

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

Faculty of Social Sciences

Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

Timm Rainer Tamsar

**First Level Agenda-Setting Effects of the Media in the  
2016 U.S. Presidential Election**

Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: Hector Charles Pagan, MPA

Tartu 2020

Mina, Timm Rainer Tamsar, olen koostanud töö iseseisvalt. Kõik töö koostamisel kasutatud teiste autorite seisukohad, ning kirjandusallikatest ja mujalt pärinevad andmed on viidatud.

Timm Rainer Tamsar

18.05.2020

*/töö autori allkiri/*

Kaitsmine toimub ...../kuupäev/ kell ...../kellaaeg/  
...../aadress/ auditooriumis ...../number/.

Retsensent: ..... /nimi/ (...../teaduskraad/),  
..... /amet/

## **Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks**

Mina, Timm Rainer Tamsar (39402130266),

annan Tartu Ülikoolile tasuta loa (lihtlitsentsi) enda loodud teose „First Level Agenda-Setting Effects of the Media in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election”

(eesti k. „Meedia võime kujundada esimese tasandi agendat 2016. aasta USA presidendivalimistel“),

mille juhendaja on Hector Charles Pagan,

1. reprodutseerimiseks säilitamise ja üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemise eesmärgil, sealhulgas digitaalarhiivi DSpace’is lisamise eesmärgil kuni autoriõiguse kehtivuse tähtaja lõppemiseni;
2. üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks ülikooli veebikeskkonna kaudu, sealhulgas digitaalarhiivi DSpace’i kaudu kuni autoriõiguse kehtivuse tähtaja lõppemiseni;
3. olen teadlik, et punktis 1 nimetatud õigused jäävad alles ka autorile;
4. kinnitan, et lihtlitsentsi andmisega ei rikuta teiste isikute intellektuaalomandi ega isikuandmete kaitse seadusest tulenevaid õigusi.

Tartus, 18.05.2020

Timm Rainer Tamsar

## **Abstract**

Agenda-setting theory supposes that media sets the agenda for the public by transferring the salience of issues, candidates and attributes. The theory was first introduced in 1972 by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, who studied the effects media had on the public during the 1968 election. They found a strong correlation between the two agendas.

This paper will explain how the theory has grown since this first study. It will give a detailed overview of the two types of agenda-setting commonly recognized, explain the main concepts related to the theory and briefly explain current fields of research.

An empirical study was conducted to observe the first level agenda-setting functions of the media during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Both candidate and issue salience transference are studied and measured using correlation analysis. The first part of the empirical study observes candidate salience in cable news and measures to what extent was it transferred to the public in a short timeframe. The second empirical analysis studied issues salience transference across all media.

The findings indicate that minor news items in cable news did not have an immediate agenda-setting effect for raising candidate salience. Secondly, there is evidence of issues transference, but due to limited data, no reliable conclusions can be made.

# Table of contents

Introduction.....	7
1. Theoretical framework.....	9
1.1. McCombs and Shaw: “The agenda-setting function of mass media.”.....	9
1.2. The theory of agenda-setting .....	10
1.3. Second level of agenda-setting .....	11
1.4. Need for orientation and causality .....	12
1.5. Accessibility, framing and priming.....	13
1.6. Agenda-building .....	15
1.7. Agenda-melding.....	16
1.8. Current and future fields of research .....	17
2. Methodology .....	18
2.1. Methodology of McCombs and Shaw .....	18
2.2. Methodology for studying agenda-setting effects in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.....	19
3. The agenda-setting effect of the media in the 2016 election .....	22
3.1. Candidate salience transference.....	22
3.1.1. Media- and polling data .....	22
3.1.2. Agenda-setting function of cable news.....	23
3.1.3. Interpreting the data .....	25
3.2. Issue salience transference.....	26
Discussion.....	30
Conclusion .....	33
Appendix 1:.....	35
Appendix 2:.....	37

Appendix 3:.....	39
Appendix 4:.....	41
Appendix 5:.....	43
Appendix 6:.....	44
References:.....	45
Resümee .....	52

# Introduction

Media's role in politics has been the subject of much discussion over the years. Democratic societies depend on the media to be a neutral arbiter of public concerns. People use the news as a way to assess politicians and issues. Therefore, the media has significant influence on the public, particularly in matters of politics.

Walter Lippmann was among the first people to suggest that media may be able to influence the public in his 1922 book "Public Opinion," where he stated "the newspapers necessarily and inevitably reflect, and therefore, in greater or lesser measure, intensify, the defective organization of public opinion" (Lippmann 1922, 18). While he didn't use the phrase, what he described was what today has become known as agenda-setting. He proposed, that the world as we perceive it is one constructed by the media (Lippmann, 1922, 29). 40 years later, Bernard Cohen (1963, 13) stated, that the press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about." The process by which the media influences public salience has become known as agenda-setting.

Agenda-setting as an academic theory was officially proposed by McCombs and Shaw, when observing the 1968 presidential election of the United States. They published their findings in a 1972 paper titled "The agenda-setting function of mass media." They proposed a hypothesis, that "the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues" (McCombs, Shaw 1972, 178).

In the following 50 years, many studies on agenda-setting have been published and the theory behind it has grown more nuanced. This paper will explain the important concepts and elements of agenda-setting theory and explore whether news media set the agenda for the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Agenda-setting theory originally studied media's influence in determining the salience of public issues, such as the economy, foreign policy or welfare. Researchers soon realized that media's role goes beyond that and they are able to influence people's salience of candidates as well- thus changing the understanding of agenda-setting from issue salience to object salience.

Furthermore, since the 1980s, scholars started exploring how media may be able to transfer not just the salience of objects, but the attributes associated with those objects as well. This later became known as second level agenda-setting.

This paper will present a detailed overview of agenda-setting theory; explain his methodology and then use quantitative methods to observe first level agenda-setting effects of the media during the 2016 elections. This paper will not conduct a quantitative analysis of second level agenda-setting effects but will review some of data related to it. Instead, it will study the effects of media transferring candidate and issue salience. Because agenda-setting theory has advanced much in the last decades, researchers in the field have started studying more complex phenomenon, such as intermedia agenda-setting and network agenda-setting effects. There is virtually no scientific literature available on media's role in setting the first level agenda for the 2016 presidential election.

Due to geographical limitations, this paper will only be able to study the agenda-setting role of the media using secondhand sources. While not ideal, modern technology allows studying social effects through public data. The public agenda will be assessed through public opinion polls; the media agenda through internet databases and published reports.



# 1. Theoretical framework

## 1.1. McCombs and Shaw: “The agenda-setting function of mass media.”

The two people credited with the invention of agenda-setting theory are Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw. Their first study, published in 1972, begins by noting that while some better educated and more politically aware people do seek out information regarding candidates, most receive incoming information without much effort and those with the highest media exposure are more likely to know where candidates stand. McCombs and Shaw go on to state, that people learn “in direct proportion to the emphasis placed on the campaign issues by the mass media” (McCombs, Shaw 1972, 177).

To explore the effects of the media, the authors chose to compare the key issues for voters of the campaign with the content in media during the campaign. In order to avoid other variables such as regional differences or religious background, they restricted their sample group to Chapel Hill and only interviewed people, who were undecided. The authors asked participants to note, which issues were most important to them. Media content was categorized based on topic and content was divided into major and minor issues based on airtime and column inches.

The study found that a majority of published content was not about the issues, but rather about the campaign or candidates talking about each other (McCombs, Shaw 1972, 179). Secondly, when analyzing content by party, the media disproportionately devoted more time on some subjects, when talking about different party candidates. For example, 64% of the news about democratic candidates (Humphrey/ Muskie) was about foreign policy, with only 38% of coverage about Republican candidates having been about foreign policy (Nixon, Agnew).

Finally, the study found, that the correlation coefficient between major themes in media and what was considered important by the people, was +0.967, meaning a very strong correlation between the two (McCombs, Shaw 1972, 180). The authors also noted, that the composite coverage of media was the one that matched the relevant themes for people, which they concluded, meant that voters pay attention to the news, regardless of where it’s coming from. Since some voters, while still undecided, did have a preference, the authors tested, whether the subjects covered in media overall or content that only covered their preferred candidate, were

more relevant. They concluded, that the correlation of all covered subjects was stronger with voters than content regarding their preferred candidates, which they believed was “better explained by the agenda-setting function of the mass media than by selective perception.”

When looking at the coverage of specific media outlets, the New York Times (+0.96) had the highest correlation with voter priorities; the lowest were the Time and Newsweek (+0.3). The coverage was different between different types of media platforms, but similar amongst the same platform: different TV channels had similar coverage as did newspapers or magazines, yet the three larger groups, when compared, were less alike. The authors attribute this difference to the constraints these media platforms have- newspapers can publish a lot more information, while TV has time limits, magazines can only publish weekly.

The authors did admit, that media outlets have biases, but that there is generally a “professional norm regarding major news stories.” The authors conclude their paper, by admitting the correlation doesn’t prove the existence of agenda-setting by media, but it strongly indicates it. Alternative argument, that the news simply reports without influence, is unlikely, since people don’t receive much information about politics from elsewhere. McCombs and Shaw state, that further studies are required to explore the sociological and psychological effects of media to voting behavior.

## **1.2. The theory of agenda-setting**

Agenda itself is not a defined set of concepts. Media- and public agenda are generally considered a cumulative list of separate priorities, which through the process of agenda-setting is passed from the prior to the latter.

McCombs and Shaw set the course for the next 50 years. While revolutionary, the study provided limited evidence of causality. Agenda-setting as an academic field as well as a political reality has been generally accepted. Both of the authors- McCombs especially- remained focused on the phenomenon for most of their career, publishing numerous studies on the same subject.

While the findings and methodology of Chapel Hill have remained relevant, the field of agenda-setting has become wider and more complex. Firstly, nowadays two different levels of agenda-setting are recognized.

First level of agenda-setting is what McCombs and Shaw observed. It refers to object salience: issues that are constantly in the news are perceived as more important. According to Coleman et al. (2009, 147), first level agenda-setting is “the process of the mass media presenting certain issues frequently and prominently with the result that large segments of the public come to perceive those issues as more important than others.”

### **1.3. Second level of agenda-setting**

Objects however are neutral: people don't see positive or negative sides to them. In order to better understand media's ability to shape the agenda, researchers began to observe attribute salience, which later became known as second level agenda-setting (Weaver et al. 1981). Second level agenda-setting “examines the influence of attribute salience, or the properties, qualities, and characteristics that describe objects or people in the news” (Wu, Coleman 2009, 776). Attributes have two dimensions: affective and substantive. Affective attributes are either positive, neutral or negative. Substantive attributes are instead attributes, that define the object: for example, when discussing the economy, whether more focus is placed on inflation or unemployment. The second level agenda-setting proposes, that every object in the media has different attributes and those attributes carry the same agenda-setting function. When describing an issue or a person, some aspects of said object are pointed out more frequently in the news: second level agenda-setting posits, that the transfer of attribute salience occurs the same way as the transfer of object salience. “For each object on the first-level agenda, there is an agenda of attributes that can be rank-ordered in terms of their appearance in the news” (McCombs, Guo 2014, 254). Wu and Coleman (2009, 781) also found that the transference of attributes had a stronger correlation than the original first level issue transference: meaning second level agenda-setting is more effective than the first. This may be due to the fact, that the media is better at influencing people with negative images of candidates than positive ones (Wu, Coleman 2009, 782). Since only second level agenda-setting carries emotional weight, the second level agenda-setting has the ability to negatively impact the view of candidates for the audience.

Observing the shift, McCombs and Estrada (1997) reconstructed Bernard Cohen's statement: “the media may not only tell us what to think about, they may also tell us how and what to think about it, and even what to do about it.” Therefore, we shouldn't think of agenda-setting as issues that are more important or media referring to some topics more frequently. Instead,

agenda-setting should be considered the transference of salience, be it people and issues or the qualities used to describe them.

Some work has also been done on how the salience can transfer from one level to the other. Ghanem (1997) conducted a survey, in which she observed that raising the attribute salience also increased object salience. This phenomenon though has received relatively little attention and Kiouisis, Bantimaroudis and Ban (1999) found no evidence, that manipulation of substantive attributes would lead to change in candidate (object) salience.

#### **1.4. Need for orientation and causality**

The original study by McCombs and Shaw was well received. The authors sought to replicate their findings in the next national election in 1972. The secondary purpose for conducting a similar survey, was to explore “contingent conditions,” or the need for orientation (McCombs, Shaw 1993, 59). Need for orientation (NFO) is a concept developed by David Weaver, who suggested, that people feel uncomfortable in a new environment until they have enough information about any given subject (Weaver 1977). By now, it is regarded as a prerequisite for agenda-setting. In essence, NFO explains why agenda-setting at a psychological level occurs and it shows us how much someone may be influenced by media. Need for orientation can be measured using two factors: relevance and uncertainty (McCombs, Guo 2014, 262). The authors list relevance as the first priority- only if people deem an issue relevant, do we require orientation. Uncertainty goes directly to audience’s prior knowledge: how much do we already know and how much are we willing to learn. High relevance and high uncertainty lead to higher NFO- meaning a person is more likely to have their agenda shaped by the media. While uncertainty is a factor, relevance is far more significant when measuring the impact of media’s agenda on the public’s agenda. People, who are politically undecided are more influenced by media’s agenda-setting effect: this can be explained by NFO. While news media is not the only source of information, it is the primary one for larger social issues and concepts. Additionally, the need for orientation applies both to object- and attribute salience (Camaj 2014, 708). In their study, Wu and Coleman (2009, 782) found, that in 2004 media’s ability to set the agenda was significantly stronger with John Kerry than with president Bush. They attributed that fact to Bush already being a household name, while Kerry was relatively unknown- the need for orientation was greater, when it came to an unknown candidate. There is however some evidence, that low uncertainty may in fact allow for more transference. When people, who have

a strong party affiliation consume highly partisan news media, their salience on second level is more affected (Camaj 2014, 709).

One of the main criticisms of agenda-setting research is that it doesn't determine the direction of the transference: whether the media is influenced by the audience as much as the audience is by the media. The need for orientation is generally considered the concept for explaining the causal effect of the media: we turn on the news to receive information not to distribute it. According to a Pew Research Center report (Gottfried et al. 2016, 2), news media is the primary source of political information. This demonstrates the public's dependence on news media for political information. Shaw and McCombs (1977) conducted a cross-lagged agenda-setting research: comparing the media agenda at an earlier date with the public agenda at a later time. They discovered a significant causal effect of the media on the public agenda for newspapers. In addition, McCombs, Lopez-Escobar and Llamas (2000, 89-90) showed that the media agenda of specific outlets is more closely matched to that of the public than to each other. They argue, that this proves the causality, because if the direction of influence were reverse, the agendas of the different media publications would be more similar to each other.

### **1.5. Accessibility, framing and priming**

Agenda-setting theory studies the effect media has on the voter. Journalism and communications theory study the effect similarly, but with the focus on the news media: this is known as framing. "Framing is the selection of a restricted number of thematically related attributes for inclusion on the media agenda when a particular object is discussed," said McCombs (1997, 37). One of the most debated issues in agenda-setting field right now, is how framing and second level agenda-setting relate to each other and whether they are in fact different. While the distinction may seem subtle, agenda-setting is considered as the theory of accessibility (Scheufele 2000, 299). Weaver (2007, 145) defines accessibility as "increasing the salience of issues and thus the ease with which they can be retrieved from memory when making political judgments." In layman's terms, repeating something enough so it's the first thing people think of, when the broader subject is brought up. McCombs argues that accessibility is a necessary condition for agenda-setting, but not sufficient. He claims the other element is applicability, which means that cues in the media re-enforce already existing prejudices.

Framing, however, originates in prospect theory, meaning that the description of an event has an influence on the interpretation of it (Weaver 2007, 145). Entman (1993, 52) proposes that framing “is to select aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” While it appears to be synonymous with second level agenda-setting, McCombs (2005, 547) argues, that framing is a narrower concept and not all frames are attributes. He claims, that a frame is “a dominant attribute in a message that comprises a central theme, defining a dominant and pervasive perspective on an object.” Because McCombs is credited with the invention of agenda-setting theory, it can be argued, that his perspective on the issue is biased.

A convincing argument is made by Weaver (2007, 143), who points out, that there is no one clear definition of framing. He goes on to state, that framing can be understood as “problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations, as well as key themes, phrases, and words.” Without a clear definition and understanding of the theory, comparing it to agenda-setting is difficult. If accessibility is considered the most important factor of knowledge activation for agenda-setting, then applicability is regarded as the more important one for framing, meaning it is used to reinforce already existing notions regarding objects (McCombs 2010, 204). The primary difference of the two theories is in how the attributes of an object are transferred: for second level agenda-setting it’s through volume (accessibility); for framing it is through choosing a narrow image which to portray to the public. It remains to be determined, whether a clear understanding as to how framing and second level agenda-setting relate to each other will emerge.

If we consider the need for orientation as the condition necessary for agenda-setting, then priming is what would be the consequence. Priming is according to Iyengar and Simon (1997, 250) “an extension of agenda-setting and addresses the impact of news coverage on the weight assigned to specific issues in making political judgments.” Priming is the concept by which we form political opinions based on the amount of coverage on specific issues. Kioussis and McCombs (2004, 37) explain priming as “media attention to political issues provides the criteria for how governmental leaders are evaluated in public opinion.” For example, Weaver, McCombs and Spellman (1975, 471), showed how during the Watergate scandal news media strongly suggested how to evaluate political actors. Agenda-setting is the transfer of salience;

priming is forming opinions about politics based on the knowledge we obtained. “Basic priming” is when people form stronger and more definite opinions about the candidates based on information in the media (Kiousis, McCombs 2004, 40).

A step further would be how different policy options are transferred. Some scholars have studied (Benton, Frazier 1976), how the salience of potential solutions have been affected by agenda-setting, however support for different policies have several factors including socio-economic standing as well as religious background, which is why this study will not focus on it.

## **1.6. Agenda-building**

Agenda-setting theory doesn’t take into consideration whether actors are active or passive: it only observes the transfer of salience. The process of someone actively and consciously trying to form the agenda is called agenda-building. In their seminal work, Cobb and Elder (1971, 905) state, that “In its most elementary form, we are raising the basic question of where public-policy issues come from. We are concerned with how issues are created and why some controversies or incipient issues come to command the attention and concern of decision makers, while others fail.” Agenda-building studies who sets the agenda and how issues get on the agenda. It occurs, when either political groups, politicians, businesses or the media itself seeks to change the opinion of the general public through mass media (Kiousis, Wu 2008). Agenda-building can be used to shift the focus of issues and turn the public into an effective tool to influence policy makers. If agenda-setting generally distinguished two agendas- the public and the media- then for agenda-building a third, policy agenda, must be included. Through building, active participants seek to place an issue on the policy agenda. This research has also influenced agenda-setting by expanding the understanding, who can have agenda-setting effect: it needn’t necessarily be the news. McCombs (2010, 199) wrote, that “a handful of studies have now applied agenda-setting theory in settings that do not involve a media agenda.” For example, business often try to build the agenda in order to improve their public image or promote their products. Agenda-building is a competition of sorts, since different interested parties are looking to further their cause, but not all are able to place their issues on the agenda (Cobb, Elder 1971, 908).

Agenda-building by candidates was part of what McCombs and Shaw were testing in 1968, they simply didn’t call it that. By measuring how often candidates’ comments about specific

issues or each other were in the news, they effectively measured a campaign's ability to build the agenda. President Trump is a good example of a candidate building an agenda. David Sussman (2017, 85) found, that between 2010-2016, the tone of coverage in the news regarding economy was 1:2 negative; for immigration it was 1:5. He attributes that Donald Trump was able to turn immigration into a symbolic issue- no clear stance, no coherent policy positions; he instead personified the issue itself and therefore every time it was raised, the electorate thought of Trump. This shows that accessibility is a necessary condition for agenda-building as well. Trump's positions changed so frequently, that he was able to stay in the public's focus all the time. During his campaign he changed his stance on immigration 19 times, each of them receiving free coverage by the news (Sussman 2017, 88). Sussman concludes that Trump was able to bring more focus on the issue and to use media to his advantage (2017, 95).

### **1.7. Agenda-melding**

Agenda-setting theory sets the expectation, that incoming information comes from the media. Statistically, that is correct as the most popular source of political information is cable news (Gottfried, Barthel and Shearer 2016, 2). It doesn't however take into consideration, how the audience gathers information or perceives it. The pictures in our heads, which Walter Lippmann was referring to are complex and agenda-melding is the process by which we create them. "Agendamelding is the social process by which we meld agendas from various sources, including other people, to create pictures of the world that fit our experiences and preferences" (McCombs, Shaw, Weaver 2014, 794). If agenda-setting is the transference of salience, then agenda-melding is the process of gathering salience from sources which conform to our understanding of the world. Agenda-melding recognizes, that based on a similar understanding of the world people form groups and communities. Unlike agenda-setting, agenda-melding research studies how people seek out information from different sources and form their world view, so it matches that of the community they wish to be a part of. Agenda-melding divides media into two distinct groups: traditional media- newspapers and network channels- are considered vertical media because they try to reach a maximum audience; horizontal media is new media- cable news, bloggers- which targets a specific audience (Vargo et al. 2014). For agenda-melding, horizontal media is particularly important given their biased nature.



## 1.8. Current and future fields of research

The first- and second level agenda-setting are based on object and attribute salience transference. In recent years, researchers have explored the idea of third-level agenda-setting, which theorizes connection salience: “salience of the networked relationships among objects and attributes is transferred from the news media to the public” (McCombs, Guo 2014, 256). Third-level agenda-setting suggests, that if media is able to influence the salience of issues and attributes, it should also be able to influence the way viewers think, when considering these subjects. The authors suggest that media can affect the “cognitive map.” This has become known as the “Network Agenda- Setting Model” and it suggests that media can combine different objects and/ or attributes and thereby transfer the salience of a complete picture (Guo, Vu, McCombs 2012, 55). While the research is still in its’ early phase, there is strong evidence, that media is able to transfer a combined picture of objects and attributes to the audience (Guo, Vu, McCombs 2012, 61). If first level agenda setting inquires what are the most important issues and second level asks responders how they would describe a candidate, then third-level agenda-setting studies public’s agenda through mind-mapping; asking responders to expand outwards regarding certain topics to see what are most common associations (Guo, Vu, McCombs 2012, 61).

Naturally, the field of media has changed dramatically since the 1970s with the internet and particularly social media. Social-media sites such as Facebook and Twitter aren’t technically media, but platforms, where anyone can post. As shown by Sussman (2017, 94), Twitter can be an effective tool for building an agenda as well as setting it. McCombs (2010, 202) demonstrated, that the transference in the internet is much more imminent: just browsing and clicking on a small number of articles can have agenda-setting effects. Additionally, modern technology has given rise to the era of fake news. Vargo, Guo and Amazeen (2017, 2038) studied how fake news can affect agenda-setting and discovered, that it has the ability to influence traditional media agenda by forcing them to address false stories.

## **2. Methodology**

Agenda-setting process is media influencing the salience of objects, attributes and their connection through accessibility. According to a Pew Research Center report (Gottfried, Barthel and Shearer 2016: 2), cable news is overwhelmingly the most used media source for election news. This paper will observe the first level agenda-setting function of cable news in transferring candidate salience during the 2016 election. In the second portion of the empirical part, the author will observe issue transference.

The methodology of agenda-setting research is generally quite similar across different studies. It follows the same path as the work of McCombs and Shaw (1972, 177-178): conducting content analysis of media in order to observe the major topics in the news and a survey in order to measure public opinion. Once data is gathered, the connection between media content and public's priorities is expressed through correlation coefficient. In this chapter, the author will first explain the original methodology of McCombs and Shaw and then his own, based on recent findings, development of agenda-setting theory and changes in media and data.

### **2.1. Methodology of McCombs and Shaw**

In 1968, the authors chose to conduct their study in one town called Chapel Hill in order to avoid possibly influencing factors such as regional differences; at the same time they chose the people for their survey from five different polling stations across town, in order to avoid economic, social and racial differences of a segregated community. They conducted interviews with 100 people between mid- September and early October about a month before the election. They asked the responders to list key issues regardless of candidates' positions. They analyzed news content between September the 12<sup>th</sup> and October the 6<sup>th</sup> and divided it into 15 categories. They further divided the content into major and minor categories to see whether there was a difference on how much time and space was devoted to specific topics. For media agenda, the authors analyzed news content.

In their findings, the authors discovered, that the most covered topics weren't policy positions, but the campaign itself (McCombs, Shaw 1972, 179). The most covered policy area was foreign policy with 10% of total campaign airtime. Meanwhile, media spent a combined 47% of time analyzing the campaign itself or covering events related to the campaign. Still,

McCombs and Shaw (1972, 180) conducted their study by limiting their analysis to the prevalence of policy issues in the media. They discovered a very strong correlation of +0.967 for major news items and +0.979 for minor ones, with no significant difference between the two subcategories. They found that while different politicians spent different amounts of time focusing on different issues, the voters' priorities seemed to have reflected the aggregate of news, regardless of whether it was coming from their favored candidate (McCombs, Shaw 1972, 182). Therefore, agenda-setting function of the media is more effective than selective perception.

## **2.2. Methodology for studying agenda-setting effects in the 2016 U.S. presidential election**

To study the agenda-setting effect of cable news, the author will observe the focus of the three major cable news networks: CNN, MSNBC and Fox News. The methodology follows the general path of McCombs and Shaw, but with some alterations.

As agenda-setting developed, first level became known as object salience, which includes the transference of candidate salience as well (chapter 1.3.). "The amount of news coverage of an object would largely determine the perceived importance of that object by the audience" (Cheng 2014, 10). The author will compare the amount of coverage a candidate received to their popularity in order to observe, whether there was a correlation.

For studying the public agenda, the author will use the aggregated polling data available on RealClearPolitics, following the method of Kiousis and McCombs (2004, 44). Using polling data allows to measure candidate popularity over time; aggregated data increases its' reliability.

Given that agenda-setting is based on the need for orientation (chapter 1.4.), it is reasonable to assume, that agenda-setting effects are stronger during the primary process of U.S. election cycle: by the time the general election campaign begins, the two major party candidates have been thoroughly vetted and therefore people are familiar with them. The dates under observation are February 1<sup>st</sup> until March 13<sup>th</sup>: February 1<sup>st</sup> was chosen because it was the date of the Iowa Caucuses, March 13<sup>th</sup>, because a day later the primaries were held in several of the swing states such as Ohio, Florida and North Carolina ("2016 presidential primary election schedule" 2016)- thus producing front runners for both nominations and likely a lot of news content, which would affect the study.

When observing two separate events to determine whether they are correlated, a question of time frame arises. How long does it take for the media agenda to move onto the public agenda? There is no consensus among scholars, what the time-lag of agenda-setting effect is. Therefore, the author will have to choose one of his own accord. Most work has been done observing a longer time period: a week or more. In order to provide new insights into media's agenda-setting function, the author chose a very short time-lag of just one day. Therefore, the correlations will be conducted between media coverage on day X and public support on day X+1.

There is some prior work done on candidate salience regarding the 2016 election: "The extensive coverage of Trump displayed how media used its agenda-setting function to signal to the audience that Trump was the most important story of the election" (Caulk 2017: 16). Prior work however hasn't studied the change in candidate popularity among voters as a result of agenda-setting.

The hypothesis for McCombs and Shaw (1972, 177) was that "the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues." Based on their findings, the first hypothesis for this paper is:

**Hypothesis 1:** Media set the agenda for the public by transferring the salience of candidates.

As the author will be observing three different news channels, it is possible to observe six distinct correlations between media and public agenda: since primary elections are technically two separate races they must be observed separately. Accessibility being the key concept behind agenda-setting (chapter 1.5.), it is reasonable to assume, that public agenda would most accurately resemble the most watched channel, which was Fox News (Moraes 2016). Therefore, the second hypothesis of this paper is:

**Hypothesis 2:** Fox News had the biggest first level agenda-setting effect of the three cable news channels.

Finally, the original paper by McCombs and Shaw showed, that the aggregate coverage of the same medium (in this case cable news channels) better reflected the public agenda than the individual outlets (or channels). The third hypothesis of this paper is:

**Hypothesis 3:** Aggregate media coverage of candidates better reflected the public agenda than any single channel.

In the second part of the empirical portion, the author will observe whether the media transferred issue salience. Because analyzing media content to the extent that it provides any significant data requires thorough content analysis, the author will observe the data through secondhand reports. Because data availability is limited, so are the results. First level agenda-setting started as issue transference and therefore this paper will replicate the work of McCombs and Shaw. The fourth hypothesis for this paper is:

**Hypothesis 4:** Media set the agenda for the 2016 presidential election by transferring the salience of issues.

For studying public agenda, the author will use a Gallup poll, that includes a question about the important issues facing the country (Smith, Saad 2016). The Gallup poll is national, thereby satisfying the condition stated by McCombs and Shaw back in 1972 to measure agenda-setting nationwide.

For measuring the connection between agendas, both Spearman and Pearson correlation coefficient formulas are used. The data calculations are done using R-Studio. All tables and graphs are generated by the author and the data is referenced.

### **3. The agenda-setting effect of the media in the 2016 election**

#### **3.1. Candidate salience transference**

##### **3.1.1. Media- and polling data**

Before exploring the correlation between media and public agenda, it is important to understand the data. The polling information from RealClearPolitics is an aggregated dataset. As these candidates were consistently in the news during their campaigns, they are the objects, whose salience transference was observed. For both the Democratic and Republican primaries, 13 polls were used (“2016 Democratic Presidential Nomination” 2016; “2016 Republican Presidential Nomination” 2016). This work studies four Republican candidates: Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, Ben Carson and Marco Rubio; and two Democratic ones: Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. These candidates were chosen, because they were the only ones polling at least 5 percent at the time of the Iowa Caucus. Candidates polling below that generally aren’t considered serious challengers for the party nomination. From the beginning, the Democratic campaign was a two-way race with Clinton in the lead the entire time. The campaign for the republican nomination was more contested, but from November 2015, Donald Trump remained in the lead. The change in support for the candidate compared to the previous day will be the observed data measure.

For measuring media agenda, the author used Internet Archive- a non-profit database, which allows users to search keywords on specific dates on specific media platforms and sites. The six previously mentioned candidates were searched for captions. The unit of measurement is the percentage of candidate mentions per day out of all candidate mentions that day within their party. This is done in order to account for the difference in ordinal and nominal datasets. This method allows observation on which channel had a stronger effect on which primary race. There are some limitations to this, given that potentially other mentions on races for the House of Representatives or the Senate had an influence on the viewer, or a third-party candidate was gaining public support.

### 3.1.2. Agenda-setting function of cable news

#### Agenda-setting function of CNN

The correlations between the data sets are done in R-Studio. CNN mentions are listed in Appendix 1, candidate support during the same period in Appendix 2. First correlation will be to determine the salience transfer of democratic candidates using a 1-day time-lag.

The correlation is expressed using a dataset of  $N=84$  (42 for Clinton; 42 for Sanders), applying the Pearson correlation. The coefficient value  $R$  (CNN Democrats) =  $-0.15$  ( $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ). Therefore, CNN had no significant agenda-setting effect in transferring candidate salience regarding Democratic candidates.

For Republican candidates, a similar test was conducted, except given that there were four candidates and not two, the dataset was larger:  $N= 168$  (7 incompletes after Ben Carson dropped out). The coefficient for Republican primaries was  $R$  (CNN Republicans) =  $+0.06$  ( $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ), showing no reliable correlation for transfer of salience.

Therefore, it cannot be said, that CNN set the agenda for the primaries in the 2016 election by transferring candidate salience.

#### Agenda-setting function of MSNBC

The values found in this subchapter are made the same way as for CNN: by measuring the correlation between candidate mention percentage (of the total mentions of party candidates) and change in public support for the candidate. The correlation coefficient for the Democratic primary was  $R$  (MSNBC Democrats) =  $-0.26$  ( $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ) indicating no salience transfer by the channel. The data is listed in Appendix 3.

For the Republican candidates, the correlation coefficient is  $R$  (MSNBC Republicans) =  $+0.05$  ( $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ), once again showing that the amount candidate was mentioned didn't affect the public support for them the following day.

### Agenda-setting function of Fox News

The third of the big three cable news channels is Fox News. The ratio of candidate mentions is used to measure media agenda, the change in popular support for public agenda. For the Democratic Party, the  $R(\text{Fox News Democrats}) = -0.07$  ( $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ). Once more, cable news captions had no immediate effect on the public agenda. The data for Fox News mentions of candidates is listed in Appendix 4.

For the GOP, the correlation is measured by the mentions of the aforementioned four candidates in relation to their public support the next day. The Pearson correlation coefficient is  $R(\text{Fox News Republicans}) = +0.08$  ( $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ). The correlation isn't indicative of salience transfer.

### Aggregate agenda-setting function of cable news

So far, the effects of three separate news channels have been observed. In none of them did the correlation indicate that a time-lag of one day would yield a significant salience transfer through captions. As was shown by McCombs and Shaw and later by Kiousis and Stromback (2010), the aggregate media agenda is more similar to public agenda than that of any single publication. To test, whether the combined media agenda more closely resembles the public's, the number of mentions for every candidate across the channels were combined and presented as the ratio of all mentions for the party across the channels. The data for the public salience remained the same.

The correlation for the Democrats is  $R(\text{Aggregate Democrats}) = -0.13$  ( $p\text{-value} > 0.5$ ); the correlation for the Republicans is  $R(\text{Aggregate Republicans}) = +0.07$  ( $p\text{-value} > 0.5$ ); no significant correlations can be drawn between the two datasets.

As a result of these findings, hypotheses 1; 2 and 3 are disproven. The cable news did not set the agenda by transferring the salience of candidates during the primary elections; Fox News did not have a stronger agenda-setting effect and the aggregate media agenda did not reflect the agenda of the public more accurately.



### **3.1.3. Interpreting the data**

Based on the findings in the previous chapter, the 3 major cable news networks did not have an agenda-setting effect on the public. The data, however, is not enough to fully capture media's effect on the elections.

Firstly, the media agenda is presented as a number of capture mentions. According to McCombs and Shaw (1972, 179), this would fall under the category of minor news items. They didn't find any substantial differences in the agenda-setting effects of major and minor news items; that doesn't necessarily mean that there weren't any in the 2016 elections. Therefore, a detailed study to compare the major and minor news items' agenda-setting effect is needed.

Secondly, the study was conducted to test, whether there was an immediate agenda-setting effect; the time-lag was only one day. Additionally, this paper used issue mentions in the span of a single day to measure media salience. Based on these findings, cable news doesn't have an immediate effect on the public. In order to better understand the role minor news items have, one would have to observe longer time periods in the media as well as test for a delayed effect.

Thirdly, public salience is measured in this study based on public polling. This indicates, that salience equals popularity, but that is not necessarily so. A voter could consider a candidate as important, but fundamentally oppose them. Thus, the salience could have risen, but not have been reflected in the polls. For this, an in-person interview would be needed, which inquires about whether a voter is concerned about a candidate they dislike. Due to geographical constraints, the author wasn't able to do that.

Finally, first level agenda-setting extends beyond transferring candidate salience; it also includes the original issue salience as the author will explore in the next subchapter.

### 3.2. Issue salience transference

The initial purpose for this paper was to study, whether the issues that occurred most commonly in the news, were also the same ones, that were considered most important by the voters; to explore the original first level agenda-setting function of the media during the 2016 election. It seems however, that only 10% of all election coverage was regarding issues (Patterson 2016, 8).

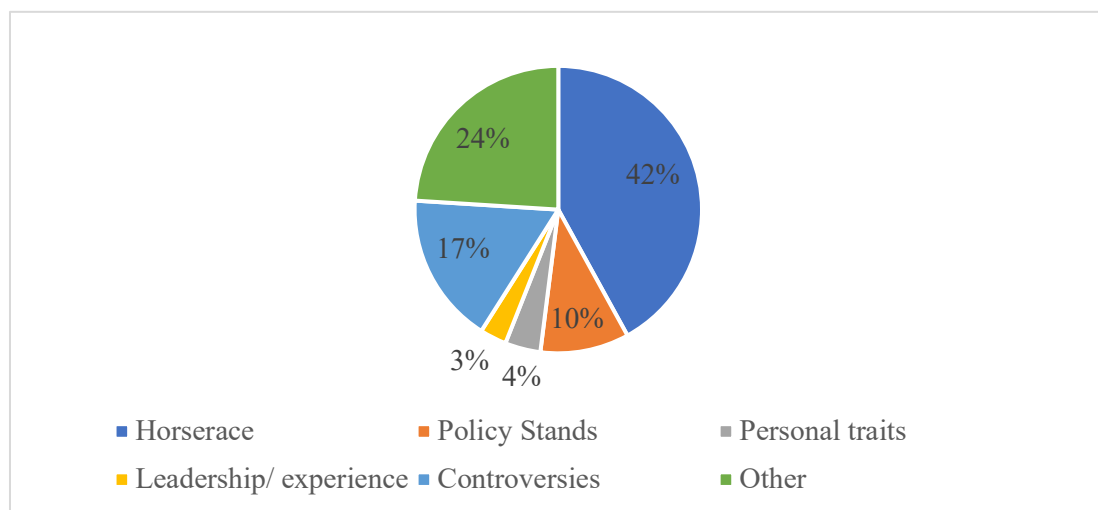
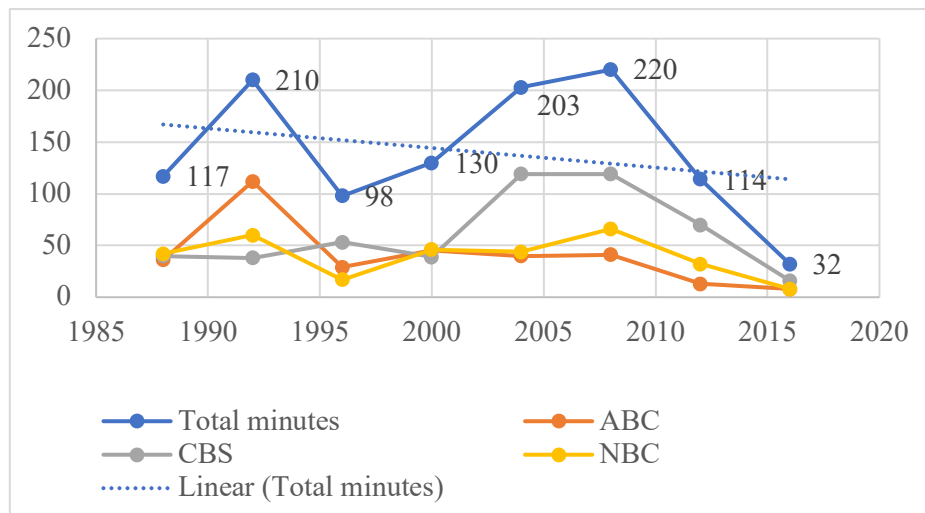


Figure 1. Coverage by topic

*Created by author; Data source: Patterson 2016*

The low amount of coverage of policy clearly indicates, that in the media, campaigns aren't about issues and candidates' positions on those issues. McCombs and Shaw noted in their original work, that media's focus on substantive issue positions is low. In 1968 the coverage of issues was 37% of all election coverage. As shown in Figure 1, in 2016 it is only 10%. Campaign analysis received 28% of attention, in 2016 it is 42%. Perhaps most significantly, controversies or scandals didn't merit a separate category in 1968, in 2016 it was almost one fifth of all coverage.



**Figure 2. Issue coverage by Network**

*Created by the author, data source: Tyndall 2016*

According to the Tyndall report (2016), from the late 80s, most campaigns averaged somewhere between 125 and 200 minutes a week on issues across the big 3 network news channels. There was a significant decrease in 1996, but that can be explained by the Monica Lewinsky scandal- a prime topic for the press to focus upon. While the 2012 election already saw a significant decrease in issue coverage, the 2016 elections were historic in that compared to 1988, the three channels combined spent less time on policy questions than every single one of them back in 1988.

Pew Research Center (Gottfried, Barthel and Shearer 2016, 5) reported that while cable news is the most common source of political information; for younger audiences, social media is the most common news platform. Given the divided field of news, an overview of media's role should be observed across all media.

A Gallup poll listed the top 25 answers to the question "most important issue," allowing observations of issue salience on a broader scale (Smith, Saad 2016). The survey was conducted throughout the year 2016. Ideally, national exit polls (also NEP) would have been the primary source for studying public agenda given that they indicate issue salience at a specific time, but the exit polls did not ask open-ended questions regarding top voting issues, instead responders had to choose one of the four listed issues ("Fox News Exit Polls" 2016).

For comparison, a study conducted at Harvard provides close insight into the media's overall coverage of the election. The study found that "Donald Trump succeeded in shaping the election agenda" (Faris et al. 2017, 6). This is critical information for understanding agenda-building, however the focus of this paper will remain on agenda-setting. The relevance of Trump's ability to drive the conversation is apparent, when reviewing the most covered issues during the election cycle: immigration was the most covered; Islam/ Muslims the second (Faris et al. 2017, 7).

For correlation analysis, the categorization of issues is problematic, since some of the key topics are divided into several smaller categories or phrased differently, demonstrating the shortcomings of using secondhand sources. However, this does provide some data to study the agenda-setting effect of the media (Raw data available in Appendices 5 and 6). By combining some of the similar issues on the public agenda (like poverty, lack of money and economy) and excluding some, which are not relevant for issue salience (like moral issues) a list of 18 issues appear, 9 of which can be compared.

Table 1. First level agenda-setting data

Issue	Ranking for media agenda	Ranking for public agenda
Immigration	1	5,5
Terrorism (Muslims/ Islam)	2	5,5
Jobs& Economy	3	1
Race	4	4
Guns	6	13,5
Healthcare	7	7,5
Climate Change	9	13,5
Education	10	9,5
Economic Inequality	12	13,5

*Created by author; Data source: Smith, Saad 2016; Faris et al. 2017*

This provides a dataset which can be analyzed. There, however, are several limitations to this. Firstly, because the media data provides only rankings and not numerical values for issues, the

data had to be analyzed using the Spearman method. Secondly, a dataset of nine is too small to observe any significant correlation. The correlation coefficient is +0.72 with a p-value  $< 0.5$ . This indicates that the correlation between the two data sets is strong and statistically significant, proving hypothesis 4: media set the agenda for the public by transferring issue salience. The limited data however means that no significant conclusions should be made from this.

While this data does demonstrate a reasonably strong correlation, comparing this to the agenda-setting effect of the media in 1968 (+0.967), we see a significantly lower correlation between the media and the public agenda (McCombs, Shaw 1972, 180). There are several explanations for this. Firstly, the research design includes using two sets of different secondhand sources, which means the categorization isn't fully compatible. In addition, McCombs and Shaw conducted their study only by studying undecided voters; this paper however includes all people in order to view media's agenda-setting role on the entire population. Secondly, as shown by Patterson, the election coverage had very little to do with policy positions. In the national exit polls, when asked "which candidate quality mattered the most?" the most popular answer was "can bring change" with 39%. With lower media coverage and low interest on the public's part, it is understandable, that the issue salience transference was low.

## Discussion

For discussion purposes, the author will review possible second level agenda-setting effects of the media.

According to a Pew Research Center report about the 2016 election (Doherty, Kiley, Johnson 2016, 1), people's view of the candidates was at its lowest since 1992. More than 40% of people said, that neither candidate would make a good president. The same report found, that 55% of Trump supporters said that their reason for voting was to keep Clinton from winning, with only 41% saying it was to elect Trump as the next president. For Clinton supporters, this number was 50% against Trump, with 48% for Clinton (Doherty, Kiley, Johnson 2016, 3-4).

According to Patterson (2016, 3), 77% of coverage about Trump was negative as a whole, 64% of coverage about Clinton was also negative. It is very likely, that the high percentage of anti-Trump and anti-Clinton voters were to some extent moved by the negative coverage of the candidate they opposed.

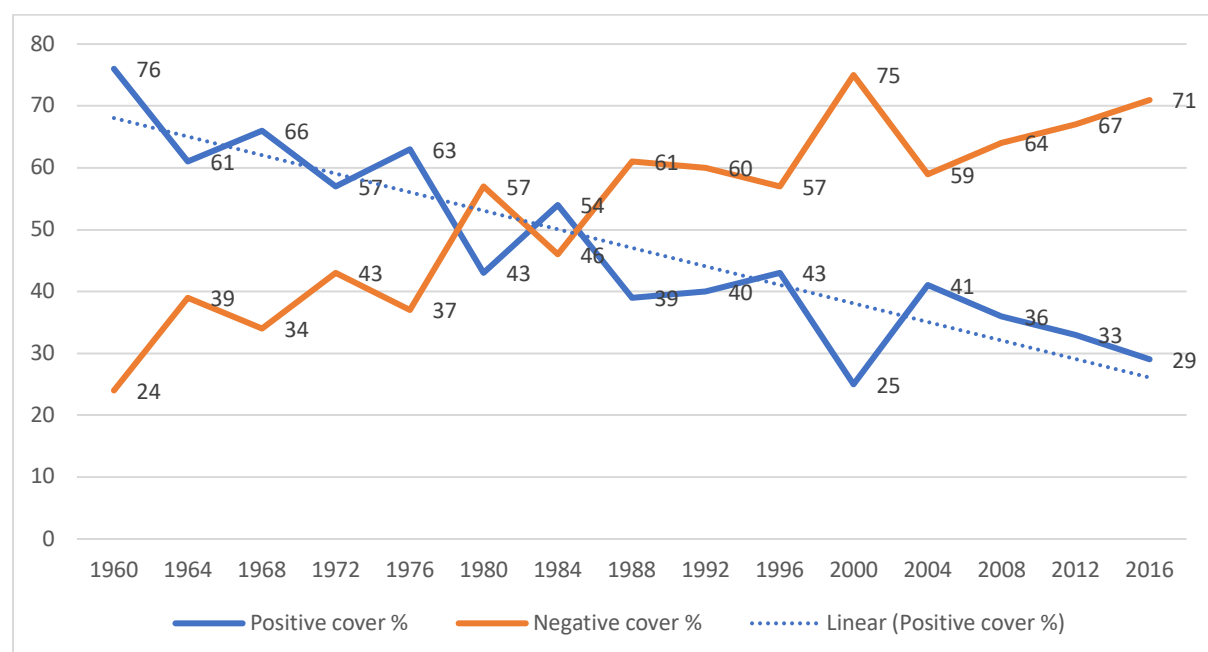


Figure 3. Tone of coverage for the election

*Created by author; Data source: Patterson 2016*

As the coverage of issues seems to have decreased over the years, so has the tone of coverage. The average tone for this general election was 71% negative - 29% positive (Figure 3). Even more remarkable, this number includes positive coverage of “horserace” or campaign analysis. Excluding that, Patterson found that coverage of personal qualities, leadership abilities, ethical standards and policy positions was even more negative: 87% for both candidates. The affective attribute agenda of the public can be determined from the national exit polls (“Exit polls”). Two of the questions included were: “opinion of Hilary Clinton” and “opinion of Donald Trump.”

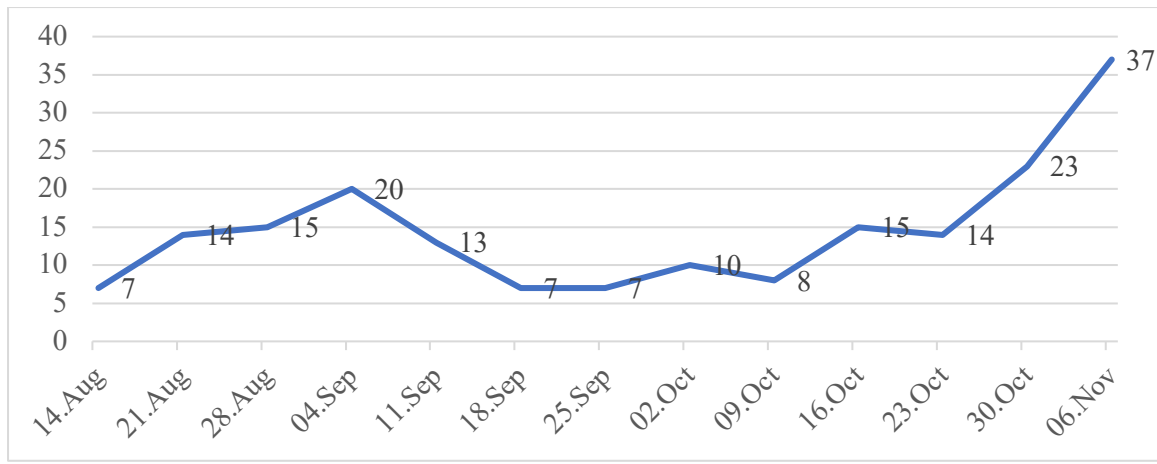
Table 2. Second level agenda-setting data

Exit polls % of responses		Tone of coverage %	
Trump favorable	38	Trump positive	13
Trump unfavorable	60	Trump negative	87
Clinton favorable	43	Clinton positive	13
Clinton unfavorable	55	Clinton negative	87

*Created by author; Data source: CNN, Patterson 2016*

While this paper will not study second level agenda-setting quantitatively, the data in Table 4 strongly indicates that the affective dimension was transferred from the media to the public.

92% of Trump’s media coverage regarding scandals was negative; followed closely by Clinton with 91%. On the exit polls, when asked the question “does Donald Trump's treatment of women bother you?” 70% of people responded yes. When asked “Does Clinton’s use of private email bother you?” 63% answered yes. These are legitimate concerns about harassment and data security, but it is highly probable, that at least to some extent, there was a transference of salience about candidates’ substantive attributes.



**Figure 4. % of Clinton scandal coverage**

*Created by author; Data source: Patterson 2016*

According to a Gallup poll (Newport et al. 2016), Clinton's emails were the first thing people thought of, when asked about her. The decision of FBI director James Comey to reopen the investigation into Clinton's use of a private server was highly criticized, particularly only 11 days prior to a national election (Frizell 2016). According to the exit polls, 26% of voters decided whom to vote for in the last month before the election and of them 48% voted for Trump, 40% for Clinton (12% didn't answer or voted for a 3<sup>rd</sup> candidate). This strongly indicates, that media's attention to Clinton's scandals had a role in shaping people's image of Hillary Clinton as careless, irresponsible and unfit for office. Substantive attribute salience isn't quantitatively studied in this paper but should not be ignored.



## Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to give a detailed overview of agenda-setting theory and to study the agenda-setting effect media had on the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The author observed candidate- and issue salience transference: the first level agenda-setting effects.

The agenda-setting function of the media was first introduced to the public by McCombs and Shaw in 1972. Agenda-setting theory proposes, that media influences public priorities through salience transference. In the first substantive portion of this paper, the author provides a short overview of the original paper titled: “The agenda-setting function of the mass media” and explains the key concepts associated with agenda-setting.

McCombs and Shaw conducted a study, where they observed the agenda-setting effects of news media. By using content analysis, they studied the most prevalent topics in the news and interviewed 100 people to study public opinion. They found a strong correlation between the issues that are most covered in the media and issues that are considered most important by the public.

Transference of issue salience became later known as first level agenda-setting, when the concept of attribute salience transference was introduced. Attributes refer to qualities the objects- issues or people on the news- possess. Media is able to transfer the salience of attributes to the public in the same manner as issues.

The reason people turn to the news media is explained through the need for orientation: a central concept in agenda-setting theory. It refers to people feeling uncomfortable in a new environment; therefore, they use the news to get better acquainted with a foreign topic.

Modern agenda-setting research is mostly focused on social media effects or studying the third level of agenda-setting. Third level agenda-setting refers to the transference of networked pictures: media cannot only transfer object- and attribute salience, but also a connected picture of the them.

The second substantive portion of this paper explains the methodology of McCombs and Shaw in 1968 as well as gives a detailed overview of how the author measures media's agenda-setting effect in the 2016 presidential election.

The author proposes four hypotheses: cable news set the agenda by transferring candidate salience; Fox News had the strongest agenda-setting effect; aggregate news coverage of the candidates had a stronger correlation to the public agenda than any single channel and media set the agenda by transferring issue salience.

In the first part of the empirical work, the author disproves the first three hypotheses. None of the three observed cable news channels had a significant effect on the popularity of the candidates the following day; Fox News did not have an observably stronger effect than MSNBC or CNN and the aggregate coverage across the three channels did not yield a stronger correlation than the three distinct channels. The author attributes this to the short time-lag chosen for observation: an immediate effect couldn't be observed, but that doesn't mean that news captions didn't have an accumulated effect over time.

In the second part of the empirical work, the author studies issue salience transference. Data shows, that policy issues had a very low impact on the election in general. Due to limited data availability, only 9 pairs of issues could be observed. This produced a strong and significant correlation, but given the small dataset, these results must be viewed critically.

In the discussion, the author observes exit polling for the 2016 general election along with a detailed study which analyzes the tone of coverage for the 2016 election. There is strong evidence to suggest the media may have had a second level agenda-setting function during the elections. Further observations of these effects are required.

## Appendix 1:

	CNN number of mentions					
Date	Trump	Clinton	Sanders	Cruz	Carson	Rubio
01.02.2016	20	19	19	19	12	19
02.02.2016	21	20	19	21	13	20
03.02.2016	25	20	19	20	15	20
04.02.2016	17	18	17	14	10	13
05.02.2016	19	17	16	19	13	20
06.02.2016	18	16	16	16	11	18
07.02.2016	15	16	16	15	10	15
08.02.2016	11	11	11	10	5	11
09.02.2016	19	19	19	19	9	19
10.02.2016	31	19	18	25	14	20
11.02.2016	24	19	19	25	7	18
12.02.2016	18	20	16	13	5	11
13.02.2016	20	17	15	19	8	13
14.02.2016	16	16	12	16	14	17
15.02.2016	13	11	11	12	10	13
16.02.2016	21	20	18	19	13	19
17.02.2016	20	20	21	20	15	16
18.02.2016	18	20	17	16	15	16
19.02.2016	15	18	11	15	10	15
20.02.2016	16	16	15	16	11	15
21.02.2016	25	25	25	24	15	24
22.02.2016	12	18	12	12	9	12
23.02.2016	18	25	20	17	14	17
24.02.2016	18	21	16	17	15	16
25.02.2016	20	18	18	19	16	20
26.02.2016	15	19	10	15	11	17
27.02.2016	19	25	29	16	6	17
28.02.2016	20	21	35	19	5	19
29.02.2016	12	14	25	11	5	11
01.03.2016	23	23	45	22	12	22

*Created by author; Data source: Internet Archive*

## Appendix 1 (continued):

Date	Trump	Clinton	Sanders	Cruz	Carson	Rubio
02.03.2016	19	19	19	19	15	19
03.03.2016	27	19	18	20	13	21
04.03.2016	19	14	10	14	5	15
05.03.2016	17	17	16	17	11	18
06.03.2016	19	19	18	14	5	17
07.03.2016	17	15	15	14	1	12
08.03.2016	23	20	20	20	3	21
09.03.2016	19	19	19	19	2	19
10.03.2016	15	16	17	14	3	12
11.03.2016	20	19	12	18	15	18
12.03.2016	24	19	22	19	5	18
13.03.2016	19	16	17	14	7	14

*Created by author; Data source: Internet Archive*

## Appendix 2:

Public Support %						
Date	Trump	Ted Cruz	Marco Rubio	Ben Carson	Clinton	Sanders
01.02.2016	35.8	19.6	10.2	7.6	51.6	37.2
02.02.2016	35.8	20.3	10	7.5	51.6	37.2
03.02.2016	35.8	20.3	10	7.5	51.6	37.2
04.02.2016	33.6	20.4	12.2	8.2	51.8	36.3
05.02.2016	33.2	20.7	13.3	7.8	50.4	36.4
06.02.2016	31.8	20.6	15.8	7.4	49.8	36.4
07.02.2016	29.5	21,00	17.8	7.8	49.3	36
08.02.2016	29.5	21,00	17.8	7.8	49.3	36
09.02.2016	29.5	21,00	17.8	7.8	49.3	36
10.02.2016	29.5	21,00	17.8	7.8	49.3	36
11.02.2016	29.5	21,00	17.8	7.8	49.3	36
12.02.2016	29.5	21,00	17.8	7.8	49.3	36
13.02.2016	29,00	21,00	20.3	7.3	49	35.3
14.02.2016	29,00	21,00	20.3	7.3	49	35.3
15.02.2016	29,00	21,00	20.3	7.3	49	35.3
16.02.2016	31.7	19.7	20.3	6.7	49	35.3
17.02.2016	33.3	22,00	17.7	6	48	38
18.02.2016	34.2	20.6	16	6.6	47.6	42
19.02.2016	34.2	20.6	16	6.6	47.6	42
20.02.2016	33.0	21.3	15.3	7.3	47.6	42
21.02.2016	33	21.3	15.3	7.3	47.6	42
22.02.2016	33	21.3	15.3	7.3	47.6	42
23.02.2016	33.6	20.4	16.4	7.5	47.6	42
24.02.2016	33.6	20.4	16.4	7.5	47.6	42
25.02.2016	33.2	20.3	16.7	8.2	47.2	42.2
26.02.2016	33.2	20.3	16.7	8.2	47.2	42.2
27.02.2016	32.8	20.4	16.6	9.0	47.8	42.2
28.02.2016	32.8	20.4	16.6	9.0	47.8	42.2
29.02.2016	35.6	19.8	17.4	9.0	49.6	40

*Created by author; Data source: RealClearPolitics 2016*

## Appendix 2 (continued):

Date	Trump	Ted Cruz	Marco Rubio	Ben Carson	Clinton	Sanders
01.03.2016	35.6	19.8	17.4	9.0	49.6	40
02.03.2016	35.6	19.8	17.4	9.0	49.6	40
03.03.2016	35.6	19.8	17.4	9.0	49.6	40
04.03.2016	35.6	19.8	17.4	9.0	49.6	40
05.03.2016	35.6	19.8	17.4	9.0	50	40.2
06.03.2016	35.6	19.8	17.4	9.0	50	40.2
07.03.2016	37.5	19.3	18.3	8.7	50	40.2
08.03.2016	36.0	20.8	18.6	8.7	51	39.6
09.03.2016	36.0	21.8	18.0	N/A	51	39.6
10.03.2016	36.0	21.8	18.0	N/A	51	39.6
11.03.2016	36.0	21.8	18.0	N/A	51	39.6
12.03.2016	36.0	21.8	18.0	N/A	51	39.6
13.03.2016	36.0	21.8	18.0	N/A	51	39.6
14.03.2016	36.0	21.8	18.0	N/A	51	39.6

*Created by author; Data source: RealClearPolitics 2016*

### Appendix 3:

	MSNBC number of mentions					
Date	Trump	Clinton	Sanders	Cruz	Carson	Rubio
01.02.2016	22	17	17	18	15	17
02.02.2016	13	13	12	13	8	13
03.02.2016	21	20	21	21	14	20
04.02.2016	23	20	20	21	18	20
05.02.2016	19	21	21	12	11	13
06.02.2016	17	17	16	13	13	13
07.02.2016	17	14	12	10	5	13
08.02.2016	13	15	12	9	2	14
09.02.2016	16	17	16	16	10	18
10.02.2016	15	12	12	13	7	12
11.02.2016	10	13	13	10	6	10
12.02.2016	20	25	18	16	6	14
13.02.2016	13	16	13	14	7	11
14.02.2016	10	12	11	10	9	11
15.02.2016	13	12	7	10	5	9
16.02.2016	22	19	14	14	6	12
17.02.2016	11	13	12	9	6	10
18.02.2016	20	19	18	17	13	16
19.02.2016	17	20	17	13	4	10
20.02.2016	15	16	15	12	5	13
21.02.2016	19	18	18	15	11	17
22.02.2016	19	23	19	18	9	18
23.02.2016	23	28	20	21	19	20
24.02.2016	12	15	12	12	8	12
25.02.2016	17	21	16	17	10	17
26.02.2016	16	15	15	14	7	13
27.02.2016	13	9	18	9	2	8
28.02.2016	12	13	27	7	6	7
29.02.2016	18	25	30	10	2	11
01.03.2016	21	19	54	14	7	17

*Created by author; Data source: Internet Archive*

### Appendix 3 (continued):

Date	Trump	Clinton	Sanders	Cruz	Carson	Rubio
02.03.2016	10	9	8	14	6	9
03.03.2016	21	16	15	18	14	17
04.03.2016	17	14	10	13	8	15
05.03.2016	20	17	18	13	7	13
06.03.2016	21	17	16	18	4	17
07.03.2016	24	21	20	17	4	24
08.03.2016	27	20	20	23	9	21
09.03.2016	20	20	20	20	6	20
10.03.2016	19	20	21	18	0	19
11.03.2016	23	21	19	18	18	18
12.03.2016	17	15	16	12	5	14
13.03.2016	21	12	12	15	3	14

*Created by author; Data source: Internet Archive*



## Appendix 4:

	Fox News number of mentions					
Date	Trump	Clinton	Sanders	Cruz	Carson	Rubio
01.02.2016	23	21	20	24	15	22
02.02.2016	20	19	19	19	15	19
03.02.2016	24	22	22	23	18	7
04.02.2016	7	7	7	7	7	7
05.02.2016	23	21	21	21	10	21
06.02.2016	8	8	8	7	6	8
07.02.2016	22	22	17	19	19	23
08.02.2016	22	19	17	23	17	23
09.02.2016	22	24	22	25	14	25
10.02.2016	22	21	21	20	13	21
11.02.2016	34	26	24	28	17	19
12.02.2016	26	24	24	24	20	21
13.02.2016	38	35	22	26	13	17
14.02.2016	27	27	16	21	15	17
15.02.2016	29	28	14	17	8	14
16.02.2016	26	25	19	21	13	20
17.02.2016	3	2	2	3	2	2
18.02.2016	3	2	1	2	1	1
19.02.2016	7	7	7	8	4	7
20.02.2016	22	22	16	17	13	17
21.02.2016	22	21	21	20	17	21
22.02.2016	21	21	21	19	12	20
23.02.2016	22	20	18	21	19	21
24.02.2016	18	18	18	18	15	18
25.02.2016	22	24	19	22	18	22
26.02.2016	22	21	14	21	17	21
27.02.2016	23	22	16	23	9	24
28.02.2016	22	21	20	22	13	22
29.02.2016	19	19	19	19	16	19
01.03.2016	22	22	16	21	16	22

Created by author; Data source: 1

## Appendix 4 (continued):

Date	Trump	Clinton	Sanders	Cruz	Carson	Rubio
02.03.2016	13	13	13	13	12	13
03.03.2016	26	21	16	21	19	23
04.03.2016	26	20	13	22	8	25
05.03.2016	20	16	14	19	12	19
06.03.2016	16	16	12	15	6	14
07.03.2016	21	20	20	20	2	19
08.03.2016	24	21	21	22	8	22
09.03.2016	21	21	21	21	6	20
10.03.2016	21	18	14	21	5	21
11.03.2016	21	21	13	20	18	20
12.03.2016	24	19	20	22	14	22
13.03.2016	23	22	20	22	10	22

*Created by author; Data source: Internet Archive*

## Appendix 5:

Combined media agenda issue ranking	
Rank	Issue
1	Immigration
2	Muslims/ Islam
3	Jobs& Economy
4	Race
5	Trade
6	Guns
7	Healthcare
8	Female Health
9	Climate Change
10	Education
11	Policing
12	Economic Inequality

*Created by author; Data source: Faris et al. 2017*

## Appendix 6:

Public agenda based on Gallup poll	
Value in %	Issue
16	Economy
13	Government
9	Unemployment/Jobs
8	Race relations
7	Immigration
6	Terrorism
6	Elections/ Election reform
5	National security
5	Fed. Deficit/ Debt
5	Healthcare
4	Ethics/ Morals
4	No opinion
6	Other noneconomic
6	Unifying the country
6	Lack of respect for each other
6	Crime/ violence
6	Poverty/ homelessness
6	Education
2	Environment
2	Judicial system
2	Lack of money
2	Gap between rich and poor
2	Foreign aid
2	Situation in Iraq
2	Guns

*Created by author; Data source: Smith, Saad 2016*

## References:

“2016 Presidential primary election schedule.” 2016. *The Washington Post*.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/2016-election/primaries/schedule/>  
(17.05.20).

„2016 Democratic Presidential Nomination.” 2016. *RealClearPolitics*.  
[https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2016/president/us/2016\\_democratic\\_presidential\\_nomination-3824.html](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2016/president/us/2016_democratic_presidential_nomination-3824.html) (17.05.20).

„2016 Republican Presidential Nomination.“ 2016. *RealClearPolitics*.  
[https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2016/president/us/2016\\_republican\\_presidential\\_nomination-3823.html](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2016/president/us/2016_republican_presidential_nomination-3823.html) (17.05.20).

Benton, Mark, P. Jean Frazier. 1976. “The agenda-setting function of the mass media.”  
*Communication Research* 3(3): 261–274.

Camaj, Lindita. 2014. “Need for Orientation, Selective Exposure, and Attribute Agenda-Setting Effects.” *Mass Communication and Society* 17(5): 689-712.

Caulk, Angela Jean. 2017. “Trumpism: How agenda setting in the media drove a movement.”  
Master’s thesis. Iowa State University.

Cheng, Zhuqing, 2014. "An Examination of the First- and Second-Level of Agenda- Building with the Image of China’s President Xi Jinping in Xinhua and Four U.S. News Outlets.”  
Master’s Thesis. Syracuse University.

Cobb, Roger, Charles Elder. 1971. “The Politics of Agenda-Building: An Alternative Perspective for Modern Democratic Theory.” *The Journal of Politics* 33(4): 892-915.

Cohen, Bernard C. 1963. *The Press and Foreign Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Coleman, Renita, Maxwell McCombs, Donald Shaw, David Weaver. 2009. "Agenda setting." In *The handbook of journalism studies*, eds. K. Wahl-Jorgensen, T. Hanitzsch. New York: Routledge, 147- 160.

Doherty, Carroll, Jocelyn Kiley, Bridget Johnson. 2016. "2016 Campaign: Strong Interest, Widespread Dissatisfaction." *Pew Research Center*. July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016. <https://www.people-press.org/2016/07/07/2016-campaign-strong-interest-widespread-dissatisfaction/> (16.05.2020).

Entman, Robert. 1993. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43(4): 51-58.

"Exit polls." 2016. *CNN*. November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016. <https://edition.cnn.com/election/2016/results/exit-polls> (16.05.2020).

Faris, Robert, Hal Roberts, Bruce Etling, Nikki Bourassa, Ethan Zuckerman, Yochai Benkler. 2017. "Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation: Online Media and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election." *Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society Research Paper*. August 2017. <https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/33759251> (16.05.2020).

Fox News. 2016. "Fox News Exit Polls." November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/elections/2016/exit-polls> (16.05.2020).

Frizell, Sam. 2016. "FBI Examining Hillary Clinton Emails Found in Anthony Weiner Probe." *Time*. October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016. <https://time.com/4549527/hillary-clinton-emails-fbi-reopen/> (12.05.2020).

Ghanem, Salma. 1997. "Filling in the tapestry: The second level of agenda setting." In *Communication and democracy: Exploring the intellectual frontiers in agenda-setting theory*, eds. M. McCombs, D. Shaw, D. Weaver. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 3-14.

Gottfried, Jeffrey, Michael Barthel, Elisa Shearer, Amy Mitchell. 2016. "The 2016 Presidential Campaign- a New Event That's Hard to Miss." *Pew Research Center*. February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016. [https://www.journalism.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2016/02/PJ\\_2016.02.04\\_election-news\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.journalism.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2016/02/PJ_2016.02.04_election-news_FINAL.pdf) (15.05.2020).

Guo, Lei, Hong Tien Vu, Maxwell McCombs. 2012. "An Expanded Perspective on Agenda-Setting Effects: Exploring the third level of agenda setting." *Revista de Comunicación* (11): 51-68.

Huang, Jon, Samuel Jacoby, K.K. Rebecca Lai, Michael Strickland. 2016. "Election 2016: Exit Polls." *New York Times*. November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/11/08/us/politics/election-exit-polls.html> (16.05.2020).

Internet Archive. 2020. "Television Archive News Search Service." <https://archive.org/details/tvnews> (10.05.2020).

Iyengar, Shanto, Adam Simon. 1997. "News coverage of the Gulf crisis and public opinion: A study of agenda setting, priming, and framing." In *Do the media govern? Politicians, voters, and reporters in America*, eds. S. Iyengar & R. Reeves. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 248–257.

Kiousis, Spiro, Maxwell McCombs. 2004. "Agenda-Setting Effects and Attitude Strength: Political Figures During the 1996 Presidential Election." *Communication Research* 31(1): 36-57.

Kiousis, Spiro, Philemon Bantimaroudis, Hyun Ban. 1999. "Candidate Image Attributes: Experiments on the Substantive Dimension of Second Level Agenda Setting." *Communication Research* 26(4): 414-428.

Kiousis, Spiro, Xu Wu. 2008. "International agenda-building and agenda-setting." *International Communication Gazette* 70(1): 58–75.

Lippmann, Walter. 1922. *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Lopez- Escobar, Esteban, Juan Pablo Llamas, Maxwell McCombs, Federico Rey Lennon. 1998. "Two Levels of Agenda Setting Among Advertising and News in the 1995 Spanish Elections." *Political Communication* 15(2): 225-238.

López-Escobar, Esteban, Juan Pablo Llamas. Maxwell McCombs. 1998. "Agenda Setting and Community Consensus: First and Second Level Effects." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 10(4): 335–348.

McCombs, Maxwell, Donald Shaw, David Weaver. 2014. "New Directions in Agenda-Setting Theory and Research." *Mass Communication & Society* 17(6): 781-802.

McCombs, Maxwell, Donald Shaw. 1972. "The Agenda- Setting Function of Mass Media." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 36(2): 176-187.

McCombs, Maxwell, Donald Shaw. 1993. "The Evolution of Agenda-Setting Research: Twenty-Five Years in the Marketplace of Ideas." *Journal of Communications* 43(2): 58-67.

McCombs, Maxwell, Esteban Lopez-Escobar, Juan Pablo Llamas. 2000. "Setting the Agenda of Attributes in the 1996 Spanish General Election." *Journal of Communication* 50(2): 77-92.

McCombs, Maxwell, George Estrada. 1997. "The news media and the pictures in our heads." In *Do the media govern? Politicians, voters, and reporters in America*, eds. S. Iyengar, R. Reeves. London: Sage, 237-247.

McCombs, Maxwell, Lei Guo. 2014. "Agenda-setting Influence of the Media in the Public Sphere." In *The Handbook of Media and Mass Communication Theory*, eds. R. S. Fortner, P. M. Fackler. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 249-268.

McCombs, Maxwell, Sebastian Valenzuela. 2007. "The Agenda-Setting Theory." *Cuadernos de Information* (20): 44-51



McCombs, Maxwell. 1997. "New frontiers in agenda setting: Agendas of attributes and frames." *Mass Communication Review* 24(1&2): 32–52.

McCombs, Maxwell. 2005. "A look at agenda-setting: Past, present and future." *Journalism studies* 6(4): 543-557.

McCombs, Maxwell. 2010. "Extending our theoretical maps: Psychology of agenda-setting." *Central European Journal of Communication* 2(5): 197-206.

Moraes, Lisa de. 2016. "Cable TV Rankings 2016: Presidential Politics Fuels Ratings Gains." *Deadline*. <https://deadline.com/2016/12/cable-rankings-network-ratings-fox-cnn-msnbc-1201873996/> (17.05.2020).

Newport, Frank, Lisa Singh, Stuart Soroka, Michael Traugott, Andrew Dugan. 2016. "'Email' Dominates What Americans Have Heard About Clinton." *Gallup*. September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/195596/email-dominates-americans-heard-clinton.aspx> (16.05.2020).

Patterson, Thomas. 2016. "News Coverage of the 2016 General Election: How the Press Failed the Voters." *Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy*. December 2016. <https://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2016-General-Election-News-Coverage-1.pdf> (16.05.2020).

Scheufele, Dietram. 2000. "Agenda-setting, priming, and framing revisited: Another look at cognitive effects of political communication." *Mass Communication & Society* 3(2&3): 297–316.

Shaw, Donald, Maxwell McCombs. 1977. *The Emergence of American Public Issues: The agenda-setting function of the press*, eds. D. Shaw, M. McCombs. St. Paul: West Pub. Co.

Smith, Michael, Lydia Saad. 2016. "Economy Top Problem in a Crowded Field." *Gallup*. December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/200105/economy-top-problem-crowded-field.aspx> (16.05.2020).

Stromback, Jesper, Spiro Kioussis. 2010. "A new look at agenda-setting effects: Comparing the Predictive Power of Overall Political News Consumption and Specific News Media Consumption Across Different Media Channels and Media Types." *Journal of Communication* 60(2): 271–292.

Sussman, David. 2017. "Immigration, Trump, and Agenda-Setting in the 2016 Election." *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 41(2): 75-98.

Tyndall, Andrew. 2016. "Tyndall Report." October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016. <http://tyndallreport.com/comment/20/5778/> (16.05.2020).

Vargo, Chris, Lei Guo, Maxwell McCombs, Donald Shaw. 2014. "Network Issue Agendas on Twitter During the 2012 U.S. Presidential Election." *Journal of Communication* 64(2): 296-316.

Vargo, Chris, Lei Guo, Michelle Amazeen. 2017. "The agenda-setting power of fake news: A big data analysis of the online media landscape from 2014 to 2016." *New Media & Society* 20(5): 2028-2049.

Weaver, David, Doris Graber, Maxwell McCombs, Chaim Eyal. 1981. *Media agenda-setting in a presidential election: Issues, images, and interest*. New York: Praeger.

Weaver, David, Maxwell McCombs, Charles Spellman. 1975. "Watergate and the media: A case study of agenda-setting." *American Politics Quarterly* 3(4): 458-472.

Weaver, David. 1977. "Political issues and voter need for orientation." In *The Emergence of American Public Issues: The agenda-setting function of the press*, eds. D. Shaw, M. McCombs. St. Paul: West Pub. Co., 131-139.

Weaver, David. 2007. "Thoughts on Agenda Setting, Framing, and Priming." *Journal of Communication* 57(1): 142–147.

Wu, H. Denis, Renita Coleman. 2009. "Advancing Agenda-Setting Theory: The Comparative Strength and New Contingent Conditions of the Two Levels of Agenda-Setting Effects." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 86(4): 775-789.

## Resümee

### **Meedia võime kujundada esimese tasandi agendat 2016. aasta USA presidendivalimistel**

Läbi aastate on palju uuritud meedia rolli poliitika kujundamisel. Bernard Cohen (1963) ütles, et „uudised ei pruugi suuta öelda inimestele, mida mõelda, kuid nad on hämmastavalt head määramaks millest mõelda.“ Aastal 1972 pakkusid Maxwell McCombs ja Donald Shaw välja agenda kujundamise teooria. Autorid mõõtsid 1968. aasta Ameerika presidendivalimiste eel meedias enim esil olnud teemasid ning võrdlesid seda avaliku arvamusega. Nad avastasid, et esineb tugev korrelatsioon meedia ja avaliku agenda vahel.

Alates 1972. aastast, agenda kujundamise teooria on muutunud keerukamaks ning mitmetahulisemaks. McCombs ja Shaw leidsid, et meedial on võime vormida avalikke prioriteete, määrates millised probleemid on kõige tähtsamad läbi nende kordamise. Teatud teemade pidev esile tõstmine meedias muudab nad avaliku jaoks silmapaistvaks ning seeläbi tähtsamaks.

Agenda kujundamise arenemise käigus mõistsid uurijad, et meedia roll ei piirdu ainult poliitiliste probleemide tähtsuse võimendamisega, vaid laieneb ka isikutele (nagu poliitilised kandidaadid) ning nende omadustele. Seetõttu on meedia mõju avalikkusele jaotatud kaheks alamkategoriaaks: esimese ning teise tasandi agenda kujundamine. Esimese tasandi agenda kujundamine seisneb esemete tähtsuse ülekandumises: esemeteks on peamiselt kas avalikud probleemid või kandidaadid. Teise tasandi agenda kujundamine tähendab esemeid kirjeldavate omaduste ülekandumist: kas isikuomadused kandidaatidel või kindlad aspektid probleemi tajumisel. Teise tasandi agenda kujundamine väidab, et meedia suudab mõjutada omaduste tähtsust samamoodi nagu esemete tähtsust.

Agenda kujundamise kesksed kontseptid on kättesaadavus ning orienteerumisvajadus. Kättesaadavus tähendab, et meedia kujundab agendat läbi kindlate teemade pideva kordamise. Esemete tähtsus kasvab, sest avalikkus kuuleb probleemist pidevalt meedias, mistõttu muutub see kergemini nende peas kättesaadavaks. Orienteerumisvajadus on psühholoogiline kontsept, mis leiab, et inimesed tunnevad end ebamugavalt uue informatsiooni ees seistes; uudised ning meedia pakuvad informatsiooni, mistõttu väheneb vajadus orienteerumaks ning ka sellega

kaasnev ebamugavus. Modernne agenda kujundamise uurimine keskendub sotsiaalmeedia võimele avalikkust mõjutada. On leitud, et sotsiaalmeedia on võimeline agendat kujundama sarnaselt traditsioonilistele meediakanalitele. Samuti on teadlased hakanud uurima meedia võimet kanda üle terviklikke pilte, mitte vaid esemete ning nende omaduste silmapaistvuse suurendamist.

Käesolev töö uuris agenda kujundamist 2016. aasta Ameerika Ühendriikide presidendivalimistel esimesel tasandil. Autor tegi seda läbi kahe empiirilise uuringu. Vaatluse all oli kuivõrd suurel määral kandus kandidaatide tähtsus televisioonikanalilt avalikkusele ning probleemide tähtsus kogu meedialt avalikkusele. Autori metodoloogiline lähenemine oli sarnane McCombs'i ja Shaw omale, vaadeldes esmalt probleemide ning kandidaatide esinemise sagedust meedias ning seejärel võrreldes nende samade esemete tähtsust avalikkuse seas. Nendevahelist seost väljendas autor läbi korrelatsiooni koefitsiendi.

Empiirilise töö käigus hindas autor kolme suure kanali, CNN, MSNBC ja Fox News, võimet kanda üle teadlikkust kandidaatide kohta USA eelvalimiste perioodil. Tulemused näitasid, et ükski kanalitest ei omanud kohest mõju kandidaatide populaarsuse tõstmisel olulisel määral. Autor leiab, et see ei tähenda, et nendel kanalitel puudus mõju, vaid et mõju võib olla pikaajalisem. Samuti ei saa samastada kandidaadi tähtsuse kasvu kandidaadi populaarsusega.

Empiirilise töö teises pooles hindas autor probleemide tähtsuse ülekandumist. Ilmnes, et traditsioonilistel poliitilistel probleemidel oli väga väike roll 2016. aasta valimistel. Piiratud andmete tõttu oli autor sunnitud hindama korrelatsiooni väikese andmestiku põhjal. Need tulemused näitasid olulist ning tugevat korrelatsiooni meedia ning avalikkuse agenda vahel, kuid vähesed andmed ei võimalda üldistavaid järeldusi teha.

Arutluse käigus vaatlleb autor agenda kujundamise teise tasandi andmeid. Madal avalik arvamus kandidaatidest ning negatiivne reportaaž viitavad, et võis esineda ka teise tasandi agenda kujundamine 2016. aasta presidendivalimistel.