

Issue salience and framing*

Agenda-setting and framing explain ways in which news media and communication content can influence the perceptions of individuals about public issues. According to McCombs, 'through their day-by-day selection and display of the news, editors and news directors focus our attention and influence our perceptions of what are the most important issues of the day. This ability to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda has come to be called the agenda-setting role of the news media.' (McCombs 2004: 1) The daily repetition of the topic issue 'is the most powerful message of all about its importance'. (Ibid.: 2) That is to say, news media can potentially influence public opinion by increasing the salience of the issue on the public agenda (Maxwell McCombs et al. 2015). This influence is conditioned by the existence or absence of experience that citizens have on the topic issue, being greatest in the case of 'unobtrusive issues' where the public has not direct experience (i.e. foreign policy issues) (Ibid.: 81). In the words of Bernard D. Cohen,

'the press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about. And it follows from this that the world looks different to different people, depending not only on their personal interests, but also on the map that is drawn for them by the writers, editors, and publishers of the papers they read' (Cohen 1965: 13).

On the other hand, frames 'shape what others think of an issue' and the understanding and discussion of the world around us (Druckman 2010: xiv). As defined by Entman,

'To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. Typically frames diagnose, evaluate, and prescribe' (Entman 1993: 52).

References

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***Note**

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