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Trumpism: How agenda setting in the media drove a movement

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Trumpism: How agenda setting in the media drove a movement

by

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Program of Study Committee:
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Tessa Ditonto
David Peterson

The student author and the program of study are solely responsible for the content of this thesis. The Graduate College will ensure this thesis is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2017

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my son, Alec Damon Caulk. I hope my hard work and dedication will inspire you to greatness.

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ABSTRACT

This study will look at agenda setting in the media and how it aided in the spread of Trumpism. Broadcasts of the three major cable news networks were looked at. The constructed-week method was used to produce a sample of 36 shows that represent 12 days during the selected time frame. A descriptive qualitative content analysis was then used to examine the coverage relating to the main themes of the Trump campaign: immigration, terrorism, crime, economic insecurity, and populism. A survey was then conducted to show how the themes found affected voter behavior. The study found that the amount of coverage signaled to the public that Trump was the most important candidate, and the theme of establishment versus anti-establishment painted Trump as the anti-establishment candidate who was battling the powers that be within the Republican Party.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The 2016 election cycle was anything but conventional; with reality TV star Donald Trump becoming the presidential nominee of the Republican Party, it left a segment of the public wondering how we came to this state of political affairs. Amongst the confusion, a new term was born: Trumpism. What is Trumpism? According to Dr. David E. Tabachnick of Nipissing University, Trumpism consists of four principles: celebrity, nativism, the outsider persona, and a populist appeal (2016). This study looks for those themes and others including, terrorism, crime, and economic insecurity in the coverage of Trump from the three cable news networks: CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC.

For this study, it is also important to look at the candidate being studied in a more meaningful way. This is because the United States has not witnessed the rise of a major-party candidate who espouses both a nativist platform and populist appeal since the Know-Nothing Party of the 1850s and the McCarthy era. As the focus of this study is how agenda setting spread Trumpism, it is important to look at a similar time period in American history when the same type of national movement gained strength. Nativism was prevalent in the Know-Nothing platform. Those themes, as the content analysis will show, were also prominent in Trump's campaign.

Agenda-Setting Theory: Trump, Media, and the American Voter

This study looks at the effects of agenda setting on the rise of Donald Trump. According to Dautrich and Hartley, Americans get their political information from media agencies such as talk radio, print and television journalism (1999, 6). Agenda setting was

chosen because per the theory, issues that are given high priority in the media translate to salience in the public sphere (Kim & Maxwell, 2007). It will also be important to look at second-level agenda setting. When agenda setting occurs, it signals to the public which issues hold importance. When second-level agenda setting is added, it looks at those issues the media deems important and emphasizes particular attributes of those issues and signals how the public should think about them (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). For example, in the realm of Trumpism, an outsider persona is salient and some of the attributes of that might include: an anti-establishment tone in media coverage, or the appearance of Trump as an underdog fighting the Washington elites within the Republican Party. These attributes are then framed in a positive, negative, or neutral way, presented in a cognitive or affective manner, and thus, the process of second-level agenda setting is complete (Golan & Wayne, 2001). In this way, agenda setting, at both levels, tells us what to think about and how to think about it (McCombs & Shaw, 1993).

Past research on agenda setting shows that there is a correlation between the issues the media emphasizes and the issues the public deems important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). What is missing in the literature since the most recent election is how media assisted in the rise of Trumpism through its agenda-setting power. This study uses agenda-setting theory to show that the themes and tones that were salient in coverage of the Trump campaign transferred to the public as they viewed the coverage and decided how to cast their vote. Media through first-level agenda setting portrayed Trump as the most important candidate in the 2016 presidential race. Through second-level agenda setting, media framed the coverage with themes of establishment vs.

antiestablishment, and set Trump up as the anti-establishment candidate, signaling to the public that he is an underdog battling the establishment-wing of the Republican Party.

Overview

This study will use agenda setting by the three 24-hour news networks - Fox, CNN, and MSNBC - to see if there was significant coverage of not only the Trump campaign, but also the themes expressed by the campaign. Those themes, as previously stated, include: immigration, crime, terrorism, economic insecurity and populism. For this research, the dependent variables are the public's opinions and attitudes. The independent variables are frames and attributes in the media coverage. To test this, I distributed and analyzed a survey to show the effects of coverage on voter behavior.

This thesis looks at past literature on the Know-Nothing Party, McCarthyism, and populism to understand the rise of Trumpism. It then looks at past research on agenda setting to see how this process aided in the rise of Trump's candidacy. Next, the method of qualitative agenda-setting analysis is used. This is the primary method for analyzing the coverage of Trump in the media. Last, a survey is used to show how media coverage affects the attitudes and opinions of voters. The objective is to shed light on the Trump phenomenon by looking at the role of media in projecting an unlikely candidate into the Office of the President.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are two aspects of this study that require a review of previous literature; the first being the rise of Trumpism, and the way that media portrayed Trump during the primary election cycle. Agenda setting has been studied for decades by communication researchers and political scientists. Trumpism, however, is a new phenomenon that lacks research. Because of this unique situation, the analysis will draw from past similar movements and studies on the formation of ideology and populist movements.

Trumpism

An ideology is a set of beliefs held by a community or group that explains how they think society should function. It can also act like a prism reflecting these beliefs into their interpretations of the world around them (Jost, Frederico, & Napier, 2009). Trumpism, although possibly short-lived, falls under the definition of an ideology. As discussed by Jost, Frederico, and Napier, political elites have a heavy influence on the formation of ideology (2009). Trump, as a new political elite, would then have this power as well.

Examples of short-lived ideologies are infrequent in American political history, but they do exist. In the 1950s, McCarthyism rose from the uncertainty of the Red Scare. As stated by Hayden, "McCarthyism was a nationalistic, xenophobic response to the perceived threats of the Soviet Union and the Chinese communist led revolution" (2011, p. 12). It also held a belief in a strong state because of the appearance of both internal

and external threats (Savage, 2013). Savage noted that, not only did McCarthy believe

that communists had infiltrated notable offices in the government, but he also believed

in the external threat posed by the Soviet Union (2013). It is thought that after the

events on September 11, 2001, the United States entered a new McCarthy era (Gibson,

2008; Hayden, 2011). Gibson looked at levels of intolerance in government in the first

decade of the 21st century and in the McCarthy era. He found that although intolerance

has declined, there are increases in those who perceive that they have less freedom to

express their beliefs. He also discovered that the perception of decreased civil liberties

led to higher rates of political intolerance.

Aside from McCarthyism, another similar movement was the Know-Nothing

party of the 1850s. The Know Nothings' platform centered on nativist principles.

Specifically, it was Anti-Catholic and anti-Irish. The Irish were stereotyped as being

"...lazy, thieving drunkards, poor material for either a labor force or a citizenry," (Levine,

p. 468, 2001) while Catholics were described as "...the Roman Catholic hierarchy,

structurally and philosophically monarchial and virulently antirepublican, aimed to

subvert self-government and individual freedom everywhere" (Levine, 2001, p. 467).

The party looked to avoid dangers posed by out groups and promoted giving full

citizenship only to those who were born on U.S. soil (Levine, 2001).

Populism

Lastly, along with nativism, Trumpism relies on a populist message (Judis, 2016).

Commeroff described populism as having traits that appeal to the people, play on

emotional triggers, and carry tones of fascism, in its strongest form (2011). Judis on the

other hand, cites Michael Kazin as defining populism as using language that appeals to the masses and paints elite opponents as "self-serving and undemocratic" (2016, 14). Populism relies on an anti-establishment stance, the "us vs. them" mentality, and, maybe most importantly, a charismatic leader. Richard Hofstadter (1955), noted in *Age of Reform,* that modern populist movements were a response to the industrialization of the country (61). Today the response could be the de-industrialization of the country, caused by increasing globalization.

Judis went on to describe the difference between left-wing and right-wing populism. He argued that right-wing populism depends not only on disdain for the elite, but also the view that these elites are giving special favor to other groups such as, immigrants or minorities. He also notes that right-wing populism "looks upward, but also down upon an outgroup" (2016, 15). There is not a clear definition of elites, and they can range anywhere from intellectuals to the upper class to Washington insiders. There only needs to be the belief that this establishment will favor the out groups and give these groups the benefits that the populists' followers feel they deserve (Judis, 2016,15 - 16).

Populism has been on the rise in the U.S. with the growth of fiery news and entertainment hosts like Glenn Beck and Rush Limbaugh (Commeroff, 2011). With the reality show fame of Donald Trump, there are possible correlations to be drawn between other populist figures and the Republican nominee. As discussed by Jost et. al., these movements and ideology formations require the leaders to have a platform to bring his or her message to the public in order to gain support (2009). As Beck has his

popular radio show and in the past had a successful television show, and Limbaugh has

his popular radio show, Trump has his prior celebrity from being a reality television

show star.

Trump fueled his populist message with talk of the "silent majority." This is a

term, borrowed from the Nixon era that sends signals of being against the

establishment and special interests (Judis, 2016, 72). Trump, himself, started this

narrative while declining to run for president in 2000 by expressing that he was

disappointed he would not be able to run against the two establishment candidates

(Judis, 2016, 72). Judis discusses that Trump became the "voice of middle American

radicalism and more broadly white Americans who felt left behind by globalization and

the post-industrial economy" (Judis, 2016, 75). Finally, Judis noted that Trump

supporters "fit the profile of middle American populism. They were skeptical about the

power below *and* above" (2016, 76).

Agenda Setting

There are two levels of agenda setting, and for this study both are important. Per

McCombs and Shaw, the first level of agenda setting is the media function of telling the

public what to think about, and the second aspect of agenda setting, or second-level

agenda setting, – also referred to as framing, but for the purposes of this study will be

referred to as second-level agenda setting- is when media tells the public how to think

about these topics (1993). Media provides an accessible way for voters to keep up to

date on the changing political landscape. Voters learn what issues are important by the

stories covered by mass media. Issues or "objects" are presented to the public in a way

that signals the importance of the topic (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Research also shows

that if the broadcasts are interesting and engaging, viewers are more likely to recall and

understand what was discussed on the program (Hill, 1985).

When discussing agenda setting and coverage of candidates, it relates to how

much coverage the candidate receives and what traits are given salience by media. It is

thought that this type of coverage has more of an effect on voters and their voting

decisions than issue related agenda setting (Weaver, 1996). In a study by Weaver, it was

found that voters thought it was easier to learn about candidate attributes such as

personality traits and styles than to learn about their ideological beliefs or past

experiences (1981). Media's focus on some issues and candidates while it puts less

emphasis on others tells the pubic who and what is important during a campaign

(Rogers, Hart, & Dearing, 1977, 234)

Walter Lippmann describes public opinion as the contrast between, "The world

outside and the pictures in our head," (1922, 4). Media is one apparatus that puts those

pictures in the heads of the public. It is also argued that media should be evaluated as a

political institution because it supplies voters with information and influences their

levels of political knowledge (Dautrich & Hartley, 1999, 2-3). According to McCombs and

Estrada, stories covered by media become important to the public. In this way, media

agenda becomes the public agenda through that transmission of information (1977,

237).

Second-level agenda setting is when these issues or objects are broken down

into "attributes" or the particular problems and causes of the issue. Then negative or

positive arguments are made for these attributes. This is how media tells the public not only what to think about, but how to think about it (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). McCombs and Estrada explain second-level agenda setting through a sports analogy. There is a team (object), which in this case would represent that candidate, and there are rising stars on the team (attributes), which would represent the attributes of the candidates. Media with their second-level agenda setting power, not only chooses the team to cover but also chooses which attributes to focus on (1977, 239 - 240). In the political realm, it picks the candidate to focus on and which traits or attributes of the candidate to report to the public. This allows media to not only give salience to an object, but to also signal how the public should think about the object by the attributes it reports on. As a result, the candidate and attributes the media deems important, the public will also view as salient.

Golan and Wanta (2001) performed a study looking at the coverage of Bush and McCain during the 2000 New Hampshire Primary. They found that second-level agenda setting is more effective for cognitive attributes than affective attributes. The respondents were more influenced by the factual information expressed by second-level cognitive attributes than the negative or positive opinions of the candidates written in the stories (2001). A study by Kiousis (2003) looked at favorability ratings for President Clinton during the Monica Lewinsky scandal. He argued that favorability is an emotional or affective measure when looking at the president. This is compared with the job approval rating that he states to be a more cognitive or fact-based measure. In the end, Kiousis found that news coverage of scandals as an attribute of coverage of the office of

the president, has more of an effect on favorability ratings. This suggests that affective

second-level agenda setting can impact how the public views a politician (2003).

There is also research on second-level agenda setting in regards to specific

issues. Hester and Gibson look at the affective attributes of unfavorable coverage of the

economy and favorable coverage of the economy (2007, 2003). They find support for

second-level agenda setting because as unfavorable coverage continues in the media,

the expectations of economic performance decreases (Hester & Gibson, 2003). This

study combined with the Kiousis (2003), and the Golan and Wanta (2001) studies

provide evidence in support of both cognitive and affective forms of second-level

agenda setting.

First and second-level agenda setting are normal functions of media. During the

2016 presidential election, cable news networks used this power to project the salient

candidates and issues to the public. Through first-level agenda setting, media signals to

prospective voters which candidate is important by the amount of coverage given to

each potential nominee. Then, through second-level agenda setting, media stresses

noteworthy attributes of the candidate who is deemed important through the amount

of coverage. This thesis will use agenda setting theory to test which candidate and

which attributes media gave salience to during the 2016 election.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS CONTENT ANALYSIS

For this thesis, I conducted two separate analyses. First, a descriptive qualitative analysis and a quantitative analysis was performed on transcripts from CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC. These techniques were chosen because, per a recent Pew Research poll, 24% of Americans name cable news as the most helpful medium for learning about the election. The same Pew survey also showed that cable television news was the main source for likely primary voters (Gottfried, Barthel, Shearer, & Mitchell, 2016). This poll suggested that the three cable news networks were the best way to gauge the salience of issues from the Trump campaign since most voters used these platforms to gather relevant election information.

This method was also chosen because one of the purposes of the descriptive analysis is to form hypotheses. As discussed by Krippendorff and Bock (2009), an important distinction between frequency and non-frequency analysis is between hypothesis testing and hypothesis formation. It is also a "…more conventional way of interpreting communication and drawing inferences…" (Krippendorff & Bock, 2009). Since the purpose of this analysis was hypothesis formation, a non-frequency method was chosen. The data was gathered using two constructed weeks which are discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Population And Sample

In choosing the programs to analyze, it was important to follow several guidelines: each relevant day of the week must be represented, the shows must have

similar topics, and they must also be of equal length. Using constructed-week sampling, each day of the week was represented "...to account for the cyclic variation of news content" (Luke, et al, 2011). This method also aided in avoiding weeks where one issue dominated the news cycle. All the shows center on the political news of the day. As the focus of the study is the rise of Trump in the 2016 campaign, political oriented shows were the most relevant. As for time constraints, it was important for the transcripts to be of similar length and to have similar segment times, and the best way to achieve this was by choosing shows with the same runtimes.

A weekly afternoon political show from each network was chosen, and a popular Sunday as well. The weekly Fox News Channel show was *On the Record with Greta Van Sustern*. This show had a runtime of an hour, and focused on the election and current political news of the day. The Fox Sunday program was *Fox News Sunday with Chris Wallace*. This show also had a runtime of an hour, and the show's description indicated that it discussed stories from the Beltway. The weekly CNN broadcast was the first hour of *The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer.* This show had two separate airings and to remain consistent the first hour was used. The description of the show suggests that it covered current political news. *Inside Politics* was the CNN Sunday show. This program, as the title indicates, was centered around political and election news. The MSNBC weekly broadcast was *All in with Chris Hayes*. This show featured political news of the day and had a runtime of one hour. Finally, the MSNBC Sunday program was *Politics Nation with Al Sharpton.* This show had a runtime of an hour and was the only politically oriented show on MSNBC on Sunday mornings.

Data Collection

The data for this study were gathered using a constructed-week sampling

method. As stated above, this was to mimic the cyclical nature of the news and to avoid

days or weeks when one story dominated the news cycle. The dates were chosen by

listing all the dates between February 1, 2016, through March 16, 2016, and then a

random number generator, provided by *random.org,* was used to choose the two dates

for each day of the week -minus Saturday because MSNBC runs non-news related

programing on that day- that were used to make up the two-week period. The dates

were chosen because they fell between the Iowa Caucus and the day Marco Rubio

dropped out of the presidential race. The dates and chosen programs are provided in

Table 1. This provided a random sample of 36 broadcasts, 12 from each network. Once

completed, *LexisNexis* was used to access the transcripts of the shows on the chosen

dates.

The next method of collection was a descriptive qualitative content analysis of

the transcripts. The process of analyzation was to take in the samples as if I were a

viewer of the news programs. The samples were first read to see what themes and

frames emerged. The transcripts were then read again and marked up by segment. The

ending of a segment was signaled by the host thanking the guest or panel, and

commercial breaks were also considered the end of a segment. The samples were then

read again with the purpose of highlighting themes and frames. While analyzing the

transcripts, they were read in the same order: CNN, Fox News, and then MSNBC. This

format was followed with every reading, for every day. I chose this order because it was

the order in which the broadcasts aired. Once again, this was a way to mimic actual viewership of the news programs.

While reading the transcripts, themes become prominent throughout the broadcasts. I looked for themes relating to crime, terrorism, economic insecurity, and populism. Reading through the transcripts required looking at them like a viewer would, letting the text speak and tell a story. I chose this method because when the public views a news broadcast, they are not sitting down with the intent to pick out how many times in a segment the contributors use a word or phrase. Instead, they hear overarching themes and frames. The idea was to take in the transcripts as if I was a potential voter deciding between the candidates.

Last, there was an aspect of quantitative analysis used as well. To show the discrepancies in the amounts of coverage, segments were totaled, then a quantitative method was used to determine how many segments were dedicated to coverage of Trump, coverage of the Democratic candidates, and lastly how many segments covered general news. A quantitative method was again used to look for themes and frames within the primary coverage. Segments were analyzed for discussions of terrorism, crime, immigration, economic insecurity, and the frame of establishment versus anti-establishment.

Table 1. Weekly Transcripts

	Week One			Week Two		
Shows	*The Situation Room*	*On the Record*	*All in*	*The Situation Room*	*On the Record*	*All in*
Monday	Feb. 15, 2016	Feb. 15, 2016	Feb. 15, 2016	Mar. 7, 2016	Mar. 7, 2016	Mar. 7, 2016
Tuesday	Feb. 23, 2016	Feb. 23, 2016	Feb. 23, 2016	Feb. 2, 2016	Feb. 2, 2016	Feb. 2, 2016
Wednesday	Feb. 10, 2016	Feb. 10, 2016	Feb. 10, 2016	Mar. 2, 2016	Mar. 2, 2016	Mar. 2, 2016
Thursday	Mar. 3, 2016	Mar. 3, 2016	Mar. 3, 2016	Mar. 10, 2016	Mar. 10, 2016	Mar. 10, 2016
Friday	Feb. 12, 2016	Feb. 12, 2016	Feb. 12, 2016	Feb. 26, 2016	Feb. 26, 2016	Feb. 26, 2016
Shows	*Inside Politics*	*Fox News Sunday*	*Politics Nation*	*Inside Politics*	*Fox News Sunday*	*Politics Nation*
Sunday	Feb. 7, 2016	Feb. 7, 2016	Feb. 7, 2016	Feb. 14, 2016	Feb. 14, 2016	Feb. 14, 2016

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS CONTENT ANALYSIS

The themes and frames that emerged centered around the amount of coverage given to Trump and the populist messaging spread by the media. First-level agenda setting emerged through the importance that media placed on Trump by the amount of coverage they provided him. Second-level agenda setting came to light through the spread of populist messaging.

The most staggering result was the amount of coverage, displayed in *Table 2,* dedicated to the Trump campaign. This study looked at 36 cable news broadcasts that equaled 285 segments in total. Of these segments, 48% of the coverage focused on Donald Trump and his campaign, while 19% focused on the race between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. The extensive coverage of Trump displayed how media used its agenda-setting function to signal to viewers that Trump was the most important story of the election.

It was also interesting to look at how the coverage broke down by network. *Table 3* shows the amount of coverage between the three major cable news networks. The results show that CNN and Fox News each dedicated more than half of its coverage, 51%, to coverage of the Trump campaign. At the same time, CNN covered the Democratic candidates 22% of the time, while Fox only dedicated 14% of its coverage to the Democratic race. MSNBC had the most equitable coverage of the three networks, but it still covered Trump 45% of the time and the opposing Democrats 24% of the time.

Table 2. Total Amounts of Coverage (285 segments)

	Number of Segments	Percent of Segments
Trump	138	48.0%
Clinton/Democrats	55	19.0%
Both	3	3.0%
Other	89	30.0%

One of the starkest examples of the coverage imbalance occurred on March 10, 2016. On March 9, a Democratic debate took place between Secretary Clinton and Senator Sanders, but the coverage of two of the three major networks did not mention the debate at all. That day *The Situation Room* ran seven segments and all seven were discussions of the Trump campaign. *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren* produced similar coverage with seven out of ten segments covering Trump and one covering the Democratic race, but did not mention the debate. *All in with Chris Hayes* was the only show to mention the debate. The show had eight segments with one dedicated to the democratic debate.

Table 3. Amounts of Coverage by Network

	CNN	FOX	MSNBC
Trump	51.0%	51.0%	45.0%
Clinton/Democrats	22.0%	14.0%	24.0%
Both	1.0%	_	2.0%
Other	26.0%	35.0%	29.0%

Another example of the disparity in coverage was that there were four times in the random sample when the Democratic race was not covered in a single segment. On March 3, 2016, *all in with Chris Hayes* ran six segments with four covering Trump, one covering general news, and one covering both Secretary Clinton and Donald Trump. On February 23, 2016 *On the Record with Great Van Susteren* ran twelve segments with six covering Trump, five covering general political news, and one covering general political news that mentioned Donald Trump. Again, on February 26, 2016, *On the Record with Great Van Susteren* ran eight segments and all eight covered the Trump campaign. The last example came from *The Situation Room* on March 10, 2016, seven segments run, all seven covered the Trump campaign, and there was a Democratic debate on March 9th.

Some of the most telling coverage bias came in the form of the coverage of Jeb Bush. The first instance came from an episode of *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren* that aired on February 15, 2016. During this episode, Van Susteren previewed the

upcoming segment by talking about the Bush brothers; George and Jeb, but when the

segment began it was a clip of Trump talking about George W. Bush and 9/11. Then the

coverage continued to talk about the debate and the exchanges between Trump, Cruz,

and Bush. Another example, also on February 15th came from *The Situation Room.*

Opening a segment Blitzer stated, "CNN's Jim Acosta is in South Carolina for us tonight.

Jim, this all comes just, what, five days before the South Carolina primary. Jeb Bush has

a lot at stake right now." Acosta then goes on to respond, "Absolutely. And a lot for

Donald Trump as well, Wolf" (Blitzer, CNN, February 15). The segment then went on to

cover the exchange between Cruz and Trump at the debate. The last example is also

from Fox News. On *Fox News Sunday,* Chris Wallace interviewed Jeb Bush opening with

a clip of Bush and Trump exchanging insults at a debate. The interview went on to ask

several questions regarding Trump. The networks could not avoid talking about Trump

even when the topic appeared to be focused on another candidate. This sent the

message to the audience that Trump was the most important candidate in the field.

Table 4. Themes of Trumpism in Coverage (285 segments)

Issues	Segments	Percent
Crime	5	2.0
Economic Insecurity	12	4.2
Terrorism	22	8.0
Immigration	8	3.0
Establishment vs. Anti-establishment	77	27.0

Terrorism And Economic Insecurity

While the analysis did not show terrorism, immigration, crime, or economic insecurity to be strong themes as reflected in *Table 4*. A few examples of this coverage helped to paint a better picture of how these themes were covered. During the February 23, 2016 airing of *The Situation Room,* discussion turned to terrorism and President Obama's talks of closing Guantanamo Bay. CNN anchor Brianna Keilar quoted candidate Ted Cruz as saying, "Let's throw some more terrorists in there," expressing his desire to expand the prison instead of shut it down (CNN, February 23, 2016). Most of the segments dealing with terrorism were about Guantanamo or the San Bernardino shooting.

Surprisingly, talk of economic insecurity came from the Sanders campaign as opposed to talk from the Trump campaign. An example, from the March 3, 2016 episode of *All in with Chris Hayes:* a segment began with a clip of Sanders discussing NAFTA and trade with China while stating that families were suffering because of these policies. Hayes then went on to discuss Sander's releasing a statement where he referred to Clinton as "outsourcer in chief" (MSNBC, March 3, 2016). The sampled segment was an example of how economic insecurity was covered by cable news networks during the primary season. Referring to *Table 2*, we can see that although themes of terrorism and economic insecurity were at times covered, they did not always pertain directly to the Trump campaign.

Establishment Versus Anti-establishment

The coverage also produced themes related to the talk of establishment politicians that often-painted Trump as an underdog while simultaneously being the frontrunner. As *Table 2* displays, discussion of establishment vs. anti-establishment made up 27.0% of cable news network coverage. For example, on the March 3, 2016 episode of *All in with Chris Hayes*, Hayes stated, "If Republican leaders fail to grapple with their own party, they don't have a stand out chance of being able to destroy him" (Hayes, MSNBC, March 3). Gloria Borger on *The Situation Room* on February 10, 2016 commented:

> "I spoke with one member of the so-called establishment today who said,
> 'Look, nobody is going to have 300 delegates by March 15.' And the
> Funders are holding back, and the establishment is beginning to get used
> to the idea that perhaps Donald Trump is going to be their nominee. So,

they might just adopt him. But they also believe, for example, that Jeb Bush got some life last night, that Marco Rubio can compete in South Carolina, and I think, quite frankly, if they had a choice between Cruz and Trump, they would pick Trump" (Blitzer, CNN, February 10).

The narrative at the end of Borger's comments about Trump and Cruz was later reflected in an interview with Senator Lindsay Graham during an appearance on *The Situation Room* on March 7, 2016. Graham, considered to be an establishment Republican, would be viewed through an establishment lens. In the interview, Graham discussed his feud with Donald Trump and stated in reference to Trump, "Winning to me is stopping him from getting the nomination. This is not about who we nominate anymore as Republicans as much as who we are." He continued by stating, "As much as I disagree with Ted Cruz, if it came down to Donald Trump or Ted Cruz, I would be firmly in Ted's camp, because I think he really is a conservative" (Blitzer, CNN, March 7). This coverage portrayed Trump as the underdog going up against the powerful establishment that was doing all in its power to see him fail.

Fox News was not immune to the establishment talk and on the February 23, 2016 episode of *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren,* Carl Cameron, Fox News Chief Political Correspondent, commented on establishment candidate Marco Rubio:

> "And as for Ted Cruz, he has been battling a whole series of allegations about dirty tricks and lying. A lot of the allegations from Donald Trump, but also from Marco Rubio. Rubio is looking to pull off a second-place finish tonight to cast himself as the candidate who can really unite the mainstream Republican establishment and be the contender, the conservative alternative to Donald Trump" (Van Susteren, Fox News, February 23).

Another example of Fox News also setting the agenda of establishment versus anti-establishment came from an episode of *Fox News Sunday* that aired on February 7, 2016. During the episode, the three governors who were running for the nomination were interviewed, and Chris Wallace sets up the interviews by discussing the candidates' establishment status, "We'll talk with all three as they battle in the GOP establishment lane against a rising Marco Rubio." Later in the broadcast, it became evident that the establishment versus outsider narrative was havinge an effect in an exchange between Governor Kasich and Wallace:

Wallace: Don't you have to finish first here among the so-called four establishment candidates?

Kasich: First of all, I'm not an establishment candidate. I have never been in the establishment. I'm not anti-establishment. (Wallace, Fox News, February 7)

This exchange signals to the audience that the label of establishment candidate is a negative attribute. Once again, it gives more power to Trump and his anti-establishment status.

The above examples showed that the news coverage was unbalanced between the Republican and Democratic races, but not only unbalanced on the macro level but also between coverage of the candidates running within the Republican Party. Aside from the difference in coverage, the analysis also spoke to themes of anti-establishment versus establishment, which possibly, inadvertently painted Trump as an underdog against the establishment machine.

To conclude, the amount of coverage favored candidate Trump. This was the media giving salience to Trump as a candidate above all other candidates. The analysis also displayed strong frames of establishment versus anti-establishment in the election coverage. If first-level agenda setting took place, then the survey will show that respondents felt that candidate Trump received more coverage. When it comes to second-level agenda setting, the survey results need to reflect that respondents picked up on the frame of establishment vs anti-establishment from both their memory of the coverage and through the examples of coverage that the questions provide.

CHAPTER 5: SURVEY METHODS

The second part of the agenda-setting study involved fielding a survey that attempted to replicate the previously analyzed media content. The survey provided empirical data to show that the themes and frames drawn out during the qualitative analysis affected what voters found important, and then how they thought about those issues. The platform used to field the survey was Amazon's Mechanical Turk. The survey was conducted on February 15, 2017. This medium was used because it gave a more representative sample than using the student population of Iowa State University. It also provided a low-cost method to collect the needed data.

The sample size for the survey was 375. As *Table 5* displays, although the demographics were not a perfect match for known census data, it was a better sample than if Iowa State students were used. When looking at age, I obtained a sample with 49.43% of respondents between the ages of 30 – 49. It is unlikely that a student sample would have provided many respondents within this age demographic. The education demographics would have lacked those with a completed degree or with an advanced degree. Income was another area where Mechanical Turk enabled wider range of incomes; 32.76% made between $50,000 - $90,999. Using a student population, this demographic most likely would have been significantly smaller. Using Mechanical Turk allowed for greater generalization of results amongst the larger population.

Table 5. Demographics

	Answer	Percent
Party id	Democrat	45.2
	Republican	22.4
	Neither	32.4
Voted for	Hillary Clinton	45.2
	Donald Trump	26.7
	Other or did not Vote	28.1
Preferred news network	CNN	57.8
	Fox	22.5
	MSNBC	19.7
Age	18-29	41.4
	30-49	49.4
	50 & over	9.1
Education	High school	15.2
	Some college	22.4
	College degree	54.2
	Advanced degree	8.3
Race	White	82.3
	African American	7.1
	Asian	10.0
	Other	4.3
Household income	Less than $10,000 to $49,999	57.0
	$50,000 to $99,999	32.8
	$100,000 or more	10.3
Marital Status	Married	36.5
	Divorced or separated	5.7
	Never married	57.8

To test if the themes extracted from the analysis were accurate, a survey was fielded to see if those themes transferred to the public. The survey consisted of several questions ranging from thoughts on the amount and frames of coverage of the 2016 primary season. There were questions that looked at information gathering habits of respondents such as which of the three major cable news networks they chose to watch for election coverage. In order to determine first-level agenda setting, a question was asked about which candidate received the most coverage during the primary season. To determine second-level agenda setting, a question was asked about the framing of coverage of the 2016 campaign. The survey then went on to layout scenarios that mimicked exchanges noted in the qualitative analysis. These questions were designed to see if respondents picked up on the same themes and tones as I did while preforming the content analysis.

It is hypothesized that the survey will find results in line with the results of the content analysis:

H_1: Respondents will feel that Donald Trump received most the coverage.

H_2: Respondents will believe that the Republican candidate was portrayed as an underdog in media coverage.

H_3: Respondents who self-identify as Republicans will more often view Trump as the underdog.

H_4: Respondents who voted for Trump will more often view Trump as the underdog.

H_5: Respondents will recall an establishment versus anti-establishment theme in the coverage of the 2016 campaign.

Survey results were then compared to the findings of the content analysis. It is believed that the survey questions properly represent the findings of the content analysis. Thus, the combination of the content analysis and survey results showed that the agenda set by the media favored Trump in the 2016 primary election cycle. By disproportionately covering Trump and expressing frames of establishment vs. antiestablishment, media enabled his eventual nomination. If the survey results mirror the content analysis results, first and second-level agenda setting will be shown to have played a role in the results of the 2016 primary election.

CHAPTER 6: SURVEY RESULTS

The survey reflected many of the findings in the qualitative analysis. It supported that both first and second-level agenda setting existed during the 2016 primary election cycle. Respondents felt that Trump received more coverage and that the overall tone of the election was establishment versus anti-establishment. This chapter will further look at these and other results that strengthen proposed hypotheses and provide more evidence of first and second-level agenda setting.
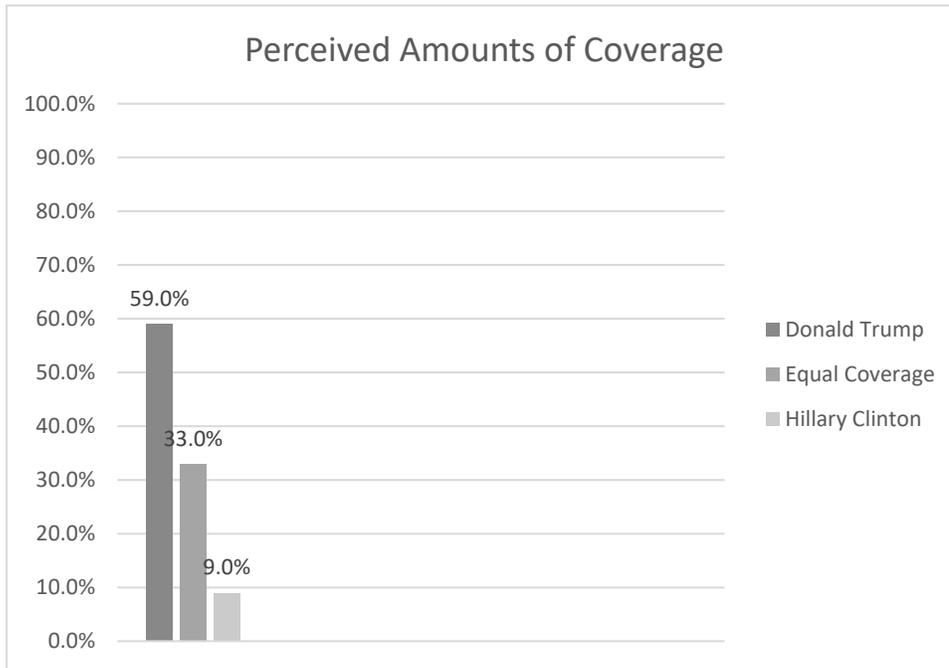

Figure 1. Perceived Amounts of Coverage

First, perceived amounts of coverage support H_1, with 59.0% of respondents expressing that Trump received more coverage than Clinton. This was observed in *Figure 1*. It also showed that a clear minority, 9.0%, felt that Clinton received more coverage than Trump. Lastly, a third of respondents felt that the candidates receive

equal coverage. This was important because it was the first evidence that first-level

agenda setting occurred. It was important to further analyze the results by party

affiliation and who respondents voted for in the election.

Table 6. Perceived Amount of Coverage by Party Affiliation

	Democrats	Republicans	Neither Party
Equal Coverage	30.2%	28.2%	38.6.0%
Trump Received More	65.4%	54.0%	52.6%
Clinton Received More	4.4%	18.0%	8.8%

Note: X^2=15.13, p<.000.

As displayed in *Table 6,* these results were further broken down by Party

affiliation. Of those self-identifying as Democrats, 65.4% believed Trump received more

coverage compared to 4.4% who responded that Clinton received more coverage.

Whereas, 54.0% of Republicans answered that Trump received most coverage and

18.0% that Clinton received more coverage. When it came to believing that the

candidates received equal coverage, 30.2% of Democrats responded that coverage was

equal and 28% of Republicans. This breakdown further supported H_1. It also again

demonstrated the occurrence of first-level agenda setting.

Table 7. Perceived Amount of Coverage by Vote

	Hillary Clinton	Donald Trump
Equal Coverage	28.0%	28.0%
Trump Received More	69.0%	53.0%
Clinton Received More	4.0%	19.4%

Note: X^2=33.04, p<.000.

Table 7 displayed similar results when coverage was broken down by who respondents voted for in the general election. 69.0% of those who voted for Clinton, and 53.0% of those who voted for Trump responded that Trump received more coverage. 59.0% of respondents to the question believed that Trump received the most coverage. These results reflected the themes observed in the qualitative analysis of media coverage. This was again evidence of first-level agenda setting regardless of who respondents voted for in the election. It also supported H_1. These results were strong indicators for first-level agenda setting by displaying that respondents believed Trump received a disproportionate amount of coverage during the campaign cycle.

Table 8. Perceived Frame of Coverage by Party Affiliation

	Democrat	Republican	Neither Party
Referendum of Obama Administration	14.0%	19.2%	9.0%
Establishment v. Anti-establishment	64.2%	63.0%	62.3%
Need for economic and border protection	22.0%	18.0%	29.0%

Note: X^2=6.49, p<.17.

Next the question turned to the way media framed election coverage. When asked about media frames of the election, 62.0% responded that the dominate frame was establishment versus anti-establishment. The finding that most respondents believed that the frame establishment versus anti-establishment supports H_5. This also confirmed that second-level agenda setting took place. This result showed that respondents recalled that the dominate frame of the election had a populist message. These results can again be further evaluated by party id and how respondents voted.

Table 9. Perceived Frame of Coverage by Vote

	Voted for Hillary Clinton	Voted for Donald Trump
Referendum of Obama Administration	12.0%	16.0%
Establishment v. Anti-establishment	69.0%	60.0%
Need for economic and border protection	20.0%	24.0%

Note: X^2=8.70, p<.37.

The survey results reflected the qualitative analysis by displaying that most respondents believed that the media set a tone of establishment vs. anti-establishment, and thus failing to reject H_5. It also supported second-level agenda setting. When looking at the results by self-identified party affiliation, Democrats, Republicans, and those with other affiliations or no affiliation agreed that the dominate frame was establishment vs. anti-establishment. This was observed again when the results were broken down by who respondents voted for with 60.2% of Trump voters and 69.0% of Clinton voters all confirming the frame as well.

Table 10. Perceived Amount of Coverage by Preferred News Network

	CNN	Fox News	MSNBC
Equal Coverage	35.1%	34.2%	24.0%
Trump Received More	62.0%	45.1%	65.3%
Clinton Received More	3.3%	20.73%	11.1%

Note: X^2=26.64, p<.000.

Results also showed, as *Table 10* and *Table 11* reflect*,* that regardless of the cable news network respondents regularly consumed, a majority felt that Trump received the most coverage, and that the dominate frame was establishment vs. anti-establishment. CNN watchers 62.0% felt that the coverage focused more on Trump than on Clinton. Fox News watchers, although a smaller percentage but still a majority, agreed that Trump received more coverage at 45.1%. At 65.3%, MSNBC watchers, by far, believed that Trump received the majority coverage. When it came to the frame of the coverage, 61.0% of CNN watchers felt that there was a dominate establishment vs. anti-establishment frame. Fox News and MSNBC also had clear majorities with 59.0% and 71.0%. The results further strengthen H_1, and H_5. Also, the results strengthen the development of first and second-level agenda setting.

Table 11. Perceived Frame of Coverage by Preferred News Network

	CNN	Fox News	MSNBC
Referendum of Obama Administration	16.1%	21.0%	3.0%
Establishment v. Anti-establishment	61.0%	59.0%	71.0%
Need for economic and border protection	23.2%	20.7%	26.4%

Note: X^2=11.03, p<.03.

The above discussed results provided convincing evidence in support of some of the hypotheses and both levels of agenda setting. Respondents strongly mirrored results of the qualitative analysis showing that Trump received more coverage, and that the prevalent frame of the election was establishment versus anti-establishment. Now with both levels of agenda setting confirmed, it is important to take a deeper look at how respondents felt about the coverage.

The next set of survey questions attempted to simulate exchanges discussed in the qualitative analysis. The exchange was chosen because it played into the establishment vs. anti-establishment frame. Lindsay Graham is a long-time senator and considered a part of the Republican establishment. The question aimed to tease out if potential voters viewed the exchange as Graham, the establishment, taking on Trump, the outsider. In the mock campaign coverage, there were two main front-runners from each party. On the Republican side, an oil tycoon from Texas who never held political

office, John Ewing. The Democrats had a long-time senator and former governor of New

Jersey, Taylor Johnson. Media covered Ewing quite a bit because of his unorthodox style

and tendency to attack his own party. The question focused around an interview with

prominent Senator Smith (Graham), and was almost verbatim of the actual exchange

that took place in the transcript.

Table 12. Establishment vs. Anti-establishment Question by Party Affiliation

	Democrat	Republican	Neither
Underdog	28.3%	30.4%	25.4%
Personal issue	32.0%	27.0%	29.0%
Party strife	20.0%	18.0%	18.0%
Negative media bias	16.4%	18.0%	23.0%
Smith is a RINO	4.4%	8.0%	5.3%

Note: X^2=3.58, p<.89.

The results of the question showed that overall, 29.1% of respondents thought

the exchange made them feel that the Senator had a personal issue with Ewing. While

28.0% stated that the exchange signaled that Ewing was an underdog candidate battling

the establishment within his own party. This again was reflective of the qualitative

analysis and it gave some support for H_2. However, it gave mixed results for H_3 and H_4.

Those who voted for Trump were evenly split between feeling that the candidate was an

underdog and believing that the Senator had a personal issue with Ewing. While 30.4%

felt that Ewing was an underdog, there was still 27.0% that believed it was a personal issue between the two politicians.

Table 13. Establishment vs. Anti-establishment Question by Vote

	Voted for Clinton	Voted for Trump
Underdog	30.0%	30.0%
Personal issue	30.2%	26.0%
Media Strife	19.0%	16.0%
Negative media bias	15.1%	22.3%
Smith is a RINO	6.3%	6.4%

Note: X^2=22.21, p<.14.

There was equal support between Clinton and Trump supporters on this question with 30.0% of Trump supporters feeling that this showed Ewing as an underdog while 30.0% of Clinton supporters respond in the same fashion. When analyzed by party, 28.3% of Democrats responded that this exchange made Ewing appear to be an underdog with 30.4% Republicans feeling the same. These findings support H_3 and H_4. They also further strengthen the instances of second-level agenda setting.

Table 14. Media Bias Policy Frame Question by Party Affiliation

	Democrat	Republican	Neither
Importance of Ewing as front runner	11.3%	9.0%	13.3%
Biased because of outlandish behavior	75.0%	31.1%	67.0%
Negative media bias	14.1%	60.0%	20.0%

Note: X^2=32.42, p<.000.

The next question was an example of an exchange between the Republican challenger to Ewing, and Jim Perry, another Republican vying for the nomination. The question was proposed in two separate ways, and it was randomly split between respondents. The first question focused more on framing the exchange around policy stances while the second version framed the exchange in a more personal manner. In both frames, most respondents felt that the exchange showed a bias in favor of covering Ewing by the media because his outlandish behavior brought in ratings. Question one shows 61.0% of respondents answer in this manner. Question two lowers a bit to 58.0%, but still a clear majority.

Table 15. Media Bias Policy Frame Question by Vote

	Voted for Clinton	Voted for Trump
Importance of Ewing as front runner	15.3%	9.0%
Biased because of outlandish behavior	75.0%	35.0%
Negative media bias	10.0%	57.0%

Note: X^2=35.01, p<.000.

There was a difference when the data was analyzed by party and who the respondents voted for in the general election. This is reflected in *Table14* and *Table 15.* On question frame one, 75.0% of those who voted for Clinton felt that the coverage was bias in favor of Ewing because of outlandish behavior. At the same time, 56.5% of those who voted for Trump felt that the coverage was bias in a way to make Ewing look bad. When broken down by party affiliation, 75.0% of Democrats felt that the coverage was biased because Ewing's outlandish behavior brought in ratings. However, only 31.1% of Republicans felt the same, with the majority, 60.0%, believing that the coverage was again biased to make Ewing look bad. The findings are important because when looking at agenda setting, viewers feeling that Trump was purposely being portrayed in a negative light could increase the belief that he was an underdog or battling the establishment. It strengthens the establishment versus anti-establishment frame observed by respondents.

Table 16. Media Bias Personal Frame Question by Party Affiliation

	Democrat	Republican	Neither
Importance of Ewing as front runner	16%	9.0%	11.1%
Biased because of outlandish behavior	65.0%	47.1%	54.0%
Negative media bias	19.3%	44.1%	35.2%

Note: X^2=8.98, p<.06.

The second question frame which focused more on the personal nature of the campaign had results that are a bit different. As *Table 17* shows, of those who voted for Clinton, 69.0% of respondents felt that there was a media bias in favor of Ewing because his outlandish behavior produced ratings. Respondents who voted for Trump felt that there was a media bias attempting to make Ewing look bad with 52.1% responding as such. When analyzed by party affiliation, *Table 16* showed 64.8% of Democrats and 47.1% of Republicans believed that the media was biased in favor of Ewing because of the ratings his behavior generated. Interestingly, there was a difference between those who voted for Trump, and Republicans when it came to the belief that the media had a negative bias when covering Ewing. 44.1% of Republicans felt that the coverage was negative compared to 52.1% of Trumps voters. These findings support the presence of second-level agenda setting.

Table 17. Media Bias Personal Frame Question by Vote

	Voted for Clinton	Voted for Trump
Importance of Ewing as front runner	14.0%	15.0%
Biased because of outlandish behavior	69.0%	33.3%
Negative media bias	17.2%	52.1%

Note: X^2=26.13, p<.000.

The last question laid out a scenario with the Democratic nominee, Taylor Johnson, wrapping up the nomination process, and the broadcast of a competing event with Ewing discussing how his administration would view the use of nuclear weapons. In the scenario, media outlets chose to cover Ewing's speech as opposed to the Democratic candidate. Overall, 69.0% of respondents felt that the media chose to cover Ewing because he brought in ratings. However, when broken down by who respondents voted for and party identification, stark differences arise.

Table 18. Lack of Candidate Coverage Question by Party Affiliation

	Democrat	Republican	Neither
Brought in ratings	76.1%	47.0%	75.0%
Ewing would be president	12.0%	6.3%	8.0%
Negative media bias	12.0%	47.0%	18.0%

Note: X^2=40.49, p<.000.

The results of the final question, when looked at regarding who respondents voted for and party identification, the differences were interesting. 45.7% of respondents who voted for Trump felt that the media gave Ewing substantial amounts of coverage, but it was in anticipation of possible gaffes. This was the media's way of discrediting the candidate. When analyzed by party identification, Republicans were evenly split with 46.8% of respondents feeling that the media chose to focus on Ewing because he broughtin ratings, and 46.8% feeling that the coverage had a negative intent. Democrats and Hillary Clinton voters, on the other hand, felt that the coverage was biased in Ewing's favor because he brought in ratings. 76.1% of Democrats felt this way and 79.3% of respondents who voted for Clinton. The findings support first and second-level agenda setting. First-level agenda setting is backed by respondents believing that Ewing was given substantial amounts of coverage. Second-level agenda setting was supported by those who answered that Ewing was covered because the media excepted gaffes and wanted to discredit the candidate. This again painted the candidate as an underdog.

Table 19. Lack of Candidate Coverage Question by Vote

	Voted for Clinton	**Voted for Trump**
Brought in ratings	79.3%	45.0%
Ewing would be president	10.1%	10.0%
Negative media bias	11.0%	46.0%

Note: X^2=52.81, p<.000.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As previously stated, the findings of the qualitative analysis were not entirely

expected, but the populist messaging did come through. As Commeroff discussed, a

central part of the populist message was the anti-establishment theme (2011). And as

Jost et al, discussed, the populist leader required a platform to relay his or her message

to the people (2009). The results of the content analysis showed that Trump's success in

the early weeks of the primary season relied on the platform provided by media

coverage and the anti-establishment frame that news coverage set. The results of the

survey displayed how voters responded to those tones and themes in the coverage.

The coverage gave Trump the platform to get his message to the people, and the

media seemed to be a willing accomplice in his rise. The disproportionate amount of

coverage of his campaign triggered the agenda-setting function of the media. By

covering Trump nearly 50% of the time, cable news programs conveyed to audiences

that Trump was the most important candidate in a field, that at its height contained

seventeen qualified candidates. The interview with Jeb Bush where Chris Wallace asked

him about Trump's behavior provided an example of how even when anchors talked

with other qualified candidates they took those opportunities to discuss Trump. This

displayed that not even the Republican field was safe from the first-level agenda setting

that was occurring within the coverage of Donald Trump.

First-level agenda setting was used to tell the public that Trump was important.

By seemingly ignoring the Democratic race, the cable networks also signaled to the

public that the opposing race was unimportant, and that the candidates in that race,

Secretary Clinton and Senator Sanders, did not rise to the same level of salience as

Donald Trump. This was best evidenced by the above cited example of the lack of

coverage of the democratic debate during the March 10, 2016, news cycle and the

survey question that addressed the lack of coverage of the Democratic candidate

wrapping up the nomination. The news programs conveyed to their audiences that the

Trump candidacy was more important than the democratic debate. This set the stage

for Trump to not only stay the frontrunner but to later survive the general election.

First-level agenda setting was reflected in the survey through the question

relating to theme of the primary election. 58.7% of respondents felt that Trump

received more coverage than Clinton. This shows that potential voters were exposed to

an abundance of Trump coverage which signaled his importance in the eyes of the

media. In another interesting finding, a majority of respondents felt that the media

tended to give disproportionate coverage to candidates who brought in ratings.

However, of those who believed that Trump received more coverage, 45.6% also felt

that media covered candidates the journalists prefer. This showed that a segment of

those who felt Trump received more coverage also felt that journalists preferred him as

a candidate, this again enforces the agenda-setting power of the media.

Next, through second-level agenda setting the sampled media displayed that an

establishment candidates had the upper hand in the race, and that despite Trump's

frontrunner status, he was still facing an uphill battle to the nomination. As the results

exhibited, journalists and pundits often discussed candidates in the term of being part of the establishment. This signaled to a frustrated public that this was something to take notice of. And by framing the coverage in a way that made Trump appear to be the David to the Goliath of the establishment, the second-level-agenda setting conveyed to the public that establishment candidates were to be thought of in a negative way.

The use of establishment figures like Senator Lindsay Graham only exacerbated the "us versus them" anti-establishment narrative. As discussed in the results, Graham left viewers with the impression that establishment Republicans would do anything to prevent Trump from being the nominee. This again portrayed Trump as an underdog and signaled to the public that the establishment should be viewed as a threat to a candidate that appeared to have support and momentum on his side. As this tone emerged from the qualitative analysis, it was also reflected in the survey results.

The overall tone of the election was establishment versus anti-establishment. The power of second-level agenda setting in the primary election was displayed through the survey question intended to mimic Senator Graham's anti-Trump rhetoric during an interview. The majority of respondents either felt that the exchange showed a personal issue between the politicians or that the candidate was an underdog battling his own party. Both, a majority of Trump supporters and Republicans felt that Trump was the underdog. This again reflects the power of second-level agenda setting in the primary election cycle.

The overall results of the qualitative, quantitative, and survey analyses showed that first and second-level agenda setting helped keep Trump as the salient candidate and painted him as the outsider, underdog, and anti-establishment candidate. These findings combined show that Trumpism, at least in the way news coverage affected its rise, depended on having the platform to get out the message, and the strong establishment versus anti-establishment frame. Judis' (2016, 14) definition of populism as using language that appeals to the masses and paints elite opponents as "self-serving and undemocratic" is reflected in this study of Trump and the rise of Trumpism.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. First, the qualitative analysis is subjective in nature, and what was observed in this study might not stand out as salient in another study. However, in defense of the method, the main findings were backed up by the agenda-setting survey responses. Second, this election defied many theories in both political communication and political science. As a result, it was difficult to find literature pertaining to topics like the rise of populism and nationalism in the United States. This opens areas for collaboration between the two fields of study. Moving forward, political communication and political behaviorists should research and publish more studies together. Once theories in political communication occur such as agenda setting, framing, and spiral of silence, it is then important for behaviorists to look at how voters react to these aspects of the media and how they affect voter behavior. Third, the use of reflective survey questions is thought to be unreliable. The time between the

primary elections and the general could produce questionable results. However, well-known data provided by surveys like the NES will not be available for some time, and that leaves a gap that individual researchers have to fill if they wish to look at current phenomena. Last, related to the previous limitation, not knowing that Trump would be the nominee and eventually the president, made it difficult to justify studying agenda setting in relation to his primary season candidacy.

Implications

This study adds to agenda-setting theory by opening the door to the role media played in the unconventional election of 2016. The findings can be used by journalists and news agencies to better determine how to cover candidates in the future. It might also be a testament to reinstating the Fairness Doctrine and modernizing it for the current state of media. On a more negative note, it could also serve as an aide for unlikely politicians to manipulate the media. Future research in both political science and communications should look at incorporating more qualitative methods. This gives the researcher the opportunity to look at the data through the lens of the public. Rather than trying to quantify the content, researchers seek to discover the way it spoke to the public. Lastly, it will be important for the media to look at the use of horserace and strategy framing and how it could be unintentionally pushing populist messaging.

In conclusion, this thesis displays how the agenda-setting function of the media aided the rise of Trump and Trumpism. The amount of coverage attributed salience to Trump as a candidate. The public also observed that the Trump campaign was the major

focus of the three cable news networks. Second-level agenda setting was displayed by the media through the overall tone of establishment versus anti-establishment narratives in coverage. The public also picked up on these tones in the coverage.

Future research could expand these findings by testing populist narratives such as establishment vs anti-establishment when looking at other candidates. It is likely that the coverage of Sanders carried the same tones. On the other side of the argument, it would be worth looking into how candidates painted as establishment members, such as Secretary Clinton and Jeb Bush, were hurt by the label. It is impossible to say if these tones will be present in the next election, but if we continue to study what happened in this unorthodox contest, the discipline will be better prepared to make sense of unexpected election results.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Research
Vice President for Research
2420 Lincoln Way, Suite 202
Ames, Iowa 50014
515 294-4566

Date: 2/2/2017

To: Angela Caulk
306 B Ross Hall

CC: Dr. David Andersen
547 Ross Hall

From: Office for Responsible Research

Title: Trumpism: How Agenda Setting in the Media Drove a Movement

IRB ID: 17-018

Study Review Date: 2/2/2017

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b) because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey or interview procedures with adults or observation of public behavior where
  - Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or
  - Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could not reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, or reputation.

The determination of exemption means that:

- **You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.**

- **You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application.** Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any modifications to the research procedures (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, changes in confidentiality measures, etc.), modifications that result in the inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations, and/or any change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants. Changes to key personnel must also be approved. The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.

  Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

  Detailed information about requirements for submission of modifications can be found on the Exempt Study Modification Form. A Personnel Change Form may be submitted when the only modification involves changes in study staff. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an Application for Approval of Research Involving Humans Form will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review. **Only the IRB or designees may make the determination of exemption,** even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

Please be aware that **approval from other entities may also be needed.** For example, access to data from private records (e.g. student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. **An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.**

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or IRB@iastate.edu.

APPENDIX B: SURVEY

Agenda-Setting Survey

The first set of questions will require that you think back to coverage of the 2016 presidential primary. It may be difficult to think back this far, but answer the questions to the best of your ability.

Q1
Which cable news network do you primarily depend on for political news?

- ○ CNN

- ○ Fox News

- ○ MSNBC

Q2
If you had to choose one of the following options to describe the dominant theme of mainstream media coverage during the primary, which would it be?

- ○ Donald Trump received more coverage than Hillary Clinton

- ○ Both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton received about the same amount of coverage

- ○ Hillary Clinton received more coverage than the Donald Trump

Q3
If you had to decide, what was the overall tone of media coverage during the primary election?

- ○ A Referendum on the current Obama Administration

- ○ Establishment vs. anti-establishment

- ○ The need for economic and border protection

The next set of questions will focus on general media and candidate preferences.

Q4
When considering who to vote for which type of candidate do you prefer?

- ○ Experienced politician who understands the inner workings of government

- ○ Washington outsider anti-establishment candidate

Q5

How do you think news media covers candidates?

- ○ News media gives candidates equal coverage to enable voters to make an educated decision

- ○ News media gives a disproportionate amount of coverage to the candidate that journalists prefer

- ○ News media gives a disproportionate amount of coverage to the candidate that brings in the most ratings at the expense of equal coverage of other candidates

Q6
Which political party do you believe most journalists identify with?

- ○ Democrat

- ○ Republican

- ○ No affiliation

This set of questions will mimic primary campaign coverage. There will be a short passage and then questions about the passage will follow.

In this campaign there are two main front-runners from each party. On the Republican side, an oil tycoon from Texas who has never held political office, John Ewing. The Democrats have a long-time senator and former governor of New Jersey, Taylor Johnson. Media has been covering Ewing quite a bit because of his unorthodox style and tendency to attack his own party.

Q7
During a nightly news show, prominent senator Bud Smith is asked about his on going feud with John Ewing. Here is an excerpt from the exchange:

Anchor: If Ewing is the nominee, and Taylor Johnson wins the nomination on the Democratic side, who do you vote for in the general election? Taylor Johnson?

Smith: Well, you ask me after the convention and I'll tell you.

Anchor: Why can't you tell me now?

Smith: I'm not going to tell you now. I don't believe Ewing will be the nominee. Winning to me is stopping him from getting the nomination. This is not about who we nominate as much as who we are as a party. It is a fight for our heart and soul. If John Ewing carries our party banner, I think not only do we lose the election, but we will be unable, in the future, to grow our cause.

Q8
What does this exchange make you think about the race?

- ○ Ewing is an underdog candidate battling the establishment within his own party

- ○ Senator Smith has a personal issue with Ewing but his views do not reflect the party as a whole

- ○ The media is purposefully trying to paint Ewing as an underdog by showing opposition within the party

- ○ The media is hoping that interviews like this will help pull support away from Ewing

- ○ The media is attempting to show that Smith is not a true Republican because he will not commit to supporting the nominee

On a Sunday Morning Political news show, host Michael Jones interviews Ewing's Republican opponent, Jim Perry, a sitting senator. The interview begins with clips of the most recent Republican debate and a heated exchange between Perry and Ewing concerning immigration policy.

Jones: Ewing has discussed building a wall along both the north and south borders? Is this a policy stance that you agree with?

Perry: Well this is a tough campaign, and we all disagree on some things, and this is one. Sometimes those disagreements sound personal, but I'd rather focus on my ideas than talk about how they are different than his.

Jones: But in the past, Ewing has also proposed a ban on citizens from Venezuela because of the dangers of drug trafficking to the country. Would this be a ban that a Perry administration would support?

Perry: I am trying to run my own campaign, and not just respond to Ewing.

Q9
This line of questioning displays

- ○ The importance of Ewing as the front runner

- ○ A biased in favor of covering Ewing by the media because his outlandish behavior brings in ratings

- ○ A media bias of trying to make Ewing look bad

Q10
On a Sunday morning political news show, host Michael Jones interviews Ewing's Republican opponent, Jim Perry, a sitting senator. The interview begins with clips of the most recent Republican debate and a heated exchange between Perry and Ewing.

Jones: The exchange in the most recent debate was heated. Is it acceptable for Ewing to wage personal attacks against his opponents?

Perry: Well this is a tough campaign, and we disagree on somethings. At times, those disagreements can seem personal, but I'm not here to defend his behavior. I'd rather discuss policies that are important to the American people.

Jones: But last week Ewing said that you should be arrested and shot for incompetence, shouldn't you and your fellow Republicans speak out against this behavior on the trail?

Perry: Ya know Michael, I'm trying to run my own campaign, and not just respond to Ewing

Q11
This line of questioning displays

- ○ The importance of Ewing as the front runner

- ○ A biased in favor of covering Ewing by the media because his outlandish behavior brings in ratings

- ○ A media bias of trying to make Ewing look bad

On April 9, Taylor wrapped up the Democratic nomination, even though the former governor was unopposed. You notice the next day that the press doesn't cover it, but instead focuses on a speech Ewing made discussing how his administration would view the use of nuclear weapons.

Q12
What does this coverage signal?

- ○ News media preferred to cover Ewing because he brought in ratings

- ○ News media believed Ewing would be the president in November so they gave him the appropriate amount of coverage

- ○ News media gave Ewing large amounts of coverage but since it was concerning a gaffe, the coverage was negative. This was the media's way of discrediting his candidacy

The following questions are about the November 8, 2016 election

Q13
Who did you vote for?

- ○ Hillary Clinton

- ○ Donald Trump

- ○ Jill Stein

- ○ Gary Johnson

- ○ Did not vote

Which political party do you identify with?

- ○ Democrat

- ○ Republican

- ○ Neither of these parties

The last set of questions look at demographics

What is your age?

- ○ 18 - 29

- ○ 30 - 49

- ○ 50 - 64

- ○ 65 & over

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- ○ Less than high school degree

- ○ High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)

- ○ Some college but no degree

- ○ Associate degree in college (2-year)

- ○ Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)

- ○ Master's degree

- ○ Doctoral degree

- ○ Professional degree (JD, MD)

Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino?

- ○ Yes

- ○ No

Q18

Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be:

☐ White   ☐ Asian

☐ Black or African American   ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native   Other
                                             ☐ [   ]

Q19

What is your gender?

- ○ Male

- ○ Female

Q20

What religion do you consider yourself a member of?

- ○ Catholic

- ○ Protestant

- ○ Muslim

- ○ Jewish

- ○ Atheist

- ○ Other

Q21

What do you estimate was your entire household's income last year before taxes?

- ○ Less than $10,000

- ○ $10,000 to $19,999

- ○ $20,000 to $29,999

- ○ $30,000 to $39,999

- ○ $40,000 to $49,999

- ○ $50,000 to $59,999

- ○ $60,000 to $69,999

- ○ $70,000 to $79,999

- ○ $80,000 to $89,999

- ○ $90,000 to $99,999

- ○ $100,000 to $149,999

- ○ $150,000 or more

Q22
What is your current marital status?

- ○ Married

- ○ Divorced

- ○ Separated

- ○ Never married