (Mihailidis, 2018, p. 161). Civic media literacy interventions grounded in debate offer opportunities for students to understand and adapt to unfamiliar social situations promoting, “empathy because of the respect it offers to the development of shared solutions to common challenges” (Mirra, 2018, p. 41). A classroom, “in which the practice of dialogue has become ritualized will have a higher degree of group emotional intelligence and a higher degree of empathy” (Levine, 2005, p. 118).

Empathy has a rich history in social science research which consists of cognitive empathy as well as emotional empathy (Palmer, 2018; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). It is an internal (feeling) as well as external (when the feeling compels action). Levine (2005) explains that empathy is, “a multifaceted
process that moves along a continuum from observation to thought and finally to feeling and action” (p. 4). Psychology research has found that, “people high in empathy are more tolerant of others” (Boag & Carnelley, 2015, p. 339). Researchers have found that, “enhanced empathy (via perspective talking instructions) decreases prejudice” (Boag & Carnelley, 2015, p., 339). Debating may increase empathy and decrease the most difficult misperceptions to correct - stereotypes.

A debate about the extent to which individual news outlets are biased in its reporting increases civic empathy and decreases misperceptions (H2).

Pre-Trial

Method

Procedure

Data for the pre-trial was collected as part of an introductory journalism course at a university in the Midwest. Fifty students in an introductory journalism course participated in a two week media literacy intervention. The students were exposed to a disguised, pre-debate survey as part of an exercise that took place at the beginning of each class period during attendance. The items were not presented as part of a study and the questions were not out of the ordinary for an attendance task. The pre-debate items were filled out by 41 students and 44 students filled out the post-debate survey. However, only 38 students filled out both surveys. One student left it blank. The data from that participant was dropped from the statistical analysis.

The students filled out a pre- and posttest as part of their regular assignments at the beginning of each class meeting. The instructor used a Qualtrics survey to ask students questions about the course material and their opinions about emerging news media topics and current affairs. The pre- and post-test questions were integrated to assess the effectiveness of a media literacy module that was created by the researcher, who was not affiliated with this particular journalism course. Using a pretest/post-test survey
design is beneficial when attempting to correct misperceptions because, “outdated and new information must be coactivated for knowledge revision to occur” (Swire, Ecker & Lewandosky, 2017, p., 1957). The pretest was collected one week before the debate and the post-test was given the module concluded.

A student packet was added to the lesson plan after the pretrial study to help guide students towards a better understanding of media literacy skills and debate. Three gaps in knowledge were identified after the pretrial study and were addressed in the student packet. The activities included: identifying opinion versus fact based statements, using media literacy skills to analyze news content, and how to debate.

Students were introduced to media literacy through the Crash Course YouTube Channel, developed by Hank and John Green. Using five of the Media Literacy Crash Course videos (2018) and guided questions, each video pushed students to think critically about what media literacy is and how media influences democracy. Students developed an understanding of the evolution of news media and how information can be manipulated into dis/misinformation, as well as how personal biases can affect our interpretations of content. The content paid special attention to how the news media developed as a democratizing force, in addition to critically investigating how information can be distorted into fake news: misinformation and disinformation. Students were asked questions like, what happens when society relies on the media? Should everyone have access to accurate information? What happens when information is exploited? Teachers should use dialogue and questions to guide higher levels of critical thinking within the classroom.

Building from Hobbs (2010) and Mihailidis (2018), this intervention uses debate to teach civic media literacy (media literacy skills and critical consciousness). By using media literacy skills to access information and analyze it for bias and accuracy, reflecting on the bias found within content and creating an argument to defend that organization. Students were split into debate teams to defend the extent to which their news organizations content coverage was biased. Guided by the public forum debate format,
students refined their knowledge regarding the role of respectful rhetoric in a debate as well as a democracy. Using research from Nichole Mirra (2018) and the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) program, the Public Debate Format (fig. 1) guided the two rounds of debates. Students debated a news organizations credibility, both nonprofit and corporate news organizations were assigned. Debate teams were originally organized to have a corporate news organization against a nonprofit news organization, however sometimes two corporate news media organizations debated.

**Variables**

There were 18 questions on the survey combined from three previously effectively researched scales. Participants were able to answer all survey questions on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree).

The media locus of control was used to measure critical awareness of media literacy and was developed to measure an individual's awareness and control over the influence that the news media message can have on them (Maskl, Craft, Ashley & Miller, 2017). Six questions were used to measure students' civic agency and media literacy. Questions focused on the responsibility of an individual to be fully informed. Built from Potter’s (2004) cognitive model of media literacy, an awareness in industry, content, effects, self and world enhances critical agency or their ability to understand the influence of the media. Unfortunately, a factor analysis indicated that the scale did not represent one multi-item scale for both the pre and post debate tests. In both cases the items were split in three different scale options, none of which has sufficient reliability for the purpose of this study. Therefore the pre and post tests were analyzed for each item individually.

A previously established 8-item scale to measure news media skepticism was used to measure knowledge of media systems and democracy (Maskl, Ashley & Craft, 2015), which was based on Potter’s (2004) cognitive model of media literacy. This survey adopted eight questions about news media
skepticism to measure students’ knowledge of media systems and democracy. Again, a factor analysis indicated that the scale did not represent one coherent multi-item scale and the items were analyzed individually.

Derived from the Greek words “love” and “other” the Allophilia scale was used to measure empathy (Pittinsky, 2012). The first four lines of the Allophilia scale were used (affection, comfort, engagement and enthusiasm). However, data for comfort items- was not collected due to technical error. Confirmatory factor analysis showed that the three items formed one multi-scale item for both the pre and post-debate surveys. The reliability scores were low for both the pre- (Chronbach’s alpha: .47) and post-test (Chronbach’s alpha: .43). Therefore, it was decided to analyze the items individually.

Results

There are two statistically significant comparisons to make from the data (Pair 3, Pair 8). When asked if citizens should be held accountable for being misinformed by the news? The question asked was, “When I am misinformed by the news, I am to blame” (Pair 3). Survey results show that students believe they are to blame for being misinformed by the news. The second question, “I think the news media tell the whole story” (Pair 8) data presented showed higher post-test scores than the pretest. Both statistically significant points can be associated with an increase in skepticism, suggesting that the media literacy intervention was beneficial for skepticism.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Locus/1/2</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Locus1_1</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.838</td>
<td>.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Locus2_1</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.023</td>
<td>.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Locus1_2</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.104</td>
<td>.182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Locus2_2</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.023</td>
<td>.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Locus1_3</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.712</td>
<td>.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Locus2_3</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td>.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Locus1_4</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.932</td>
<td>.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Locus2_4</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.855</td>
<td>.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Locus1_5</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.782</td>
<td>.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Locus2_5</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.866</td>
<td>.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Locus1_6</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.607</td>
<td>.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Locus2_6</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.530</td>
<td>.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Fair1_1R</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.774</td>
<td>.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair2_1R</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.045</td>
<td>.172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fair1_2R</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.652</td>
<td>.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair2_2R</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.870</td>
<td>.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Fair1_3R</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.608</td>
<td>.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair2_3R</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.699</td>
<td>.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Fair1_4R</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.900</td>
<td>.148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair2_4R</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.960</td>
<td>.158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Fair1_5R</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.726</td>
<td>.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair2_5R</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.759</td>
<td>.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Fair1_6R</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.026</td>
<td>.169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair2_6R</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.031</td>
<td>.170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Fair1_7R</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.753</td>
<td>.124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair2_7R</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.838</td>
<td>.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Fair1_8R</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.809</td>
<td>.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair2_8R</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.887</td>
<td>.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Agency1</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.632</td>
<td>.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agency2</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.599</td>
<td>.100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

Ultimately, there was not much difference in the pre/post survey questions. However, this was a small sample and a larger sample could enhance the findings helping to identify differences between pre and post tests. Feedback from the instructors indicated that students struggled going through the later rounds of rebuttals, because they felt they had made their points. Therefore, if scholars conduct the main study with some changes in the protocol, you would engage students better throughout the exercise.

Changes were made after the trial sample to include a student packet and more engaging lesson activities. Improvements should include a focus on debate and what media literacy skills are required when compiling fact based evidence.

Main Study

Method

The procedure for the main study was very similar to the pre-trial. It was decided to focus more on the fairness aspect and the allophilia items. In the pre-trial, there did not seem to be one coherent scale based on the fairness items. However, with the larger sample (N = 100 from the three other sections of the same introductory journalism course during the following academic year), five questions were found to form a sufficient scale of measurement (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q7, Q8). In fact, Chronbach’s Alpha verified a .75% accuracy for reliability between the five lines for both pre and post data.

Results

A paired-samples $t$ test was used to check the accuracy of the pre/post intervention survey. The mean of the first pretest was 3.176 (SD = .62) and the mean of the first posttest was 3.09 (SD = .5). There was not a significant increase in the first pre to post intervention in the pretrial study. Because there was no statistical difference overall, it was analyzed whether there
may have been anomalies within one or more sections, or whether the difference between the pre- and posttest were statistically significant for one class. The results were in the expected direction for Section 1 pretest mean of 3.387 (SD = .84) and posttest mean of 3.187 (SD = .521), and Section 2 pretest had a mean of 3.06 (SD = .47) and a posttest mean of 2.98 (SD = .48), however neither one was statistically significant. There was also no statistical significant result for Section 3 pretest mean 3.0 (SD = .45) and posttest mean of 3.1 (SD = .49), yet the results were in the opposite direction.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>PRE</td>
<td>3.3879</td>
<td>.84401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POST</td>
<td>3.1879</td>
<td>.52187</td>
<td>.09085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>PRE</td>
<td>3.0647</td>
<td>.47154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POST</td>
<td>2.9824</td>
<td>.48584</td>
<td>.08332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>PRE</td>
<td>3.0788</td>
<td>.45260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POST</td>
<td>3.1030</td>
<td>.48765</td>
<td>.08489</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>PRE - POST</td>
<td>.20000</td>
<td>.86603</td>
<td>.15076</td>
<td>-.10708 -.50708</td>
<td>1.327</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>.194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>PRE - POST</td>
<td>.08235</td>
<td>.42389</td>
<td>.07270</td>
<td>-.06555 .23025</td>
<td>1.133</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>.265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>PRE - POST</td>
<td>-.02424</td>
<td>.47895</td>
<td>.08337</td>
<td>-.19407 .14559</td>
<td>-.291</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>.773</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Having not found any statistical significant results for the scale, all individual items were analyzed. This resulted in three statistically significant results, even though all eight comparisons were in the anticipated direction. Three lines did work together as one cohesive scale with statistically significant results. A t-test verified Pair 3 had a mean of .24 (SD = .11), Pair 6 was .42 (SD = .103) and Pair 7 was .230 (SD = .108). There were no statistically significant results for the remaining items.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Q1_Pre</th>
<th>Q1_Pre</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.927</td>
<td>.927</td>
<td>.927</td>
<td>.927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2</td>
<td>Q2_Pre</td>
<td>Q2_Pre</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.898</td>
<td>.898</td>
<td>.898</td>
<td>.898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 3</td>
<td>Q3_Pre</td>
<td>Q3_Pre</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.950</td>
<td>.950</td>
<td>.950</td>
<td>.950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 4</td>
<td>Q4_Pre</td>
<td>Q4_Pre</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>.966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 5</td>
<td>Q5_Pre</td>
<td>Q5_Pre</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.328</td>
<td>1.328</td>
<td>1.328</td>
<td>1.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 6</td>
<td>Q6_Pre</td>
<td>Q6_Pre</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.097</td>
<td>1.097</td>
<td>1.097</td>
<td>1.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 7</td>
<td>Q7_Pre</td>
<td>Q7_Pre</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.036</td>
<td>1.036</td>
<td>1.036</td>
<td>1.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 8</td>
<td>Q8_Pre</td>
<td>Q8_Pre</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.924</td>
<td>.924</td>
<td>.924</td>
<td>.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 9</td>
<td>Q9_Pre</td>
<td>Q9_Pre</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.095</td>
<td>1.095</td>
<td>1.095</td>
<td>1.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 10</td>
<td>Q10_Pre</td>
<td>Q10_Pre</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.185</td>
<td>1.185</td>
<td>1.185</td>
<td>1.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 11</td>
<td>Q11_Pre</td>
<td>Q11_Pre</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.999</td>
<td>.999</td>
<td>.999</td>
<td>.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 12</td>
<td>Q12_Pre</td>
<td>Q12_Pre</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.173</td>
<td>1.173</td>
<td>1.173</td>
<td>1.173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

Main Findings

Overall the data did not present strong statistical support to suggest that the civic media literacy intervention caused much change. However, survey data does suggest that all the questions surrounding news media skepticism were in the expected direction which indicates that students did in fact become more skeptical of misinformation and media bias after the intervention. Therefore, improvement in the civic media literacy invention could lead to strong statistical support and identifiable growth in civic media literacy. Improvements in the instructions of the lesson plan, debate and survey would all benefit by adding additional strategies to build a foundational understanding of debate and media bias before the intervention begins.

Adaptations & Limitations

Future studies should consider lengthening the intervention to a minimum of six weeks. Changes to the lesson plan can greatly improve outcomes. More time should be spent analyzing various forms of misinformation. Presenting more examples of media bias from print and digital media in the beginning will help to prep students to analyze other content. Much time could be spent analyzing various news organizations content and using fact-checking strategies to verify information.

Students struggled to identify the difference between opinion and fact based statements, more time should be given towards teaching them how to evaluate the differences. Homework assignments to analyze and fact check content can work to inoculate students towards developing the skills to identify and combat misinformation. More examples of debunking fake news will help students to know how to determine what is fact vs. opinion. The ability to verify information and prove its validity should be a main focus during the intervention.
The capstone project to this intervention was for students to debate news media bias which was not an effective activity for the purpose of this study. Because students had to pick a side the debate muted the inoculation’s effects (An, 2004). Therefore, future civic media literacy interventions should find a final project that encompasses media literacy skills used when analyzing and fact checking information.

The compilation of scales used to measure civic media literacy and empathy could be improved. Redesigning the survey to better measure students' civic media literacy and empathy can lead to better results. We know that skepticism was improved through the study. However, to fully measure skepticism we should have included lines regarding need for cognition (NFC) because it is difficult to measure skepticism without balancing it against NCF (Maksl, Ashley & Craft, 2015). Perhaps revising the survey questions would have helped to measure civic media literacy in a richer way. In addition, the survey was long and unimaginative. There could be a multi-dimensional aspect to the survey. For example, in an online form with interactive video questions would be more engaging for test takers.

Conclusion

Misinformation and disinformation sow confusion in society and lead mass audiences to hold false beliefs which have serious consequences for social health, harmony and political life (Weeks, et. al., 2018). This study sought to curate a civic media literacy intervention to combat the influence of fake news. In an era of extreme polarization, civic media literacy interventions can prepare citizens to identify information from mis/disinformation and biased reporting. Although data doesn’t present substantial evidence, there are clear victories with increased skepticism of media bias. Future studies can build on the idea of teaching civic media literacy through debate. Democracy depends on well-informed citizens who can identify fact-based evidence and then make important democratic decisions. The ability to identify
between information, misinformation and disinformation is a critical part of that. Thus, civic media literacy should be a democratic right.
References


Crash Course (Feb. 27, 2018) Introduction to Media Literacy: Crash Course Media Literacy #1 [Video file]. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AD7N-1Mj-DU
Crash Course (Mar 6, 2018) History of Media Literacy, part 1: Crash Course Media Literacy #1 [Video file]. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXf0F4GYzWQ


Crash Course (May 1, 2018) Dark(er) Side of the Media: Crash Course Media Literacy #10 [Video file]. Retrieved from:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rR7j11Wpjw&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtM6jSpzb5gMNsx9kdmqBfmY&index=11

Crash Course (May 8, 2018) Media Skills: Crash Course Media Literacy #11 [Video file]. Retrieved from:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Be-A-sCIMpg&index=12&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtM6jSpzb5gMNsx9kdmqBfmY


doi:10.1111/j.1540-6237.2010.00697.x


Appendix 1: Pre/Post-Test Scale

**Media Locus of Control**

On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree) please tell me how much you agree or disagree with each statement

1. If I am misinformed by the news media, it is my own behavior that determines how soon I will learn credible information.
2. I am in control of the information I get from the news media.
3. When I am misinformed by the news media, I am to blame.
4. The main thing that affects my knowledge about the world is what I myself do.
5. If I pay attention to different sources of news, I can avoid being misinformed.
6. If I take the right actions, I can stay informed.

**News Media Skepticism**

On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree) please tell me how much you agree or disagree with each statement

1. I think the news media are fair.
2. I think the news media tell the whole story.
3. I think the news media are accurate.
4. I don’t think the news media can be trusted.
5. I think the news media prioritize being first to report a story.

6. I think the news media get in the way of society solving its problems.

7. I trust the media to report the news fairly.

8. I have confidence in the people running the institutions of the press.

**Allophilia Scale**

One a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree) please tell me how much you agree or disagree with each statement

**Agency/Affection**

Unbiased reporting from news outlets can empower democratic citizens to make informed voting choices

**Caring/Comfort**

News outlets should speak out against injustices that impact society

**Persistence/Kinship**

News outlets should report stories that promote equality and positive relationships

**Critical Consciousness/Engagement**

Social progress and policy reform are important effects of unbiased news reporting
Appendix 2. Lesson Plan

**MEDIA LITERACY**

**FOCUS:** Media Literacy, biased reporting, debate, civic literacy  
**AGE:** 18+  
**DURATION:** 3 weeks  
**HOST CONTENT AREA:** Mass Communications, Journalism  
**STANDARDS:** Media Literacy

### Understandings:
- “Media Literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create and act using all forms of communication.” National Association of Media Literacy
- “Media literacy education empowers people to be critical thinkers and makers, effective communicators and active citizens” (NAMLE, n.d.; Mihailidis, 2018, pg., 154).

### Related values/attitudes/issues:
- Agency, Caring, Persistence, Emancipation, Critical Consciousness

### Key concepts (big idea):
- Democracy, Media Literacy, Civic Literacy, Society, Systems, Technology

### Sources:
- Digital and media literacy: a plan of action, Renee Hobbs. Source:  
  https://libill-bsu-edu.proxy.bsu.edu/illiad/illiad.dll?Action=10&Form=75&Value=855021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Access / Resources:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Public Forum Debate Format</strong>, Video Access, Computer Access (Student Research), Timer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What materials do we need to help us plan and teach this topic?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessments routines and records:
What needs to be set up at the beginning of the unit to ensure:
● Systematic collection of assessment data
● Ongoing reflection and self-assessment?

Assessment Data: ML Survey (beginning of semester and another after the ML intervention)
Progress Monitoring Data: 5 pieces of media analyzed through analyze/evaluate questions (Hobbs, 2010)

Reflection Data: Students will write a one-page reflection on why media literacy is important for a democratic society

Analyze / Tuning in and preparing to find out:
What variety of activities will be used to:
● Engage all students in the topic?
● Access prior knowledge?
● Refine further planning?
● Lead into the ‘finding out’ experiences?

For the next three weeks we are going to focus on media literacy and society –
Week 1: Media Literacy & Civic Media Literacy
Week 2: Media Literacy Skills & Research
Week 3: Debating Resolutions

1. Pre-Assessment (10 minutes)
   ● Disguised survey, at beginning of semester (before media literacy intervention)

Week One

2. Intro (10 min)

Write on the board.... Politics & politics
we talk about politics with a big ‘P’ we are talking about political parties, campaigns and big ideas but we aren’t talking about the people.

we say politics, with a little ‘p’ we are referring to the beliefs and attitudes enacted in our daily lives as citizens and people within our democracy. We are going to be political for the next three weeks and focus on social issues of our time and how to solve them.

   - (Mirra, pg. 89, 2018)

3. Media Literacy – (20 minutes)
   ● Brainstorm: What is media literacy? (5 min)
   (in pairs, on sticky notes and bring to main board)
   ● Whole group discuss responses (5 min)
   ● Watch “Media Literacy” (10 min)
“Media Literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create and act using all forms of communication.” National Association of Media Literacy

**Conversation Guiding Questions**
How does the author of media influence it?
How does the owner of media company influence what is reported on?
How does media literacy make you a more informed citizen?
How does media literacy benefit democracy?

4. **The Evolution of Literacy** *(10 minutes)*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AD7N-1Mj-DU
- Penny Press - For the first-time information is accessible to everyone and the newspaper becomes a democratizing force
- Yellow Journalism - Sensationalism over professionalism in journalistic ethics (staying away from the facts and leaning into drama and commentary)

**Conversation Guiding Questions**
What happens when we rely on media?
Should everyone have access to it?
What happens if that access is exploited?

5. **“Median & the Mind”** *(10 minutes)*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAdkzxB4WFo
- Closure – Prior knowledge and the danger of misinformation
- Two people watching same media, get different things from it
- Media and familiar narratives

**Conversation Guiding Questions**
How are humans vulnerable to misinformation?
How are we biased?
How do we confirm our own biases?
How can our social medias influence our attitudes and behaviors?
How can the algorithms influence our attitudes and behaviors?

6. **“The Dark(er) Side of Media”** *(10 min)*
Advertisers, and PR people utilize campaigns to make people feel or act a certain way
- Widespread coordination of people bent on shifting the media landscape through propaganda can take on evil features (supporting war, believing harmful stereotypes of others)
- Government Propaganda Campaign
- Disinformation Campaigns – Coordinated Campaigns

**Conversation Guiding Questions**
How do can something influence our beliefs and attitudes?
How does propaganda, misinformation and disinformation, disrupt democracy?
How can media literacy prepare us as citizens?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Create / Finding out:</th>
<th>Week 2 (Total Time 2 hr 20 min)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiences to assist students to gather new information about the topic.</td>
<td>1. <strong>Media Skills – Research &amp; Analyzing Information (10 min)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each student will use their media literacy skills to analyze and evaluate 3 pieces of content from their news organization to prove unbiased reporting

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Be-A-sCIMpg&index=12&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtM6jSpzb5gMNsx9kdmqBfmY
### Essential Competencies of Digital and Media Literacy

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>ACCESS</strong></td>
<td>Finding and using media and technology tools skillfully, sharing appropriate and relevant information with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>ANALYZE &amp; EVALUATE</strong></td>
<td>Comprehending messages and using critical thinking to analyze message quality, veracity, credibility, and point of view, while considering potential effects or consequences of messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>CREATE</strong></td>
<td>Composing or generating content using creativity and confidence in self-expression, with awareness of purpose, audience, composition techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>REFLECT</strong></td>
<td>Applying social responsibility and ethical principles to one’s own identity and lived experience, communication behavior and conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>ACT</strong></td>
<td>Working individually and collaboratively to share knowledge and solve problems in the family, the workplace and the community, and participating as a member of a community at local, regional, national and international levels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Fig. 1 - Renee Hobbs (2010)**

2. **Teacher Lead Example** *(10 min)*

- **Access:** (Donald trump calling coal ‘clean’)
  
  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjiE9xg25Oo>

- **Analyze:**
  1. **Who created this message what is the purpose?**
     
     The white house
  2. **What techniques does it use to attract and hold attention?**
     
     Deceptive and misleading language
  3. **What lifestyles, values and points of view does it depict?**
     
     That creating cleaner ways to burn nonrenewable resources like coal is more important than focusing on renewable, clean energy.
  4. **How might different people interpret this message?**
People without energy knowledge would hear this use of language and think cleaning coal is a great idea because it is ‘clean’ and ‘beautiful’

5. **What is omitted or left out?**
The fact that coal is a nonrenewable resource and cannot be replaced. The fact that even when chemically cleaned the coal still pollutes the environment. The fact that burning fossil fuels is the main cause of global warming and climate change. That natural disasters like wildfires and severe weather are directly related to the burning of fossil fuels.

- **Evaluate:**
  1. **Relevance:** Does the content serve the purpose?
     It serves as persuasion for nonrenewable resource use.
  2. **Accuracy:**
  3. **Bias:**
     Donald shared one side of the clean coal issue and alluded to the idea that all coal is clean –

4. **Reliability:**
Reliable for the coal industry, harmful to the environment and humanity

- **Create:** Discuss the issue with my friends and family, or I could share it online.
- **Act:** What is my responsibility to my community? How can I solve problems in the family, community, or workplace? Am I a participating member of my family, community, or workplace?

3. **Student Research Explained** *(5 min)*
Each student will research pieces of content from their news organization to prove they are unbiased when reporting. To determine how biased or unbiased content is, students will use Hobbs (2010), analysis and evaluation questions.

CNN vs. Democracy Now
FOX vs. The Progressive
MSNBC vs. Mother Jones

Individually you will analyze and evaluate each piece of content to prove your organization is unbiased in reporting.

Create a word document to save you content link as well as the answers to each of the analyze/evaluate questions
Analyze
• Who created this message what is the purpose?
• What techniques does it use to attract and hold attention?
• What lifestyles, values and points of view does it depict?
• How might different people interpret this message?
• What is omitted or left out?

Evaluate
• Relevance: What purpose does this content serve?
• Accuracy: Check the facts with other sources, list them here with
• Bias: Is the author biased? Or commenting opinions?
• Reliability: Who owns this corporation? Is it trustworthy?

4. Debate Prep **(10 min)**

Split students into 5 groups of 10 people and pass out a topic/resolution to each group – each group must then split into two groups of 5 –

Teams will be arguing why “their news network” does a better job in providing unbiased news.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format of the Debate</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team A Speaker 1 - Prepared Speech</td>
<td>4 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team B Speaker 1 - Prepared Speech</td>
<td>4 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CROSS FIRE (Between A1 &amp; B1)</strong></td>
<td>2 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team A Speaker 2 – Rebuttal Speech</td>
<td>4 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team B Speaker 2 - Rebuttal Speech</td>
<td>4 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CROSS FIRE (Between A2 &amp; B2)</strong></td>
<td>2 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1 Summary of Argument</td>
<td>2 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1 Summary of Argument</td>
<td>2 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GRAND CROSS FIRE (ALL Speakers)</strong></td>
<td>3 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 Last Shot</td>
<td>1 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2 Last Shot</td>
<td>1 Min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public Forum Debate Format

Explain to students that debating is not insulting or bullying - When a clash of ideas does occur, it must be communicated in a manner that is respectful and backed with factual information.

The debate should include:
- Solid logic, lucid reasoning, and depth of analysis
- Utilize evidence without being driven by it
- Present a clash of ideas by countering/refuting arguments of the opposing team (rebuttal)
- Communicate ideas with clarity, organization, eloquence, and professional decorum

Explain to students that they should pick five pieces of media to analyze that can be used as evidence to support their resolution.

5. Student Research **(30 min + homework)**

Reflecting / Sorting out:
Activities to assist students to process and work with the information and ideas they have gathered about the topic (including exploring values).

Week 3 – Public Forum Debate

Each group will debate the topic/resolution
- After the debate each student should turn in their 5 pieces of content and analysis

Post-Assessment **(15-20 minutes)**

Making Conclusions:
Activities to ‘put it all together’, to demonstrate what they have learned and reflect on their learning

And

Action: Activities to link theory to practice. To empower students to act on what they have learned and make links to their daily lives.

Reflections (Homework)

Students should write a one-page reflection on why media literacy is important for society
### Process areas used:

**Arts:** media, visual arts  
**Math:** measurement, chance and data, tools and procedures  
**English:** text, contextual understanding, linguistic features and structures, strategies  
**Technology:** information, systems

### Going further:
Activities to challenge and extend. (These may be in the form of further shared experiences, individual or group projects, etc.)

---

**Appendix 3: Revised Lesson Plan Packet**

**FACTS VS. OPINIONS**

*How to determine the difference*
Whether you heard it on the news, in an advertisement, on social media or even in a history book – distinguishing between what is fact and what is opinion is a critical skill for a democratic citizen in the 21st century.

**Rhetoric: The Language of Fact and Opinion**

Words and phrases are used to increase the believability of an opinion, or to distort the facts. Luckily the language surrounding a statement can be a helpful guide to determine what is fact-based and what is opinion-based.

**Task 1: Fact vs. Opinion Quiz**

**Step One:** Visit - [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/R7DJCWM](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/R7DJCWM)
Step Two: As you take the survey, jot down words or phrases from each statement that act as clues to determine whether each statement is factual or opinion-based.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

8. 

9. 

10. 

MEDIA LITERACY

How to Analyze Information
We are bombarded with millions of messages every day and determining fact from fiction is an important task for any democratic citizen. Luckily, scholars have developed a process to analyze any kind of content.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Authorship</td>
<td>All media messages are “constructed”</td>
<td>Who created this message?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 Format</td>
<td>Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.</td>
<td>What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 Audience</td>
<td>Different people experience the same media message differently.</td>
<td>How might different people understand this message differently than me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 Content</td>
<td>Media have embedded values and points of view.</td>
<td>What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in; or omitted from, this message?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5 Purpose</td>
<td>Most media are organized to gain profit and or power.</td>
<td>Why is this message being sent?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Task 2: Analyzing News Stories

Using this five-step process, we are going to analyze the credibility of news organizations by evaluating content using the media literacy framework.

**Step One:** Find five pieces of content (article, video, etc.) which support the credibility of your news organization.

**Step Two:** Using the charts below, analyze each article and be prepared to defend your news organizations credibility using these articles as evidence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content #1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Authorship</td>
<td>Who created this message?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 Format</td>
<td>What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 Audience</td>
<td>How might different people understand this message differently than me?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 Content</td>
<td>What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in; or omitted from, this message?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### #5 Purpose
Why is this message being sent?

### Content #2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Authorship</td>
<td>Who created this message?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 Format</td>
<td>What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 Audience</td>
<td>How might different people understand this message differently than me?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 Content</td>
<td>What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in; or omitted from, this message?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
#5 Purpose

Why is this message being sent?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Authorship</td>
<td>Who created this message?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 Format</td>
<td>What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 Audience</td>
<td>How might different people understand this message differently than me?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 Content</td>
<td>What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in; or omitted from, this message?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Content #4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Authorship</td>
<td>Who created this message?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 Format</td>
<td>What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 Audience</td>
<td>How might different people understand this message differently than me?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 Content</td>
<td>What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in; or omitted from, this message?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
#5 Purpose

**Why is this message being sent?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Keyword</strong></th>
<th><strong>Question</strong></th>
<th><strong>Answer</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Authorship</td>
<td>Who created this message?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 Format</td>
<td>What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 Audience</td>
<td>How might different people understand this message differently than me?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 Content</td>
<td>What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in; or omitted from, this message?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now that you have prepared evidence to prove your news organization is unbiased, let's review the proper way to communicate in debate.

1. **Prepared Evidence Speech**: Each team will have a chance to develop their prepared pieces of content.
While they are presenting, the opposing team should be listening to the evidence paying close attention to the other team’s analysis of the content.

- Did they evaluate the content without bias?
- If not, identify where they might be bias and use that as a crossfire statement.

2. **Crossfire:** Each team will identify flaws in the other team’s evidence.

3. **Rebuttal Speech:** Then each team will have a chance to defend their research/evidence from crossfire claims.

4. **Discussion:** Whole group discussion led by teacher.