New media's impact on the agenda setting, framing, and priming of political news within the

news hole of partisan and non-partisan news organizations

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Abstract

In 1992, researcher John Zaller developed a theory in the book, The Nature And Origins of Mass Opinion, which stated that the political elite and mass media were responsible for the information the public received for consumption (Zaller, 1992). In other words, the general public (or those who did not have a heavy interest in politics), were force fed whatever the elites, partisan and non-partisan media outlets wanted them to know. In 1992, the Internet was still in its infancy, but newspapers were sprouting on the new technology in order to branch out and reach a new, tech savvy audience. Based on what we know about the impact the Internet now has on how people get their news currently, by seek political news online or from a smart phone application (Pew Research Center, 2012), I predict that Zaller's findings are still relevant 20 years later. My prediction will be supported by data compiled over a 15-day period from six news organizations' online sites that represent print journalism and television journalism as well as varying partisan ideologies. In addition, I examined the word sentiment of two articles between the six media outlets to determine if there was evidence of the practice of media agenda setting or media bias.

Keywords: News Hole, Priming, Agenda Setting, Framing, Media Bias, Positive, Neutral, and Negative Word Sentiment, Agenda Building, News Judgment

Introduction

.   Since 1989 in America, there has been a steady climb of perceived media bias when it comes to political coverage (Pew Research Center, 2012) as 25% of those polled felt that there was a media bias.. Within 23 years, that number has increased to 37% when asked if the media has a strong bias (Chart 1) while 30% acknowledge that a media bias exists. In addition, 21% hardly notice a bias and 10% say that a bias does not exist. Currently, 49% of republicans and 32% of democrats feel that a media bias exists in media political coverage (Pew Research Center, 2012).

But, does media bias matter (or even exist) and does it affect how Americans vote? Seventy percent of Americans in 2004 who said that there was some form of media bias said yes it does (DellaVigna & Kaplin, 2006). Data from a 2006 study conducted found that the 1996 and 2000 elections were significantly impacted in areas that the FOX News Channel was part of the local cable package (DellaVigna & Kaplin, 2006). In fact, the study found that the news network influenced three to eight percent of their audience to vote Republican.

Has the evolution of websites for news channels and traditional print organizations built on the success that DellVigna & Kaplin theorized for FOX News? Roberts, Wanta & Dzwo summarized that the Internet reach is immeasurable, going as far as to say that it provides links to an endless list of news media (Roberts, Wanta & Dzwo, 2002). Researchers Baum and Groeling wrote in 2008 that online media proponents say Web-based news affords smaller

outlets the opportunity to play David to the big media's Goliath, opponents argue that audiences will thin; causing a trickledown effect on how the country operates politically (Baum & Groeling, 2008).

Despite a perceived never ending list of URLs to inform and educate the masses, researcher Matthew Hindman would argue that Internet users actually don't rely on news websites to get their daily news fix. In fact, Web traffic data he observed from Hitwise.com in March 2007 found that nearly 10.5% of Web users flock to adult porn sites, followed by email services (9.6%), and search engines (7.2%)—just 2.9% of Web visitors went news and media sites and .12% found their way to a political Web site (Hindman, 2009). Further research on Experian Hitwise's online page on July 28, 2012 found the following results supporting Hindman's 2007 findings:

The top 10 trending political terms were (Chart 2):

- Drudge Report at 4.58%

- CNN at 1.2%

- DNC at 1.07%

- Ethiopia at 1.05%

- FOX News at 1%

President Barack Obama's Website had more than 2.5 million visits (85.23%) compared to nearly 446,000 visitors (14.77%) on Mitt Romney's site (Chart 3). Obama viewers spent 2:39 minutes on the site compared to Romney's 2:24 minutes (Chart 4).

But, the three million combined visits to the presidential candidates paled in comparison to visits to search engines such as Google (1.5 billion), Bing (244 million), and Yahoo! Search (225 million (Chart 5).

Method

Similar to Baum and Groeling's 2008 findings, in this research study, the data collected answered the following research questions about partisan bias from each organization:

- RQ1 – What is the frequency in which partisan and non-partisan news organization fill their news hole with political articles?

- RQ2 – Are the same news organizations using their websites for framing, priming and/or agenda setting in relation to their news coverage? In other words, do partisan and non-partisan skew their news hole coverage or show a deliberate media bias?

- RQ3 – Is there production differentiation between the coverage of the same news events between the news organizations? In other words, what was the priority of the news stories, how many additional stories (news bullets), videos, audio, photo galleries, audience comments and /or interactive media were tied to the story or what was the weight of news value to each organization?

- RQ4 – Are there more original news stories (by organization and partisanship) than duplicated news stories (such as AP Wire)?

- RQ5 – Are news organizations framing the headlines and/or content of duplicated news stories by using positive, neutral, or negative sentiment?

Are news outlets choosing news reports online based on partisan alliances (Baum & Groeling, 2008)? Are the website headlines slanted towards the right or left? Are the headlines of duplicated political news, such as an AP Wire report, different in the article's unique URL page than on the front page? Is the news being replaced by commentary? All of these questions are what news consumers should ask themselves. With all of this in mind, I hypothesize that:

- H1 – There is a significant difference between the news coverage of politics conservative, liberal and non-partisan news sites in the terms issues such as the economy, the job rate, election topics/primaries and federal governmental policy making.

- H2 – Agenda setting, priming and framing impact the coverage of politics on aforementioned news sites.

- H3 – Cable network websites have a significantly larger focus on international politics than national politics.

During the month of June 2012, data were collected from the six selected news sites for 15 days. Fourteen of them were consecutive and one day was a breaking news event. I selected the top three articles for the websites of four partisan news organizations, two of which, FOX News and The Washington Times, being conservative and the other two, MSNBC (which, as of June 16, 2012, rebranded as NBC.com) and The Washington Post, being liberal. Data was also collected from CNN and USA Today, two non-partisan or moderate news organizations. After data collection was completed, I categorized the news stories as follows:

- Local Politics

- National Politics (Encompasses Congressional legislation and public policy)

- The Presidential Race

- International Politics

- The Economy/Jobs/Federal Government

- The President (Focuses on the President and his cabinet)

- The War on Terror

- Political Blogs/Opinion/Editorials

- State Politics

- Other/Non-Political

The data was charted on a scale of 0% to 100% for the 15 lead stories and total 45 stories. In addition, positive, neutral, or negative sentiment in headline and article content was measured by Open Dover (http://www.opendover.nl/), which measures the emotional sentiment of content. Word sentiment was measured from two articles that appeared on the same day on each Website, one about the elections in Egypt and one about President Obama's new immigration legislation. All of the articles were the lead story on each Website with the exception of the immigration article on the Washington Times Website (the article was the third story on the page).

Literature Review

Zaller's impact 20 years later

The Newsroom, is an American television series created and primarily written by Aaron Sorkin that airs on HBO, chronicles the behind-the-scenes events at the fictional Atlantis Cable News (ACN) channel. The ensemble cast, which includes Jeff Daniels as anchor Will McAvoy, loosely references Zaller's theory in an editorial in the show's third episode. Writers Aaron Sorkin and Gideon Yago show that they are cognizant of how the news is delivered to its audience, by, as stated at the end of the editorial, that the news team at ACN is the "media elite" (Sorkin, Yago, Mottola & Daniels, 2012).

> *Good evening, I'm Will McAvoy, this is News Night…I'm beginning this newscast by apologizing to the American people for our failure – the failure of this program during the time I've been in charge of it to successfully inform and educate the American electorate.*
> *Let me be clear that I don't apologize on behalf of all broadcast journalists, nor do all broadcast journalists owe an apology. I speak for myself. I was an accomplice to a slow and repeated and unacknowledged and unamended train wreck of failures that have brought us to now. I'm a leader in an industry that miscalled election results, hyped up terror scares, ginned up controversy and failed to report on tectonic shifts in our country, from the collapse of the financial system to the truths about how strong we are to the*

dangers we actually face. I'm a leader in an industry that misdirected your attention with the dexterity of Harry Houdini, while sending hundreds of thousands of our bravest young men and women off to war without due diligence.

The reason we failed isn't a mystery – we took a dive for the ratings.

From this moment on, we'll be deciding what goes on our air and how it's presented to you based on the simple truth that nothing is more important to a democracy than a well-informed electorate. We'll endeavor to put information in a broader context because we know that very little news is born at the moment it comes across our wire.

We'll be the champion of facts and the mortal enemy of innuendo, speculation, hyperbole and nonsense. We're not waiters in a restaurant, serving you the stories you asked for, just the way you like them prepared. Nor are we computers, dispensing only the facts because news is only useful in the context of humanity. I'll make no effort to subdue my personal opinions. I will make every effort to expose you to informed opinions that are different from my own.

You may ask who are we to make these decisions. We are MacKenzie McHale and myself. Ms. McHale is our executive producer. She marshals the resources of over 100 reporters, producers, analysts and technicians and her credentials are readily available. I'm News Night's managing editor and make the final decision on everything seen and heard on this program.

Who are we to make these decisions? We are the media elite

The relevancy of Zaller's theory is still prevalent in news coverage as the politically and media elite continue to drive what the public dissects as news. Zaller sites a great example of how the media drove public opinion that impacted the nation's opinion of Defense Department's expenditures. Two years prior to the 1980 election, Zaller estimated that Newsweek ran 57 articles related to defense spending (Zaller, 1992). At the time 25% of American's supported an expanded defense budget, a radical shift from the 10% supporting the issue at the end of the Vietnam War (Zaller, 1992). An increased military budget was one of Ronald Reagan's campaign promises and when he was elected in 1980, for two years after, the media shifted and the stories now painted a picture of the military wasting money on $600 screwdrivers (Zaller, 1992). The shift in coverage did not go unnoticed—public opinion flipped two-to-one wanting the Reagan administration to cut defense spending.

The aforementioned results from the articles by Newsweek and other media outlets actually contradict a studying finding that media agenda translates into public agenda optimally

and is then forgotten within three weeks for a regional paper, four weeks for local paper, and eight weeks for a national news magazine (Roberts, et al., 2002). Incidentally, the influence of online news coverage has a shelf life of one day to one week (Roberts, et al., 2002)

More recently, in the book, When the Press Fails, the premise is similar to Zaller's example. Only, this time, the George W. Bush administration's political elite manipulated the media into reporting what they wanted the public to know (Bennett, Lawrence & Livingston, 2007). It was a simple as the non-reaction to Hurricane Katrina due to the President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, who were both vacationing, while Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice shopped in New York and Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove apparently turned off his cell phone (Bennett, et al., 2007). Reporters were left to their own devices and had to fill in the gaps for a number of days as news consumers were left with assumptions and innuendo from the media rather than accountability from the government (Bennett, et al., 2007).

Similarly, it was the Bush administrations' manipulation of the media to prevent many of the bigger media outlets to callout the military for the alleged torture Abu Ghraib. Photos by CBS News were withheld, per request of the Defense Department for two weeks (until other reporters and news outlets were threatening to break the story) (Bennett, et al., 2007). Early reports by some media outlets referred to it as mistreatment or an abuse scandal—many were influenced to drop the term scandal and many organizations were cautious as to how they framed the story. The Bush administration claim was that the alleged was actually isolated abuse (Bennett, et al., 2007).

Partisan news and consumer loyalty

Of the six Websites used to collect data to support my prediction, four of them are considered partisan or represent a political ideology towards to right or the left. Although the

targeted Websites are all household name news organizations and, on the surface, they would

appear to be the representation of the print or broadcast version of the outlet, Websites are geared

to reach out to a more loyal audience looking for something beyond the traditional publication

(Baum & Groeling, 2008). Baum and Groeling found evidence in their 2008 study that FOX

News tends to a strong media bias to the right while there was evidence that the perceived non-

partisan Associated Press (which all news organizations used in the data collection portion of this

study) sometimes posted storied that could be considered damaging to the GOP (Baum &

Groeling, 2008).

Baum and Groeling quoted Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) that getting both

sides of the story puts Americans in a place to make better decisions but Baum and Groeling

argue that reliance on partisan sites (in the case of their study, blogs) could potentially pose a

significant challenge to American democracy. In other words, the political agenda of the media

andthe politically elite is eroding the public political decision making process and creating an

elite domination of public opinion (Zaller, 1992), which is the process of influencing an opinion

to the public that would differ if citizens researched the issue rather than depend on what is

force-fed to them.

The agenda setting of mass media

Rogers and Dearing define agenda setting as the process of the media setting the priority

of the news and current issues (Rogers & Dearing, 2007). Agenda setting easily goes hand-and-

hand with agenda building, which is the influence of the politically elite married with public

agenda, policy agenda and media agenda, the three cornerstones of the agenda setting process

(Rogers & Dearing, 2007). Other tools employed by the media and politically elite include

priming, which employs the suggestion of benchmark issues for evaluating the performance of

leaders and governments and framing, which ties assumption and presentation in relation to headlines and news content (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

McCombs and Shaw hypothesized in 1972 that the media sets the agenda and attitudes for all elections (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) by putting more focus on particular issues than others. We can point to the aforementioned passage about the 1980 election campaign issue of increasing defense spending Zaller cited (Zaller, 1992). Not much has changed since 1972 as far as access to politicians. As McCombs and Shaw state, candidates use the media (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) to reach the public—whether it is through their own Website, Facebook page, a YouTube video that went viral or from an online article by CNN, in one form or another, politicians today are still reaching the public through mass media.

Similar to the methods used by McCombs and Shaw, the data collected for this study from the news Websites were treated like a newspaper. Any political article that appeared as a lead on the front or in the top three stories in the news hole was documented and categorized (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Rather than interviewing, the importance of lead was considered as what McCombs and Shaw termed major news content.

Word sentiment and its relationship with framing the news

Does word sentiment in a news story create an opinion? Kim and Hovy ask that very question (Kim & Hovy, 2004). According to their findings, sentiments, be it positive, negative, or neutral, always involve the holder's emotions or desires, and may be present explicitly or implicitly (Kim & Hovy, 2004).

In other words, in the text of a news article, word sentiment can be found overtly— clearly, New Yorkers do not support the soda ban—to subtly—Obama's new immigration policy puts states with differing laws in a difficult position. The flaw in determining word sentiment is

that some words carry stronger sentiment than others and can sometimes be used out of context (Kim & Hovy, 2004). An example found in my data was illegal immigrants. Illegal, which has negative sentiment, is a common descriptor used to describe immigrants who have made their way into American through non-traditional channels.

Results

CNN

During the 15-day data collection period, the lead stories on CNN.com had a political focus 53% of the time with 51% of the political leads covering international politics (Chart 5-6). National politics was not a lead priority for CNN—the organization did not have a nationally political article once in the 15-day period. In fact, national politics were only covered by the non-partisan news outlet 2% of the time within their top three articles. Overall, CNN's top three articles covered politics 42% of the time (Chart 6-7) while non-political features appeared 58% of the time. The War on Terror and international politics accounted for over 50% of the political stories in the top three.

Word sentiment measured for the article, Muslim Brotherhood-backed candidate wins in Egypt (CNN Wire Staff, 2012), had an overall positive score from Open Dover of 15 (Charts 30-31). Only three negative words (sagging, failing, and difficult) were used in the article for a value of -6 while words like prominent, powerful, and, stability were some of the positive words used.

The word sentiment of the article, Obama administration to stop deporting some young illegal immigrants (Cohen, 2012) had a negative value of 23 compared to a positive value of 25, leading to an overall score of 2 (Charts 32-33). Words such as strong, sensible, and more

efficient were balanced with unlawful, unconstitutional, and threatened. Only Neutral words appeared in the headlines of both articles.

The data shows that if CNN has any type of news agenda, its focus leans toward international policy. CNN's coverage of their stories did include a number of packages such as videos from their television reports, photo galleries and related stories. In addition, within each of their articles is a bullet list summary of the article and links to other stories and additional videos with the content of their articles. CNN generally covered what it reported and rarely relied on wire reports or what other news organizations were reporting on their websites. What the site lacks in political coverage, it makes up in presentation.

Forty-two percent of CNN's top three articles in their news hole had a political angle; 53% of the leads were politically charged—showing that the non-partisan news service hovered near the middle when it came to potentially pushing its media bias.

FOX News

FOX News covered politics 87% of the time in their lead story and 38% of those stories covered national politics (Charts 10-11). Fifteen percent of the lead political articles covered the economy, jobs, and /or the Federal government and another 15% covered the War on Terror. The remaining 32% of the political leads were evenly divided among international politics, state politics, the presidential race, and articles about President Obama. Similarly, FOX News' top three stories covered politics 73% of the time, once again, evenly distributing the subject coverage (Chart 12-13).

FOX News' word sentiment examination for the article, Muslim Brotherhood-backed candidate Morsi wins Egyptian presidential election (FOX New.com & The Associated Press, 2012), displayed an overall score of 18 points as the article used eight positive words compared

to two negative words (Charts 34-35). Word sentiment for the immigration policy article, [Obama suspends deportation for thousands of illegals, tells GOP to pass DREAM Act](#) (FOX New.com & The Associated Press, 2012), scored a -2 as the writer choose words like criminal, slow, and aggressive which trumped positive words like best, responsible, and significant (Charts 36-37). The headlines for both stories only used neutral words.

The conservative FOX News clearly has a political news agenda to the right, which was also discovered by the findings of Baum and Groeling in 2008 study (Baum & Groeling, 2008). It appeared as though FOX News utilized all of its resources to its full extent in order to cast a wide net of political news coverage across the nation, but the site did have the tendency, particularly when it came to international news, to rely on the Associated Press. Similar to CNN, FOX News packages their articles with video reports and photo galleries, but more than often, readers will find and opinion piece or blog in the bullet package. On occasion, FOX News also led with political opinion/editorials.

Due to an 87 and 83 percentage of leads and articles in the top three respectively collected for 15 days from the news hole, FOX New's media elite has a high chance to present their political media bias.

MSNBC

With a 67% focus on political leads, MSNBC spread their political coverage between 10% each of national politics, the presidential race, the economy, jobs, and/or the Federal government, and political opinion/editorial pieces and the remaining 60% on in international politics, state politics and President Obama (Chart 14-15). The overall top three stories feature political articles 56% of the time as the Website focus more on feature within its top news hole (Chart 16-17).

Word sentiment for the Egypt election article, Mohammed Morsi, Egypt's next president: Protesters' bloodshed will not be in vain (NBC News & msnbc.com news services, 2012), found the liberal Website using no negative words in the article, therefore placing a word sentiment score of 12 (Charts 38-39). In the immigration article, Obama administration won't seek deportation of young illegal immigrants (O'Brien & msnbc.com, 2012), the 13 positive words were valued at 40 points compared to the -13 points from the negative words (Charts 40-41).

A brief summarization of MSNBC would slightly mimic that of FOX News but with a liberal spin. Like FOX News, MSNBC took advantage of it resources, which was evident by the even distribution of political news the network decided was necessary for the Website's news hole. But, similar to FOX New again, MSNBC would also use Associated Wire reports occasionally in their top three articles. Since MSNBC has access to a number television new networks, stories consistently had a multimedia package and, like FOX News, blogs and opinions in the bullet links.

The data shows that MSNBC's 67% of political leads and 56% political articles in the top three of the news hole affords the partisan news organization the lowest level of setting their news agenda between the partisan outlets studied.

USA Today

The results from the data collection of USA Today's lead stories showed that politics was not a top priority. Political stories appeared 27% of the time during the 15-day period with nearly half of them covering international affairs (Charts 18-19). Similar to the other non-partisan example, CNN, USA Today's focuses on features for their lead stories rather than politics. The number of non-political features drops to 56% when the top three stories were categorized (Charts 20-21) but these articles still outweighed and even distribution of political articles (44%).

USA Today's word sentiment measurements for the article, Egypt's incoming leader Morsi calls for peace, unity (Lynch, 2012), had an overall score of 8 (Charts 42-43), with only two positive words (respectful and great) and one negative word (difficult). Neutral words dominated the article (49) and the headline had one neutral word. Similarly, the article, Obama easing deportation rules for young people (Wolf, 2012), had 72 neutral words (Charts 44-45), but the positive sentiment of 16 words, outweighed the negative sentiment of seven words.

USA Today's news agenda leaned towards more features or news that didn't require in-depth reading. Sometimes, the headline told the whole story. For example, this June 3 headline read, Tiger Woods rallies to win Memorial (DiMeglio, 2012). The paper also chose to fill their news hole at times with stories like Cops: Mo. Woman cooked meth inside Wal-Mart (Alcindor, 2012). USA Today did the least amount of packaging with their stories and relied heavily on Associated Press wires. The website also packages their news as it develops throughout the day in blog form and generally leaves it off of the front page.

If USA Today's media elite are trying to influence the public, they aren't doing so in the news hole of their Website. This is evident due to percentages of 27 and 44 of leads and top three political articles in the news hole.

The Washington Post

Politics dominated the headlines of The Washington Post's Website—93% of the headlines in the 15-day observation period were political and of those 51% were international news stories (Charts 22-23). The trend continues as 73% of the stories in the top three in the news hole cover an even distribution of political stories (Charts 24-25).

The Post's word sentiment of the article, Mohamed Morsi named new Egyptian president (Londoño & Brulliard, 2012), had 59 neutral words, eight positive words and seven negative

words with an overall value of 11 points (Charts 46-47). Despite the close number of positive

and negative words, the value of some of the positive words such as tremendous (8 points) and

pleased (5 points) outweighed the highest valued negative phrase deeply unpopular (-4 points).

The article, [U.S. will stop deporting some illegal immigrants who came here as children](#)

(Wallsten, 2012), showed similar results with 64 neutral words, seven positive words and three

negative words and a score of 15 (Charts 48-49). Again, high valued positive words like

prominent (8 points) overshadowed negative phases such as more difficult (-3 point).

The Washington Post's Web page heavy political coverage may be a reflection of its

location but as it was mentioned, 47% of the leads covered international politics compared to

13% of national political news. Because the Post was one of two local media outlets, they were

the only one to lead with local politics (13%). But, of all of the partisan news sites studied, the

Washington Post had the most political leads.

The Post packages most of their top stories with supporting article, video, photo galleries,

and opinion pieces. Wire reports were used on occasion but only in breaking news situations and

original content usually replaced the wire reports.

It can be concluded the Washington Post 93% and 73% political leads and political

articles in the top three of the news hole respectively show that their media elite have the

opportunity to present their media agenda if the results of the data collection are true.

The Washington Times

The news focus of lead article of the right-leaning Washington Times was the economy,

jobs, and the federal government (27% of the lead stories). Overall, political affairs were the lead

for the Times 80% of the time. National politics, international politics, state politics and features

of President Obama rounded out the leads for the Times (Charts 26-27).

The Times top three article nearly mimic its leads—84% of the articles in its news hole cover politics (Charts 28-29) and similar to its cross-town rival the Washington Post, there is an even distribution of the types of political coverage.

The word sentiment study of the article, [Islamist candidate Morsi wins Egyptian presidential vote](#) (Michael, 2012), found six positive words with an 18 point value and only one negative word for an overall value of 16 points (Charts 50-51). The second story, [Obama grants legal status to young illegal immigrants](#) (Dinan, 2012), had 52 neutral words, ten positive words and two negative words for an overall score of 22 points (Charts 52-53).

Of all of the news holes studied, the partisan Washington Times was the most consistent with its political coverage. It also had highest percentage of political news, 84%, in its top three stories of its news hole.

The Times rarely packaged their news articles and on the weekends nearly all of their news was wire reports from the Associated Press. It can be concluded the Washington Times has an 80% and 84% window of leads and articles in the top three respectively in their news hole for their media elite to present their political media bias due to the results of the data collection.

Conclusion

From the data gathered (the daily screen grabs and information are individual compressed folders attached to this paper), one hypothesis, Cable network websites have a significantly larger focus on international politics than national politics, comes close to being right. In actuality, international politics was the political news priority of leads and news hole top three of the two non-partisan sites (CNN and USA Today) and of the two liberal partisan outlets (The Washington Post and MSNBC). FOX News and The Washington Times focus on national politics and national policy respectively. Therefore, if my research holds true, we can conclude

that conservative news outlets use their online news hole to report on national affairs while liberal and non-partisan organizations focus on international affairs. Since only the conservative organizations focused on national politics, it would not be completely safe to say that Zaller's theory of news being driven by the media elite is prevalent when it comes to media Websites.

But, as Chart 54 shows, between the six outlets examined, there is a 68% chance that the political lead news articles these Websites are providing are what they want the public to see. When you measure the political leads of the partisan sites only, 82% have the opportunity to set their news agenda to influence their own media bias (Chart 56).

In addition, 62% of the political articles in the news hole of the six outlets have the potential to influence the public politically (Chart 55). When the data is adjusted to show only the percentage of the partisan sites and political news coverage and the chances increase to 72% (Chart 57).

The hypothesis that states that there is a significant difference between the news coverage of politics conservative, liberal and non-partisan news sites in the terms issues such as the economy, the job rate, election topics/primaries and federal governmental policy making is answered by the data due to the aforementioned conclusion that FOX News and The Washington Times primarily focus on national affairs.

Although other studies have found the Internet having a significant role in shaping the the agenda setting process (Roberts, et al., 2002), I cannot safely say so or completely agree. In fact, my data only found statistical evidence of agenda setting, priming and framing of political coverage.

Further Research

In order to answer all of the research questions and complete the hypothesis of this study, human subject polling must be done. The stumbling block polling might bring is a finding enough subjects who don't have a strong political allegiance. The word sentiment software used was flawed and I had to throw out a number of words the processes choose as negative or positive. Again, using human subjects to read headlines and the lead paragraphs of each story and commenting on the perceived word sentiment.

Other changes would include expanding the length of the period studied to 30 days in the each quarter or to an entire year for a consistent outcome. Expanding the number of stories in the news hole from three to five could also be considered. To find a better gauge on the partisan and non-partisan sentiments, a larger number of media outlets would need to be added in other geographic regions. Although three of the media outlets I studied were in the top six of a recent Pew study—CNN, FOX News, and MSNBC—that found Americans use these Websites as a resource for political new (Chart 58), I could easily be accused of having an East Coast bias due to the fact that all of the news outlets are based in the mid-Atlantic.

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Appendix

Chart 2

Top 10 Trending Political Search Terms

Week ending July 28, 2012, compared with July 21, 2012

Search Terms	Search Clicks 07/28/2012	Search Clicks 07/21/2012	Relative Difference
drudge retort	4.54%	<0.98%	New
cnn	1.20%	<0.98%	New
dnc	1.07%	<0.98%	New
ethiopia	1.05%	<0.98%	New
fox news	1.00%	<0.98%	New

Source: Experian Hitwise US

Full Report

Chart 3

2012 Presidential Candidates Websites Visits & Visits Share   **Ranked by US Total**

Week ending July 28, 2012

Websites	Total Visits	Visits Share	Rank 07/21	Rank 07/14	Rank 07/07
Barack Obama	2,573,826	85.23%	1	1	1
Mitt Romney	445,884	14.77%	2	2	2

Source: Experian Hitwise US

Full Report

Source: Experian Hitwise

Chart 4

2012 Presidential Candidates Ranked by Visit Time

Week ending July 28, 2012

Websites	Visit Time	Visits Share
Barack Obama	2:39	85.23%
Mitt Romney	2:24	14.77%

Source: Experian Hitwise US

Source: Experian Hitwise

Chart 5

Top 5 Search Engines by Total Visits

Week ending July 28, 2012

Websites	Total Visits	Visits Share	Rank 07/21	Rank 07/14	Rank 07/07
Google	1,518,939,267	65.90%	1	1	1
Bing	243,977,978	10.59%	2	2	2
Yahoo! Search	225,060,480	9.76%	3	3	3
Ask	75,019,545	3.25%	4	4	4
AOL Search	41,055,049	1.78%	5	5	5

Source: Experian Hitwise US

Chart 30

CNN Open Dover Word Sentiment: Egypt Election Lead Results

Headline:
1 Neutral word
Article Content:
74 Neutral words with a 0 point value
8 Positive words with a 31 point value
3 Negative words with a -6 point value
Positive words:
2 points each -- we are happy; powerful; stability; supportive; modern
5 points each -- better

8 points each -- prominent; grand
Words omitted due to usage -- grand; modern (both used in titles)
Adjusted points: 10 points
Negative Words:
-2 -- sagging; failing; difficult
Positive words: 21 points
Negative words: -6 points
Overall score: 15 points

Chart 32

CNN Open Dover Word Sentiment: Obama Immigration Lead Results

Headline:
1 Neutral word
1 Negative word -- illegal
Words omitted due to usage: illegal -- used to describe immigrants multiple times
Article Content:
68 Neutral words with a 0 point value
9 Positive words with a 25 point value
20 Negative words with a -45 point value
Positive words:
2 points each -- talented; successful; good; strong; sensible; true; responsible
3 points each -- more efficient
8 points each -- great
Negative Words:
-2 points-- illegal (used 11 times with immigrant as a title), unlawful; unconstitutional;
threatened; improper; hostile; negative
-3 points -- more difficult; more stingily
-5 points -- criminal
Adjusted points: Use of illegal 22 points = -23
Positive words: 25 points
Negative words: -23 points
Overall score: 2 points

Chart 34

FOX NEWS Open Dover Word Sentiment: Egypt Election Lead Results

Headline:
4 Neutral words
Article Content:
63 Neutral words with a 0 point value
8 Positive words with a 24 point value
2 Negative words with a -4 point value
Positive words:

2 points each -- stability; important (used twice); strong; reassuring; modern
5 points each -- most powerful
8 points each -- prominent
Words omitted due to usage -- modern (used in title)
Adjusted points: 22 points
Negative Words:
-2 points each: deteriorated; foul
Positive words: 22 points
Negative words: -4 points
Overall score: 18 points

Chart 36

FOX NEWS Open Dover Word Sentiment: Obama Immigration Lead Results

Headline:
1 Neutral word
Article Content:
56 Neutral words with a 0 point value
3 Positive words with a 12 point value
9 Negative words with a -22 point value
Positive words:
2 points each -- responsible; significant
8 points each -- best
Negative Words:
-2 points-- illegal (used 4 times with immigrant as a title); slow; aggressive; not guaranteed
-3 points -- more difficult
-5 points -- criminal
Adjusted points: Use of illegal 8 points = -14
Positive words: 12 points
Negative words: -14 points
Overall score: -2 points

Chart 38

MSNBC Open Dover Word Sentiment: Egypt Election Lead Results

Headline:
3 Neutral words
Article Content:
44 Neutral words with a 0 point value
3 Positive words with a 12 point value
0 Negative words with a 0 point value
Positive words:
2 points each -- stability; peaceful

8 points each -- great
Negative Words:
None
Positive words: 12 points
Negative words: 0 points
Overall score: 12 points

Chart 40

MSNBC Open Dover Word Sentiment: Obama Immigration Lead Results

Headline:
0 Neutral words
1 Negative word -- illegal (omitted due to usage with immigrant as a title)
Article Content:
64 Neutral words with a 0 point value
13 Positive words with a 40 point value
9 Negative words with a -23 point value
Positive words:
2 points each -- Comprehensive (used twice); important (used twice); clean; responsible; strong; significant; effective; decisive
3 points each -- more efficient
8 points each -- winning
9 points each -- very best
Negative Words:
-2 points -- illegal (used 5 times with immigrant as a title); insulting
-3 points -- more difficult (used twice)
-8 points -- criminal
Adjusted points: Use of illegal 10 points = -13
Positive words: 40 points
Negative words: -13 points
Overall score: 27 points

Chart 42

USA TODAY Open Dover Word Sentiment: Egypt Election Lead Results

Headline:
1 Neutral word
Article Content:
49 Neutral words with a 0 point value
2 Positive words with a 10 point value
1 Negative word with a -2 point value
Positive words:
2 points each -- respectful
8 points each -- great

Negative words:
-2 points each -- difficult
Positive words: 10 points
Negative words: -2 points
Overall score: 8 points

Chart 44

USA TODAY Open Dover Word Sentiment: Obama Immigration Lead Results

Headline:
0 Neutral words
Article Content:
72 Neutral words with a 0 point value
16 Positive words with a 44 point value
15 Negative words with a -45 point value
Positive words:
2 points each -- talent; responsible; hardworking; significant (used twice); sensible; productive; huge; true; improving; cautious; realistic
3 points each -- especially justified
4 points each -- very significant
5 points each -- advanced
8 points each -- tremendous
Negative Words:
-2 points-- illegal (used 7 times with immigrant as a title); disapproved; diminished; outdate; inflexible; dangerous
-5 points -- criminal
-8 points -- horrible, violent
Adjusted points: Use of illegal 14 points = -31
Positive words: 44 points
Negative words: -31 points
Overall score: 13 points

Chart 46

Washington Post Open Dover Word Sentiment: Egypt Election Lead Results

Headline:
1 Neutral word
Article Content:
59 Neutral words with a 0 point value
8 Positive words with a 27 point value
7 Negative words with a -16 point value
Positive words:
2 points each -- strong; true; stability; essential; moral
4 points each -- very positive

5 points each -- pleased
8 points each -- tremendous
Negative words:
-2 points each -- weakened; difficult; chaotic; illegitimate; fraudulently; cantankerous
-4 points each -- deeply unpopular
Positive words: 27 points
Negative words: -16 points
Overall score: 11 points

Chart 48

Washington Post Open Dover Word Sentiment: Obama Immigration Lead Results

Headline:

1 Negative word -- illegal (omitted due to usage with immigrant as a title)
Article Content:
64 Neutral words with a 0 point value
7 Positive words with a 22 point value
5 Negative words with a -7 point value
Positive words:
2 points each -- positive; sharp; quickly; sympathetic; significant
4 points each -- overwhelmingly positive
8 points each -- prominent
Negative Words:
-2 points -- illegal (used 2 times with immigrant as a title); aggressive (used twice)
-3 points -- more difficult
Adjusted points: Use of illegal 4 points = -7
Positive words: 22 points
Negative words: -7 points
Overall score: 15 points

Chart 50

Washington Times Open Dover Word Sentiment: Egypt Election Lead Results

Headline:
3 Neutral words
Article Content:
38 Neutral words with a 0 point value
7 Positive words with a 20 point value
1 Negative word with a 2 point value
Positive words:
2 points each -- strong; important (used twice); modern; huge; sharp;
8 points each -- prominent

Words omitted due to usage -- modern (used in title)
Adjusted points: 18 points
Negative words:
-2 points each -- foul
Positive words: 18 points
Negative words: -2 points
Overall score: 16 points

Chart 52

Washington Times Open Dover Word Sentiment: Obama Immigration Lead Results (Only
Website not to lead with story)

Headline:
1 Negative word -- illegal (omitted due to usage with immigrant as a title)
Article Content:
52 Neutral words with a 0 point value
10 Positive words with a 27 point value
12 Negative words with a -2 point value
Positive words:
2 points each -- effective; wisely; patriotic; talented; sensible; productive; comprehensive;
important
3 points each -- especially justified
8 points each -- great
Negative Words:
-2 points -- illegal (used 10 times with immigrant as a title, most illegals used once); not true
-3 points -- more difficult
Adjusted points: Use of illegal 4 points = -10
Positive words: 27 points
Negative words: -5 points
Overall score: 22 points