

# Agenda-setting assignment

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



5th of November 2012 Agenda-Setting Assignment In agenda-setting news outlets act as gatekeepers of information. Policy agenda is when the media sets their own agenda based on issues that they think are the most important. And when they decide on these most important issues, they give them the highest importance. The media highlights certain aspects because they believe that these aspects are what we should know; and if there is something they don't mention, then that's something that according to them, we shouldn't know – whether for our benefit or theirs.

Despite the simplicity of creating an agenda, every different news outlet has a different agenda, based on their interest or what they believe to be our interest. Something important however to bear in mind is that, even though the media draws our attention to certain issues, they can't tell us how to think about them – at the end of the day, how you perceive an issue depends on you. To give examples on how differently agenda-setting can be used, I will talk about two different news sources, an independent one and a national one.

As a national news outlet I will talk about “ CNN”. CNN (Cable News Network) is both America's first news channel as well as the first channel to offer 24-hour coverage. CNN in the United States is sometimes described as CNN/US to differentiate the American Channel from the International one. CNN/US was founded by Ted Turner in 1980, and since then has been one of the worlds leading news outlets. “ The Independent” is an independent, British, morning newspaper owned by Alexander Lebedev with Chris Blackhurst as the current editor in chief.

The Independent was first launched in 1986 and holds the title as UK's youngest daily newspaper. To analyze different agenda-settings, let's look at two similar news items reported in both of these newspapers and compare their similarities and differences. Let's take the picking of Egypt's new pope as one news story. Both news outlets reported the story completely different. CNN told the story in a very short article that focused primarily on the fact that Christians in Egypt are a minority.

If one were to analyze this article on the terms of Salience and Priming, one would notice very interesting facts. Firstly it's very obvious that CNN's priority is not to talk about the new pope, since he is hardly mentioned throughout the entire article. Instead the article focuses on the terms "Christians". The fact that they are a minority is mentioned several times. They also mention that according to a few forums made, the Christian population in Egypt is between 5 and 9%. The church bombing attack that took place in January killing 21 people was also stated.

However nothing is mentioned about the ceremony itself other than that a blindfolded boy picked one of the three potential popes through picking his name from a crystal bowl. Egypt's former pope is also mentioned. His date and cause of death are also cited. In terms of Framing, it is obvious that CNN has given this story a big importance as it was in the "Top Stories" section. However the words used don't really talk about the event itself but rather inform us about Christians in Egypt. Despite the fact that this event wasn't in The Independent's top news list, they gave the story a bigger importance.

The article was a lot longer than it was in CNN and more importantly it focused on the event itself. They talked about the young boy who had to pick

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a name, about the thousands of cameras that were there, and about how big of an event this was for all 8 million Christians in Egypt. They also quoted many people that said that how important finally having a new pope meant to them and how because of Egypt's current difficult political status, it's good to have a figure that represents faith and hope.

In terms of salience, priming and framing no words were repeated and the articles priority was to display how significant this event was for many people all around the world. This is just one example of how differently news outlets can report similar stories. Lets look at Superstorm Sandy as another example. Unlike the choosing of a new Pope in Egypt - CNN gave this story a lot of attention. Several articles were written with several images displaying just how big of a disaster has happened.

They mention the difficult time that these people are having to go through - not to mention that right now there is another major event happening in the U. S, the elections. Not only are these people dealing with the loss of their homes and lack of electricity but it also seems that another storm will hit New York and northern New Jersey by Wednesday. The weather has decreased suddenly and according to Meteorologists it will continue to drastically decrease. Many people say that it is a very difficult time for these American citizens that have to deal with so much at once.

However it is also mentioned how construction work has immediately begun and how many have started working in the 9/11 ground zero sight that has been destroyed by the flood. Although they mentioned the same facts, The Independent, took a different approach in reporting the story. Firstly they mentioned the state governor Andrew Cuomo and how he is trying to quickly

solve all of the problems that have suddenly arisen, such as the cold weather and lack of electricity hence lack of heat. There is also a problem with the lack of fuel and the inability to run back-up generators.

The difficulty of housing and how many are living in "homes that are uninhabitable", is also a massive problem. Furthermore the article goes on to say that with this new approaching storm, the anger towards the government has increased, saying that they are "moving too slow". The article's main priority is to mention all of the problems the people are facing and how the government isn't very responsive. Words such as "fear, anger, threat, struggling" are used to display just how drastic of an event this is. Overall, the article is very informative and states clear information without using any repetition.

I think by now it's clearly obvious that each news source has a different agenda and a different way of reporting a story. The reason behind that varies. Before I mentioned the storm that took place in America, I mentioned a different neutral event. CNN would obviously have more interest in the storm since it's a national event. Therefore I chose an event that both news outlets aren't directly related to - Egypt picking their new pope. What I noticed however was extraordinary. CNN talked about it very generally.

They didn't mention any details of the event itself and rather focused on the terrorism attacks that have happened with the intention of hurting Christians, the country's minority. They seemed to report the story in such a negative way instead of saying how beautiful and important this event was. The Independent on the other hand reported the story in a wonderful way. They said how important choosing a new pope was for the Christian

population. They also said that how this event brought peace, joy, hope and love to many people around the world. Lets look at the storm as our second issue.

Because CNN is directly -nationally- involved in this event it reported it very differently. It spoke about the difficult times that many are facing, bearing in mind that presidential elections are soon. They also mentioned how construction work has begun to take place quickly. On the other hand The Independent mentioned the lack of response from the government and how many citizens are afraid and aren't sure what to do next. Unlike the previous story where CNN was slightly negative while The Independent reported the story as a positive event, now it's the opposite.

However due to both news outlets orientation its understandable. I mean how would CNN a national news outlet criticize their government for responding to the crisis too slow? It just wouldn't make sense. That's why we should play close attention to a news sources' orientation because they usually create their agenda based on it. Based on their orientation and funding there are things they can and can't say - that's why every news outlet reports news differently then others. Through this, I believe that we should learn to be an active audience.

We shouldn't just limit ourselves to one media source, because that one source can be reporting news based on its agenda, and not on what we, the audience, need to know to create an informed decision on what to think about the event taking place. Furthermore we should not let a media outlet tell us what to think - we should take the information, and create our own opinion about it. Because at the end of the day we're all human beings and

we have the right to think in whichever way we see to be right. Sources: \*

- \* <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/egypts-ancient-coptic-christian-church-chooses-a-new-pope-in-elaborate-ceremony-8280938.html>
- \* [http://us.cnn.com/2012/11/04/world/africa/egypt-coptic-pope/index.html?hpt=wo\\_c2](http://us.cnn.com/2012/11/04/world/africa/egypt-coptic-pope/index.html?hpt=wo_c2)
- \* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CNN>
- \* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Independent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Independent)
- \* [http://us.cnn.com/2012/11/05/us/tropical-weather-sandy/index.html?hpt=us\\_c1](http://us.cnn.com/2012/11/05/us/tropical-weather-sandy/index.html?hpt=us_c1)
- \* <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/temperatures-approach-freezing-as-another-storm-looks-set-to-hit-new-york-in-the-wake-of-superstorm-sandy-8282360.html>