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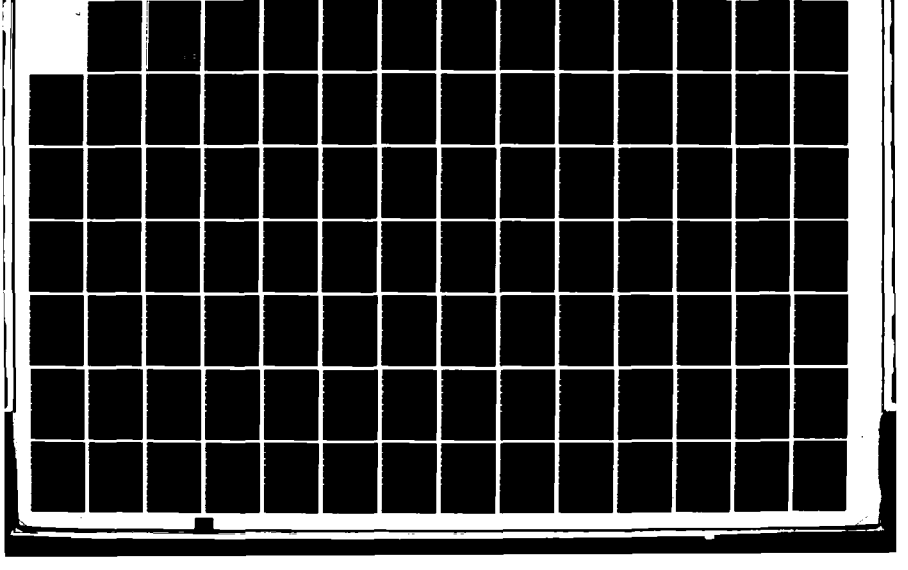

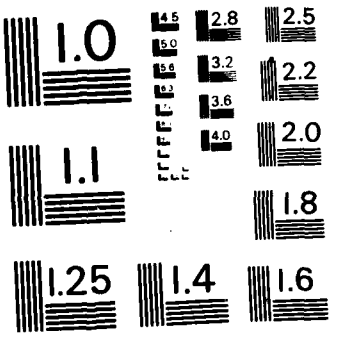

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER AFIT/CI/NR 83-98T	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) Media Agenda-Setting and Personal Influences in the Promotion of National Issues		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED THESIS/DISSERTATION 6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
7. AUTHOR(s) Douglas Gene Draper		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS AFIT STUDENT AT: University of Georgia		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS AFIT/NR WPAFB OH 45433		12. REPORT DATE 1983 13. NUMBER OF PAGES 139
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) UNCLASS 15a. DECLASSIFICATION DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE

16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report)

APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION UNLIMITED

17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)

18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE: IAW AFR 190-17

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19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)

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MEDIA AGENDA-SETTING AND PERSONAL INFLUENCES IN THE PROMOTION OF NATIONAL ISSUES

by

DOUGLAS G. DRAPER

B.A., Brigham Young University, 1980

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment

of the

Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ART

ATHENS, GEORGIA

1983

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MEDIA AGENDA-SETTING AND PERSONAL INFLUENCES
IN THE PROMOTION OF NATIONAL ISSUES

by

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Media Agenda-Setting and Personal Influences in the Promotion of National Issues
University of Georgia, M.A., 1983
Pages: 139

By researching the agenda-setting concept as affected by personal influences, another evaluation of the media's effect on society was conducted. Media agenda-setting was defined as the process through which media emphases help people rank the importance of issues. Comparisons of public and media agreement on different political issues did not always correspond with agenda-setting predictions. The public agenda was dominated by issues that involve personal influences in spite of media insistence on other issues.

When the evaluation of agenda agreement was based on emphasis changes and not on rankings, public and media agendas were often found to be highly correlated. These correlations were most significant for the issue (defense spending) assumed to feature little direct public impact as contrasted with the more obtrusive issues (inflation and unemployment). These results were obtained by comparing agendas across three and five-year time spans. The public agenda was represented by national Gallup Poll data in response to questions about the "nation's most important problem" and defense spending concerns. The media agenda consisted of network television news and the content of eight metropolitan newspapers and four papers from mid-sized cities. With a few exceptions, the highest correlations were found in the metropolitan newspapers. Television news was usually not correlated with public concerns.

Sources:

Erbring, L., Goldenberg, E.N., & Miller, A.H. Front-page news and real-world cues: A new look at agenda-setting by the media. American Journal of Political Science, February 1980, 24, 16-49.

Gallup Reports: vols. 146, 175, 187, 199, 204, 206 and 208.

Weaver, D.H., McCombs, M.E., Graber, D.A., & Eyal, C.H. Media agenda-setting in a presidential election: issues, images, and interest. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981.

Acknowledgments

In preparing this thesis, I was greatly aided by various University of Georgia faculty members. In particular, I extend my deepest appreciation to my major professor, Robert L. Bishop, and the members of my thesis committee, James E. Fletcher and Kent R. Middleton. The combination of their different strengths significantly helped produce the more professional portions of this thesis. I have truly benefitted from association with such scholars.

I am thankful for the assistance of the United States Air Force's Institute of Technology for sponsoring my pursuit of a master's degree. Its financial support permitted me to engage in a full-time scholastic effort. I sincerely hope my thesis and expanded academic training will be of value to Air Force public affairs efforts.

I deeply appreciate the support of my dear wife, Stacey, who served as a content analysis coder, manuscript proofreader and motivational force in the completion of this thesis. Also, I am thankful to Mrs. Barbara McCook who helped with the content analysis. Further thanks are due to my wonderful parents. I am grateful to my father for teaching me how to work and to my mother for teaching me how to read.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The basic goal of traditional mass communication research was to define the media's influence on people (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953, pp. 136-159). This research tried to answer questions about attitude change after exposure to potentially persuasive media messages. In a review of early research, Klapper (1957-1958) concluded that mass media have a limited role in individual decisions on social and political issues. Follow-on research (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), however, identified a more powerful media effect.

McCombs and Shaw accepted the conclusion that the media do not tell people what to think, but they suggested that media have a strong effect on what people think about. They formalized this concept in a study of the 1968 presidential campaign as covered by local and national media and described it as the agenda-setting function of the media. The basic finding of their study matched the earlier observation of Cohen (1963, p. 13) on whose comments they justified the direction of their research. Cohen wrote that media are generally only successful in telling people what to think about and not what to believe. This observation appeared in most agenda-setting research (Roberts & Bachen, 1981).

In a review of the agenda-setting approach to mass communication research, McCombs (1981) wrote that it is a "succinct statement about the social impact of the mass media" and a "contemporary theoretical approach to political communication" (p. 121). He described the impact of the media's role in telling people what to think about in the following statement:

> The idea of agenda-setting influence by the mass media is a relational concept specifying a positive--indeed, causal--relationship between the emphases of mass communication and what members of the audience come to regard as important. In other words, the salience of an issue or other topic in the mass media influences its salience among the audience. (p. 126)

The basic statement that people "think about" the issues covered by the mass media was used in later study as justification for suggesting that media messages are capable of changing the form of "American democracy" (Manheim, 1976) and it served as the basis of a publicity campaign designed to create social changes (Baade, 1980). Much less power was attributed to agenda-setting in other research as McLeod, Becker and Byrnes (1974) criticized McCombs and Shaw's generalization. They wrote that media are not the only sources of what people think about. This type of finding led one agenda-setting researcher, Weaver (1982), to write that the agenda-setting effect faces many restrictions and sometimes seems to be contraditory. He wrote that it only seems to be effective "with

regards to certain groups of people, to certain kinds of issues or subjects, to certain periods of time, to certain media, and to certain societies" (p. 538).

Many inconsistent and contradictory results have developed in rating the effectiveness of the media in setting public agendas for political events (Kaid, Hale & Williams, 1977; Weaver, McCombs & Spellman, 1975) and in evaluating how media agenda-setting is affected by personal influences (Cook, Tyler, Goetz, Gordon, Protess, Leff & Molotch, 1983; Erbring, Goldenberg & Miller, 1980). Similar comparisons of observed conflicts were noted by Roberts and Bachen (1981). They suggested that this situation indicates that further research is needed in this area. Recommendations for such research have usually emphasized the correction of method errors (Westley, 1978) and the need for adequate consideration of factors other than the mass media when studying how public agendas develop and change (Erbring et al., 1980).

Despite the controversy that is prevalent when the studies of this media effect are analyzed, the agenda-setting concept is described without qualification in one recently published graduate-level communication textbook (Tan, 1981). In Tan's book, agenda-setting is broadly defined as the way "the media influence our perceptions of the importance of political issues" (p. 277). This type of uncritical acceptance of the agenda-setting concept in other publications was noted before Tan's publication by Severin and Tankard (1979). They wrote that "at this point, the research on agenda-setting

must be labeled inconclusive. Despite the lack of clear evidence, agenda-setting is now being presented in some books as if it is established fact" (p. 225).

The purpose of this thesis was to further investigate the agenda-setting function of mass media, in particular to attempt an explanation for studies which show media influences on public agendas while others have found no such results. Basically, this thesis suggested that a limited agenda-setting effect exists. It did not cast complete doubt on the existence of a correlation between the content of media agendas with what eventually ends up on public agendas, but it challenged views of agenda-setting as an uninhibited social impact. This position was tested by applying some of the numerous recommendations for further research that have appeared in the studies discussed in the literature review portion of this study.

The promised benefit of more research of media agenda-setting proceeds from its uncritical acceptance by some academic writers. This need is reinforced by at least one information-campaign designer who used agenda-setting as a proven media effect. To better understand the media's role in society or how mass media messages can help promote certain causes, this study joins the "flood of manuscripts" that have "been produced dealing with the topic" (Becker, 1982, p. 521) in trying to build support for a few basic answers. The general research questions of this study are based on testing the effects of personal influences on agenda-setting by the

public. These forces are being emphasized, because they are often blamed for causing inconsistent findings in agenda-setting studies (Roberts & Bachen, 1981). These personal influence questions are summarized below:

(1) If media tell people what to think about, will the results of this function always be a rank-ordered correlation between the issues most heavily covered by the media and those issues the public considers most important?

(2) If this media agenda-setting occurs on an issue, will it occasionally promote one side of that issue more than the alternative?

(3) What role do personal influences have in altering the impact of any agenda-setting effects?

(4) What generalizations can be made from this area of media research that will be useful to those concerned with understanding the media's social and political effects? Also, does media agenda-setting suggest that publicity or information campaigns can succeed in raising public awareness of a campaign's subject?

In summary, this study is an attempt to clarify the media relationship to agenda-setting rather than just replicating the plentiful exercises in the larger number of conflicting findings that already exist. The tendency to create more confusion than clarity in mass communication research was described by Klapper (1957-1958), who wrote that this research area has a tradition of supplying "instead of definitive answers, a plethora of relevant but inconclusive

and at times seemingly contradictory findings" (p. 454). This study focused on testing the agenda-setting concept to evaluate it as a theory in understanding and using mass media.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

To answer the questions raised and to meet the goals of this study, support will be sought in a review of relevant mass communication literature. This review will be restricted mainly to the major agenda-setting studies and research in which personal influences were considered as important factors. A complete review of the "flood" of agenda-setting research will not be written as adequate reviews have been produced previously by Roberts and Bachen (1981) and Weaver, Graber, McCombs and Eyal (1981). The key studies in this area, however, will be discussed.

Beginnings

As a starting point, it may be helpful for the purposes of this study to review the development of the agenda-setting concept. Research using the term "agenda-setting" is often traced to McCombs and Shaw (1972), but personal, political and public "agendas" had been considered in earlier research (Cobb & Elder, 1971; Walker, 1966). In discussing these agendas, Walker mentioned many indirect influences which establish what issues are picked for these agendas and he included the mass media as one of those factors. Another early study of how agendas develop and change was conducted by Long (1958) who wrote that "the newspaper is the prime mover in setting

the territorial agenda" (p. 260). His description of this agenda matched definitions that were later used to describe the "public" agenda.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) in their first agenda-setting study referenced such earlier research. These studies were mainly observations of voting processes (Lang & Lang, 1966) or qualitative studies (Cohen, 1963) of political elites and they did not measure actual instances of specific media effects on the public. In addition to this research, McCombs and Shaw (1972) based their assumption of a possible media agenda-setting effect or function on a theory proposed by Lippmann (1922). He wrote that the media help create "maps of the world" (p. 11) for the public and they paint "pictures" (p. 11) for people of the things they do not directly experience.

Accepting this theory and recognizing that most people do not have direct contact with presidential candidates, McCombs and Shaw (1972) studied the media's effect in shaping voters' perceptions of candidates and key issues during the 1968 presidential election. The media were predicted to strongly affect how much importance voters would place on certain candidates and their related issues. It was "hypothesized that the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward political issues" (p. 177). This setting of agendas was basically seen by McCombs and Shaw as the result of learning from media-reported campaign information.

Becker (1982) described the research period during which McCombs and Shaw (1972) announced their primary agenda-setting study results. Becker wrote that it was a time of searching for an answer concerning the existence of mass communication effects. He described the situation as follows:

> U.S. mass communication researchers in the last decade found themselves with a striking paradox. Surrounded by a commercial media system based on the assumption that purchased space and time produce audience effects, the researchers were unable to provide convincing evidence of effects in noncommercial areas. The pervasiveness of the media argued for political and social effects that empirically could not be demonstrated (p. 521)

Definitions

To evaluate the theory that McCombs and Shaw (1972) offered concerning media effects, it may be important to understand the basic terms used in agenda-setting research. Also, a review of the associated definitions that have been used in defining the agenda-setting concept seems essential. These steps will comply with one of the suggestions of McCombs (1981) that follow-on agenda-setting research should pay more attention to "previous conceptualizations" (p. 122) of agenda-setting. One of the phrases critical to this study, personal influences, however, will be defined later as it is discussed with the criticisms of agenda-setting.

Perhaps the first term to examine now would logically be "agenda." From its political science use and background,

Walker (1966) defined "agenda" as the "list of questions which are recognized by the active participants of government as legitimate subjects of attention and concern" (p. 292). "Active participants" were seen as political representatives, public administration officials and politically-active citizens who strive to promote their concerns to the attention of policy makers. Cobb and Elder (1976) found that a "formal" (p. 126) agenda results from the interaction of these individuals. The agenda that the public forms and holds is produced by "thinking about" the news coverage given to the action of the active participants of government.

Another key term often referred to in agenda-setting research was cited by McCombs and Shaw (1972) in their first study. This term is the phrase that the media tell people what to "think about." It was based on the following description which was written by Cohen (1963) in discussing the media's role in society:

> The press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling its readers what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about. (p. 13)

Using Cohen's observation and a similar conclusion by Lang and Lang (1966), media agenda-setting was constructed on the assumption according to McCombs and Shaw (1976) that media have "the ability to structure the unseen environment" (p. 18) of presidential elections. This ability was described

by McCombs and Shaw (1972) in their seminal study as follows:

> While the mass media may have little influence on the direction or intensity of attitudes, it is hypothesized that the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues. (p. 177)

Becker (1982) wrote that this definition or hypothesis of media agenda-setting involves a decision-making process even though many agenda-setting studies merely describe it as a simple situation in which the media create "pictures" and the public accepts those images (Weaver et al., 1981). Becker (1982) described a more complex view of agenda-setting and wrote that it is a process involving more than people just thinking about what the media tell them. This description is included in the following:

> The assumption must be made, then, that audience members do not treat all issues equally. Rather it must be assumed that based on some criterion, the audience members classify issues into at least two groups: those which are high in importance and those which must be considered salient, i.e., conspicuous, prominent, or striking, while others are not salient. (p. 525)

This assumption has appeared in most studies which adopt McCombs and Shaw's (1972) main agenda-setting hypothesis because of their research design. To test how media set agendas for political campaigns, McCombs and Shaw set a research precedent when they matched what voters said were key issues

of the campaign with the content of the media that those voters had been exposed to. The media were found by McCombs and Shaw (1972) "to have exerted a considerable impact on voters' judgments of what they considered the major issues of the campaign" (p. 180). The correlations between the ranking of issues by the media were very high. From this finding, agenda-setting was further defined (Roberts & Bachen, 1981) as a "mirror-image" effect of the media where the passing of salience results in similar "weightings of issues" (p. 323) across the media and public agenda.

Evidences

From the combined results of agenda-setting research and related media studies, Roberts and Bachen (1981) wrote that mass communication research during the 1970s made a comeback over the law of "minimal effects" (p. 308). They found that agenda-setting significantly contributed to "a revival of the view that the mass media exert powerful influences on the way people perceive, think about, and ultimately act in their world" (p. 308). A review of the main agenda-setting studies has been conducted in this portion of the literature review to examine the findings, predictions and applications of this concept as a media effect.

Findings. In addition to the findings of McCombs and Shaw (1972) that agenda-setting by the media may exist, other related studies (Benton & Frazier, 1976; Funkhouser, 1973; Weaver et al., 1975) produced supportive results. Of these and the many agenda-setting studies that have been conducted,

the research by Weaver et al. (1975) has been described as the best example of media agenda-setting effects (Roberts & Bachen, 1981; Weaver et al., 1981). This research by Weaver et al. (1975) was centered on the public concern that developed about the media coverage of the Watergate hearings.

Weaver et al. measured increases and decreases in how much importance the public and media placed on Watergate news. The finding supported McCombs and Shaw's (1972) conclusion that the media establish public perceptions of the importance of issues and rejected the notion that the public sets the media agenda on political news. Weaver et al. (1975) wrote that agenda-setting was likely to occur in this situation because people already want to know more about the president and this desire for more information helped an issue related to him become more important to the public. They concluded that "with a high need for orientation about politics, mass communication does more than merely reinforce preexisting beliefs" (p. 471) as it sets public priorities.

Benton and Frazier (1976) also found media successful in influencing the public agenda. They discovered an additional agenda-setting effect in their study and wrote that the "media do appear to be setting the public agenda concerning rationales for the proposed solutions" (p. 269) to salient issues. Other studies (Palmgreen & Clarke, 1977; Toggerson, 1981) found agenda-setting to occur on local and national issues or at local levels (Williams & Larsen, 1977) and national levels (Winter & Eyal, 1981). Funkhouser

(1973) found media agenda-setting to occur on a variety of issues, but he restricted the media's influence in this study to only increasing the visibility of these issues among the public without related attitudes on policy choices being changed.

This range of findings generally confirmed the "mirror-image" agenda-setting definition given by McCombs and Shaw (1972) even though "off-election" years were studied (Williams & Larsen, 1977) and other research (Palmgreen & Clarke, 1977) emphasized studying issues that were not directly connected with political events. In a review of their follow-on agenda-setting research and other studies, McCombs and Shaw (1977) stressed the political nature of the original agenda-setting hypothesis, but they wrote that this political influence would generate related social effects as others had found. The result of this effect was described as helping "society achieve consensus on which concerns and interests should be translated into public issues and opinions" (pp. 151-152).

An example of how this social consensus can be achieved was reported by Nelson and Lindenfeld (1978) in discussing the results of a media publicity campaign. This campaign was designed to raise public awareness of the need to report suspected cases of abuse or to seek professional help if an individual believed he or she was guilty of child abuse. This campaign resulted in increased reports in both of these categories, and the child abuse issue reached the attention of high-level government policy makers.

McCombs and Shaw (1977) wrote that the media are very influential in promoting the salience of such issues over other issues with equal impacts on people because of "deliberate" and "inadvertent" (pp. 151-152) reporting practices. They elaborated on this media influence in the following:

> In the process of deciding each day which items to report and which to ignore, the editors of the news media guide our attention to elements in the larger political arena. They not only guide and direct, they actually supply the building blocks we use in constructing our mental mosaics of the political arena. The mass media both focus attention and structure our cognitions. (p. 151)

Weaver (1982) wrote that this agenda-setting function is dependent on the assumption that the press does not always just reflect reality without deviation. Without this deviation, it would be impossible to document a media effect because media agendas would reflect the many concerns and the occurrences of the world without any focus on any particular themes. Weaver found the public agenda to usually hold only a "few issues and subjects" (p. 538) and this agenda ignored many of the world's problems. In a similar fashion, Weaver wrote that the media do not "reflect reality, but rather filter and shape it, much as a kaleidoscope filters and shapes light" (p. 538). This filtering and shaping according to the media agenda-setting concept leads to a concentration over time of public attention on the issues the media considers most salient.

Becker and McCombs (1978) researched the varying effectiveness of this ability of the media to focus attention during primary election campaigns on certain candidates and issues. In this case, a great deal of opinion change was ongoing and was linked by considerable evidence to media agenda-setting. This influence was reflected by the public in their perceptions of specific candidate images and issues. The finding that the media help promote one candidate over another in primary elections had already been recognized in an earlier study (Mueller, 1970). To this conclusion, Becker and McCombs (1978) added the theoretical base of agenda-setting as an explanation of why the media can be influential in such cases and used their study as another evidence of media agenda-setting.

Other evidence of a media agenda-setting effect is available in related mass communication research (McClure & Patterson, 1974; Salcedo, Read, Evans & Kong, 1974). One of the key related studies (Douglas, Westley & Chaffee, 1970) found "positive correlations between information gain" (p. 487) and public concern on certain topics. They described this media effect as a minor "attitude change," but they restricted it to only being likely on topics "on which informed persons are unlikely to differ" (p. 487). This general conclusion was cited in several studies in which information campaigns raised public concern for pesticide safety (Salcedo et al., 1974), safe driving practices (Mendelsohn, 1973) and suggestions to prevent heart disease (Maccoby & Farquhar, 1975).

In a study of media influences on political campaigns, McClure and Patterson (1974) reported findings that also supported the agenda-setting concept. They found that televised political advertisements prompted viewer-preference changes concerning certain candidates and issues because of the repeated exposure to these ads. News broadcasts were seen to have this influence to a small degree but only on topics which attracted frequent media attention. This basic finding that repetition helped establish salience among viewers under these conditions is practically the same media effect as proposed by agenda-setting researchers.

Predictions. From this evidence of the research that has been conducted in this area, some writers (Hadden, 1980) and researchers (Manheim, 1976) have used agenda-setting as a justification for predicting powerful media effects. Hadden (1980) wrote that newspaper agendas seem to promote "a carcinogen of the week" (p. 1) and this agenda-setting has raised the public's awareness of many health, safety and environmental risks and dangers. This agenda-setting included the "formation of public perception of risk by withholding or emphasizing information about accidents or new discoveries about risk agents" (p. 1). The increased public awareness was seen as leading to pressure on the federal government to formulate policies to "control or alleviate" (p. 1) these risks.

Manheim (1976) wrote that a political-teaching process occurs as the media set the nation's political agenda. As an example of how people learn from the media and what effect

this has, Manheim wrote that television offers learning about politics with low psychological involvement. This process helps the media control political behavior because apathy develops. Apathy results because political matters are presented as being very complex and involvement in them appears to be unrewarding. This conclusion tends to reflect the view political representatives and public administrators have of the media's role in society concerning politics (Lambeth, 1978).

Even though agenda-setting research began as an effort to demonstrate how people come to think about certain issues more than others, it soon developed into a study of how thinking patterns change as a result of media exposure (Roberts & Bachen, 1981). The predictions discussed above are examples of this transition in some instances. The section of this literature review that follows contains applications of such views and uses of the basic agenda-setting effect.

Applications. Agenda-setting has been viewed by many researchers as a useful way of analyzing the media's role in society and has been described as a practical tool in planning publicity efforts (Baade, 1980; Chaffee & Wilson; 1977; Weaver et al., 1975). For example, as mentioned earlier, Baade (1980) cited agenda-setting research as support for use of a media publicity campaign designed to promote awareness of a social problem.

Media agenda-setting is frequently referenced as an important factor in the formation of public policies (Adelman,

Stewart & Hammond, 1975; Cobb et al., 1976) as media publicity of social problems sometimes results in political action. If media pressure prompts one social issue over others so that it has received widespread public concern, then policy makers would possibly be able to share a somewhat common view of what issues are the most important for policy action (Adelman et al., 1975). Agreement by a large portion of the public and a majority of policy makers on which issues are most important because of media agenda-setting could help generate public and government cooperation in working toward a common goal.

Election campaign efforts can be more effectively planned through application of some agenda-setting research (Weaver et al., 1981). In a study of how the agenda-setting effects of newspapers and television vary during campaigns, Weaver et al. found that newspapers have the most powerful effects early in the campaign with television catching up in influence in the last few weeks before the election. Even though newspapers were described to have the most significant long-term effects, television coverage of campaigns was found to be very important in its "spotlighting" effect and especially in its observable impacts as a campaign concludes.

Paletz and Entman (1981) suggested that another agenda-setting political application is in analyzing media effects on voters' perceptions of candidates and political issues. They found that the number of issues or policies promoted by candidates is constricted by the media. Since the "media are

the main link between presidential candidates" (p. 32) and the public, Paletz and Entman wrote that the media can be used with great confidence by candidates to conduct their campaigns. Campaign issues which are described (Kessel, 1972; Pomper, 1972) as more critical in present elections than candidate images are also affected by the media.

Weaver et al. (1975) applied agenda-setting to a study of one of the key political events of the 1970s in their Watergate research. The main political effect of the media that Weaver et al. found is described as follows:

> In fact, the media may teach these members of the audience the issues and topics to use in evaluating certain candidates and parties, not just during political campaigns, but also in the longer periods between campaigns. By keeping the Watergate affair high on the agenda for so many months, the media in effect told voters that it was an important criterion for judging political parties and candidates even after President Nixon resigned in August 1974 preceding the election. (p. 471)

Also, Chaffee and Wilson (1977) used the agenda-setting concept to evaluate the social effects of the media. Their study applied agenda-setting to an evaluation of how a city with great diversity in its number and format of newspapers is affected by its rich media environment. Chaffee and Wilson found that public agendas are more diverse and subject to change in metropolitan areas where there is more access to different media.

Criticisms

As follow-on research to McCombs and Shaw's (1972) initial agenda-setting study was reported, these studies (McLeod et al., 1974; Zucker, 1978) often mixed supportive findings with criticisms of the agenda-setting approach. One of these studies (Zucker, 1978) found a media effect that was loosely defined as "agenda-setting," but Zucker found results with which he criticized McCombs and Shaw for underestimating the media's power in telling people what to think. Zucker found media successful in affecting "the different sides of an issue" (p. 239) as well as influencing national public opinion "about the importance of issues" (p. 239).

Other critics (Erbring et al., 1980; Sohn, 1978) of agenda-setting found the media to be much less powerful than Zucker reported and even less influential than McCombs and Shaw suggested. Erbring et al. (1980) found that "real-world" impacts were experienced directly by the subjects in their study and the media had no role in setting the "public agenda" items that were viewed as being most important. Basing their test of media agenda-setting on a view that the public agenda should produce a mirror-image of the media agenda, Erbring et al. rejected the existence of a general agenda-setting effect in their study.

Instead, Erbring et al. cited underlying processes as factors in development of public agendas. Their summary of the media's relationship is very close to that described by Klapper (1957-1958) and Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1968)

as a reinforcement effect. The summary by Erbring et al. follows:

> Media effects are contingent on issue-specific audience characteristics; or in other words, issue coverage in the media serves as a trigger stimulus to salience perceptions. Only thus are the audience's latent concerns activated as perceptions of issue salience. (p. 45)

Blood (1980) researched media influences in promoting public concern for unemployment, inflation and crime in different areas where the actual levels of occurrence of these issues varied between locations. He concluded that personal experience overcomes media agenda-setting when it is in competition with the media on those issues. For example, crime was not considered as one of the "most important problems" in an area with a low crime rate even though the media emphasized it as a salient issue. However, the media had a reinforcing effect on public concern for crime in a location with high crime rates.

Another study (Sohn, 1978) which did not find "mirror-image" agenda-setting to occur was focused on studying non-political issues as covered by local media. Sohn found that the media promoted interpersonal discussion of news content, but, in ranking the importance of issues, media and public agendas did not match. This study compared this effect in two time periods separated by almost one year in response to criticism (Westley, 1976) of agenda-setting research that more than one period should be examined as a proper test of this

media-effect concept. As a challenge to the conclusion of Weaver et al. (1975) of the media being the dominant agenda-setting mechanism in society, Sohn (1978) found that the media agenda was just as likely to have been set by the public's concerns.

In testing another criticism of media agenda-setting research, Stevenson and Ahern (1979) found that a media effect appeared absent. The criticism they tested was that agenda-setting research fails to compare the effects of the media on people who are infrequent users of the media as contrasted to heavy media users. Overall, the individuals in this study with little or not direct media exposure still reflected the same rank-ordering of agenda issues as did heavy or average users of the media.

Other studies which were skeptical of the agenda-setting concept usually featured negative results as seen in the above research or they reported mixed results. For example, McLeod et al. (1974) found that media exposure influenced individuals' perceptions of which issues are important only on some issues and with some people. They attributed these fluctuations to the force of interpersonal communication. Temporary situational factors were also suggested to be very important in producing conflicting results. McLeod et al. found concern over controlling defense spending to be much higher than usual because it had become a political campaign issue. Defense spending was held on the public agenda as a decision-making tool for the election even though the media did not refer to

it frequently during the period McLeod et al. had measured the media's content.

Restrictions

This introduction of personal influences by critics of the agenda-setting concepts as a restriction on the media's power in promoting national concerns for various issues is one of several limitations defined in agenda-setting research. As noted in the sections of this chapter which discussed evidences and criticisms, these restrictions or limitations are often in conflict with each other. The restrictions to be discussed here are those that are relevant to the analysis of personal influences as effects on agenda-setting and factors in designing an agenda-setting research method.

Personal influences. The matter of how personal influences affect the media's agenda-setting ability has been included in some studies (Gormley, 1975; Siune & Borre, 1975; Kaid et al., 1977) as a sidelight and directly studied in other research (Erbring et al., 1980; MacKuen, 1979) as an overriding factor. McCombs (1981) recognized the salience of personal influences in describing agenda-setting effects after considerable follow-on research had been reported. He defined this influence as follows:

> In the tradition of effects research, the basic concept of agenda-setting asserts a direct, powerful effect of the mass media on public opinion. But a broader theory of agenda-setting modifies this assertion by recognizing that the ways people use mass communication affect its role and impact on public issues. (p. 132)

McCombs (1981) described some of these uses or conditions that alter the media's agenda-setting ability as the "obtrusiveness" (p. 132) or involving nature of issues, the degree of interpersonal discussion that issues provoke, the amounts of media exposure people experience, the need for information of individuals and various demographics. McCombs asserted, though, that media agenda-setting can still have a "significant impact on our focus of attention and what we think about" (p. 121).

As previously reported, Erbring et al. (1980) found personal influences able to overcome media agenda-setting effects. MacKuen (1979) found that social communication had a similar effect. He studied public and media agendas on several economic issues across several decades and found an almost total "independence" between the issues people think about with those issues the media through their content stress as most important. MacKuen attributed the lack of agenda-setting in this case to variables such as those listed above by McCombs (1981), but he isolated "social communication" as the most important of these factors.

Tardy, Gaughan, Hemphill and Crockett (1981) found that another personal influence that of "political participation mediates the influence of television news on the public's perception of issue salience" (p. 627). This was judged to be true because "political participants" (p. 627) were less influenced in their perceptions of the salience of various issues than "political inactives" (p. 627). This study used

national election public opinion data in a comparison with television campaign coverage.

This area of the power of personal influences as a factor in overcoming media agenda-setting is not without its share of conflict. For example, the findings of Blood (1980), Erbring et al. (1980) and MacKuen (1979) were contested by the results of a study by Cook et al. (1983). In this research, Cook et al. found that individuals who are highly involved in political matters were influenced by the media to about the same extent as the general public concerning "perceptions of issue importance" (p. 17). This finding, however, was on an issue which would be described by these other researchers as "unobtrusive" or "not involving personal impacts" even though it was with people involved in many political and social issues daily.

A more direct conflict between the results of Cook et al. and the results of other research is seen in studies by Gormley (1975) and Siune and Borre (1975). In a study of how media in Denmark set the public agenda on political issues, Siune and Borre found that a strong difference existed between the agenda of political elites with that of the "mass." This incongruity between political representatives and the public was attributed to agenda-setting because media were found to be effective in setting the public agenda but the political elites were unaffected in this manner. Gormley (1975) found almost identical results in his study conducted in the United States.

The research conducted by Cook et al. (1983) was one of the few studies in which people who followed media agendas were highly involved in political issues. Even within their study, though, the leaders of special-interest groups were described as being unaffected by agenda-setting. This secondary finding was more closely related with other research. For example, Tipton, Haney and Basehart (1975) found that agenda-setting by the media is much less significant in city and state elections than national elections because people are more likely to have personal contact with candidates and campaign workers and voters directly experience campaign issues.

The tendency of agenda-setting research to find personal influences as a significant factor in how the public adopts media agendas corresponds with an observation made by Chaffee (1972) concerning the need to consider the "interpersonal context of mass communication" (p. 95). He wrote that interpersonal relations have an added dimension today because "millions of people can receive the same message at about the same time" (p. 95). Chaffee described this interaction as follows:

> Use of the mass media is commonly thought of as a discrete individual behavior, one that can be isolated from the rest of a person's daily living. A moment's self-reflection should be sufficient to convince the reader that this conception is too narrow. We frequently refer to our daily newspapers, to the ubiquitous television set, and to magazines, books, and films for

> information and insights that we can employ in our interactions with others. We do not ordinarily think of these as two separate types of communication. Rather, we are continually--often simultaneously--involved in both mass and interpersonal communication, as we build and cross-validate our interpretations of ourselves and the people and events that surround us. (p. 95)

Chaffee's observation is consistent with the considerable amount of research that found personal influences as very powerful forces in affecting media impacts. Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) found that an individual's "social environment" and "interpersonal relations" (p. 25) must be accounted for when testing mass communication effects. Many of the variables they discovered to be important in social environments paralleled those which were seen to affect agenda-setting (Erbring et al., 1980; Tipton et al., 1975). One of the most powerful influences found in early media-effects studies was that of interpersonal communication (Rogers, 1973).

Rogers reviewed the early studies that demonstrated the relationship between mass and interpersonal communication and described it as one of its complementary roles. He found the role of mass media to be an information source that helps people increase their knowledge of the world and interpersonal communication fulfills a role more likely to affect changes in individuals' attitudes. Festinger (1951) also noted the importance of these discussions in not only affecting attitudes but in producing conforming behavior among members of work and social groups.

Shaw (1977) defended the agenda-setting function of the media as a strong media effect that is not dominated by these personal influences of social communication and direct experiences. He wrote that agenda-setting still occurs because the media feature heavy repetition of messages and sometimes subtle establishment of agendas through indirect sources after first being raised by the media. The earlier findings of Greenberg (1964) and the numerous studies reviewed by Rogers (1973) established that media messages do become sources for interpersonal discussion. This occurrence would allow the media to indirectly set the public agenda. However, this indirect agenda-setting would face the interpretation and possible alteration of the meaning of these messages by the people who would exchange them even though they first received the news directly from the media.

This possible modification of media messages by personal influences was described by Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield (1949, pp. 247-279) as the main hindrance to mass persuasion attempts. McCombs and Shaw (1972; 1977) have carefully avoided suggesting that the media can persuade people through an agenda-setting function, but these personal forces which are seen as more powerful than the media could also be affecting what people "think about." For example, Clarke and Kline (1974) found that despite the "new evidences" (p. 225) such as, agenda-setting, that the media have more discernible effects, the "social context" of "communication and learning" (p. 225) should still not be neglected. They wrote that

"audiences manipulate media content to serve their own needs, whether or not these needs match the communicator's intent" (p. 225).

In summary, the personal influences of issue obtrusiveness, social communication and media exposure have been seen to limit the effect of the media's agenda-setting function. Despite these restrictions, some agenda-setting is usually found in most studies attempting to measure such effects. Even though the media are effective in promoting some degree of additional concern for an issue, the agenda-setting concept is often rejected because its ability to set rank-ordered priorities is limited. For practical purposes, this limitation seems secondary to the media's interest-promoting ability even though it often is used as the main means of evaluating agenda-setting as a significant media effect.

Time frame. Winter and Eyal (1981) researched another possible restriction of media agenda-setting and labeled this the "time frame" issue. Although most agenda-setting studies followed very similar formats, Winter and Eyal observed how the period for measuring media agendas often varied. They conducted a study to determine the best "time frame" to consider in analyzing media content. In other words, they wanted to identify how many days or months before an opinion poll was conducted should the media analysis begin and progress through. The results of their study indicated that strong media and public agenda correlations only exist for an optimum time frame of four months before an issue is measured.

The best results were found to available by measuring media content for the month immediately prior to public opinion survey dates.

Winter and Eyal summarized these research recommendations as a generalization that it is "recent media emphasis rather than cumulative effects over time that leads to public salience" (p. 381). This conclusion indicates that considerable conflict could mainly exist in agenda-setting research because different time frames have been used in comparing media and public agendas. As support of Winter and Eyal's "one month" generalization, it is interesting that one of the strongest supports of a media agenda-setting effect was found by Zucker (1978) who used a one-month time frame.

Newspapers versus television. Another possible restriction to agenda-setting research is that newspaper agendas and television agendas must be considered in the same study to properly determine whether a media agenda-setting effect has occurred (Toggerson, 1981). Also, agenda-setting on certain issues will be more influenced by newspaper coverage than television coverage and the reverse may occur (Weaver et al., 1981). The findings of agenda-setting research will be limited by which media are included in the study and by the variable nature of the different impacts of newspapers and television.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) found similar effects of newspapers and television in agenda-setting, but a later study in which McCombs was involved (Weaver et al., 1975) found that

television was more effective. They wrote that television appeared stronger in agenda-setting because of its "inherent structural dimensions" (p. 115) which help viewers determine the importance of one issue over others. A similar study (McClure & Patterson, 1976) found television's format successful in covering action-centered issues, but its presentations sometimes buried issues behind entertaining formats. And on the other hand, Tardy et al. (1981) did not find television to have any significant agenda-setting effect.

Generally, newspapers were found by researchers (Williams & Larsen, 1977) to be more successful in agenda-setting on general long-term social issues when the media sources were compared against each other. Other studies (Benton & Frazier, 1976), though, found very similar effects in these comparisons. Toggerson (1981) suggested that the media sources should be considered together because they operate together in actual public use and media campaigns which have used both sources tend to be more effective.

Summary. Perhaps the following observation by Becker (1982) best summarizes the theme of the restrictions noticed about the media's agenda-setting ability:

> The media probably do not act alone in providing cues to the audience members about issues, the cues probably do not affect all audience members the same way, and cues may have more influence at one point in time and for another issue. In other words, the effects of the media may not be monolithic. (p. 533)

Recommendations

To help evaluate the conflict existing between researchers who disagree about the existence of an agenda-setting function of the media, several studies (Cook et al., 1983; Erbring et al., 1980; Westley, 1978) include recommendations for further research in this area. Westley wrote that the agenda-setting concept suggests an unlimited power over audience agendas. He recommended looking for other variables as influences on public agendas in follow-on studies. These influences have been cited in some studies (Erbring et al., 1980; Shaw, 1977), but the results have been mixed. The media's ability to set agendas on issues which might involve personal influences has yet to be accurately described.

Another recommendation from Westley (1978) is for follow-on agenda-setting studies to measure media and public agendas during periods of significant media emphases and public opinion shifts. These shifts according to Cook et al. (1983) should be studied over several years with agenda-setting impacts on different issues compared against each other. This procedure will help develop a theory that specifies under what conditions with what kinds of issues media influence public agendas. Minor recommendations included with other research are discussed later as this study's research method is explained.

Conclusion

The evidences and criticisms of the media agenda-setting concept are generally consistent with the basic information

theory of mass communication. Littlejohn (1978) briefly described this theory as the process whereby individuals seek media information to help them reduce uncertainty on the decisions they need to make in daily living. This theory allows for media messages to affect people or for people to influence the media. Even though different terms have been used to describe information theory, it is easily seen in most mass communication research. Information exchange which process involves a sender, message and receiver is the basic element of this theory as it is in the case of agenda-setting.

When agenda-setting researchers try to move beyond these simple steps and predict the consequences of the public's exposure to media messages, the comments of critics appear to be most appropriate. Chaffee (1972, p. 95) advised those engaged in this type of research to consider mass and interpersonal communication as separate but interactive factors working together in promoting national issues. He rejected the idea that they must not be considered in competition with each other as earlier research had suggested (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968, pp. 150-158).

In a study of political communication, Chaffee and Petrick (1975) confirmed this observation by demonstrating that the media sometimes introduce concerns to the public which are then reinforced by personal influences. Also, they wrote that the reverse may occur and that issues may be promoted by one of these forces independent of the other. Chaffee and Petrick summarized the role of the media in society as related

to this promotion of national issues. This summary included (1) viewing the media as an information-sharing mechanism, (2) which teaches "people about matters considered necessary or useful" (p. 17) and (3) which builds "support for ideas and activities" (p. 17).

This summary of the media's role in society suggests that the agenda-setting theory may indeed be too simple a generalization for application outside of political campaign studies. In his review of agenda-setting methodology problems and the conflicting research about this theory, Becker (1982) wrote the following warning:

> There is an important lesson lurking in the agenda-setting research literature: Be suspicious of the simple explanation of social phenomenon, no matter how promising it sounds; things are probably more complex than they seem at first notice. (p. 533)

As information is naturally shared between the public and the media, agendas of each are probably shaped to reflect some trace of that exchange. Dismissing the agenda-setting theory completely seems from the research discussed to be as unwise as the practice of those writers who enthusiastically use it to predict the manipulation of public opinion by the media. Further research, then, should be focused on defining the complexities of how media and public agendas sometimes reflect identical priorities or how the media might promote the salience of one issue more than another.

In analyzing agenda-setting definitions and in studying the tests of those definitions, some of the conclusions (Benton & Frazier, 1976; Zucker, 1978) lend support to the idea that the media in telling people what to think about actually contribute to shaping what people think. This idea, of course, assumes that opinions form when individuals think about the news of various issues and compare those thoughts with other sources of information. Therefore, people who only learn about an issue from the news media will only be able to "think about" that issue according to what the media provide them. If this information is unaffected by previously held and related opinions, it may influence what those people think concerning that issue.

This set of conditions could result in people thinking about media messages and using that information to construct beliefs as suggested by basic information theories (Littlejohn, 1978). Often media agenda-setting results are rejected for indicating no media effect because a rank-ordered correlation did not develop in the study. However, tests were usually not conducted to determine whether the importance of some of the issues in this case received higher amounts of concern because of the media's emphasis on them. Agenda-setting research (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) seems to view the media as having very limited power in influencing opinions on issues, but it suggests a powerful influence in telling people what issue to view as being the most important, next in importance and so forth. This contradiction in the description

of mass communication's power should be analyzed in further research. The conflict that is so prevalent in agenda-setting research might be viewed with some degree of understanding by resolving this contradiction and testing the role of personal influences in how agenda-setting affects public opinion.

CHAPTER THREE

Method

To test the agenda-setting hypothesis as affected by personal influences, the research design compared media and public agendas on three issues upon which these influences might operate. Weaver (1982) described issues which are more likely to be subject to the impact of personal influences as "obtrusive" (p. 547) and those issues which involve little public attention as "unobtrusive" (p. 547). Issues judged by Weaver to be obtrusive were inflation, unemployment and taxes. The unobtrusive issues included national defense matters and foreign affairs. This study's agenda comparisons were restricted to defense spending, inflation and unemployment.

Issues

These issues were selected because they provide examples of subjects which have varying amounts of influence from personal factors. For example, unemployment and inflation frequently involve direct personal experience or prompt interpersonal di.cussion and they are seen as important national problems ("Unemployment now seen as nation's most urgent problem," 1982). On the other hand, defense spending nas been found (Chaffee & Petrick, 1975) to attract little more than superficial public attention. Gallup polls ("Inflation still most important problem," 1982) often include these

three issues among the top six to eight concerns of the nation with the "obtrusive" issues taking a dominant position at the front.

Besides being ranked as top concerns of the public, defense spending, inflation and unemployment were described by political scientists (Plotkin, 1981) as key concerns of the presidential candidates in the 1980 election. Since the time frame in which the media to be content analyzed in this study covers the beginning and end of the presidential campaign, the media should have presented discussions of these concerns. Carey (1976) observed an earlier presidential campaign and noted that through media agenda-setting the candidates' issues more than their images became the key aspects of the campaign. This study is not an attempt to make such a statement. It will only assume, based on prior research (Carey, 1976; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Weaver et al., 1981), that if the media did set the public agenda on these issues during the campaign period, then, more than a limited media effect was experienced by society.

Hypotheses

By using the defense spending, inflation and unemployment issues in a test of this study's hypotheses, further data was gathered with which to evaluate the conflicting findings of previous agenda-setting research. Such results provide some opportunity for discussion of generalizations concerning media agenda-setting in connection with powerful personal influences. The hypotheses that were tested in this study are

stated in the following:

H_1 Media and public agendas will tend to be significantly different when comparing the emphases each gives to issues which involve varying levels of personal influences. Public concerns will usually center on social and political issues that directly and most frequently affect the general public in spite of media emphasis of other problems.

H_2 Media coverage of issues that directly impact the public will be related to some degree to the public's level of concern for them, but these correlations between media and public agendas will not be very prominent. However, the correlations between media and public concerns for issues that only indirectly affect the public will be substantial.

H_3 The similarity of media and public emphases for issues will be most visible when comparing how each treats an issue's importance without regard to its ranking among other issues. Such comparisons will be benefitted by judging the basic slant of the news forming media agendas. Also, relationships between media and public agendas will be most apparent with comparisons which include issues involving only indirect influences on the public.

From these hypotheses, research questions and methods were formed to test the correlation between public and media agendas. The media's success in raising the public's concern with a single issue was also studied. The selection of research methods was slightly restricted by the differences between the survey dates of the national public opinion data

used, but they still provided a comparable test of agenda-setting as it was described and tested in previous research (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Chaffee & Wilson, 1977; Erbring et al., 1980). In comparing changes of agenda items as possibly correlated with their media coverage, consideration was given to the procedures of previous studies. Deviations from standard agenda-setting research methods occurred in order to more thoroughly analyze the observed changes in public and media agendas and to test the study's hypotheses.

Public Agenda

To investigate public opinion on defense spending, inflation and unemployment, data were used from the Gallup Reports and Gallup Opinion Index for a period extending from September 1977 to January 1983. During that period, 12 different polls were used which reports indicated several significant public opinion shifts having occurred on the issues being tested in this study. Each of the Gallup polls represents a random, stratified sample of 1500 U.S. residents ("Design of the sample," 1983).

A disadvantage of relying on such data is that no determination of actual or light and heavy media use can be made. This disadvantage, though, may not be a significant problem because agenda-setting research has found actual, light or heavy media use variables to be insignificant in how members of the public follow media agendas (Stevenson & Ahern, 1979). Shaw (1977) wrote that agenda-setting can occur regardless of the level of media exposure because of

interpersonal discussion of media topics. This observation matches the conclusion of Chaffee (1972) concerning how large amounts of media information are relayed through interpersonal communication channels.

The specific polls selected for this study fall into two categories of six survey periods each based on the research question used by the Gallup pollsters. The first question ("Despite increasing unemployment rate, public retains guarded optimism," 1982) simply asked, "What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?" (p. 22). The second question ("U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms gap seen closing," 1983) follows:

> There is much discussion as to the amount of money the government in Washington should spend for national defense and military purposes. How do you feel about this? Do you think we are spending too little, too much, or about the right amount? (p. 12)

The dates upon which the six "most important problem" surveys were conducted include: Sept. 12-15, 1980; Jan. 30-Feb. 2, 1981; Jan. 8-11, 1982; April 2-5, 1982; Aug. 13-16, 1982; Oct. 15-18, 1982 ("Confidence in Republicans highest," 1980; "Despite increasing unemployment rate, public retains guarded optimism," 1982; "Inflation still most important problem," 1982; "Only limited survey evidence," 1981; "Several indicators put Democrats ahead," 1982). For the "defense spending" question, the dates of July 8-11, 1977; Nov. 30-Dec. 3, 1979; Jan. 25-28, 1980; Jan. 30-Feb. 2, 1981;

March 12-15, 1982; and Nov. 5-8, 1982 ("Half think defense budget too small," 1981; "Many feel U.S.S.R. has military edge," 1982; "Public support for increase in defense spending," 1980; "Support for more defense spending reaches highest level," 1977; "U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms gap seen closing," 1983) were used.

These dates generally overlap the 1980 presidential election and several other significant events that might have become factors in what the public perceived as most salient issues. For example, tension between the United States and the Soviet Union increased when the Soviet Army invaded Afganistan (Matthews, Clift, Coleman, DeFrank & Schmidt, 1980). Also, the U.S. embassy in Iran was seized and the hostages taken in that event were held for 444 days (Matthews, DeFrank, Martin & Willenson, 1980). Implications for U.S. involvement in foreign affairs also developed when the actions of guerilla armed forces in El Salvador led to the granting of U.S. military assistance to the existing government ("Reagan's blueprint," 1982). The significance of these events in relation to the survey dates selected for this study is the competition for news space affected by them. The results of this competition will be discussed later.

The "most important problem" question has been asked in open-ended style by Gallup pollsters ("Inflation still most important problem," 1982) over the last few years on a frequent basis. It has also been one of the most frequently used data-collecting questions in recent agenda-setting

research (Chaffee & Wilson, 1977; Erbring et al., 1980; MacKuen, 1979; Smith, 1980). Of these studies using the "most important problem" question, only Smith used the data that were collected by the Gallup pollsters. The other studies used independently-collected data or survey findings from the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center. Smith described this frequently-used question and the use of its related data as general ways to learn the public's priorities. These priorities are the sets of issues that agenda-setting researchers are concerned with studying. Smith wrote the following description of what this survey question produces:

> The frame of reference is the country at large, and responses inevitably deal with national or even global concerns rather than local or personal problems. The question also elicits a relative ranking of problems, not an absolute measurement of the level of anxiety in general. All problems compete for the public's attention, and the selection of one concern as most important necessitates the rejection of all others. (p. 165)

Therefore, use of the data generated by pollsters asking this question appears ideally suited for media agenda-setting research. The original McCombs and Shaw (1972) public opinion survey question for their study was very similar to this and only added a few words to limit its scope to specific issues of the 1968 presidential campaign that they studied. Other variations included one by Chaffee and Wilson (1977) who were studying state-wide public opinion and replaced the phrase

"the country" with "Wisconsin." Basically, every study of media agenda-setting has used such a variation of this question in collecting public opinion data.

Logically, the research of the last decade which used this question should have frequently reported the same list of public priorities. This occurred with the studies using the Michigan and Gallup data, but different public agendas emerged when this question was only asked locally (Sohn, 1978) or it was restricted to the problems that a local or state politician should be prepared to correct (Tipton et al., 1975). However, the most significant deviations between public agendas occurred when comparing the data collected in research (Zucker, 1978) employing a totally open-ended questioning approach and those researchers (McCombs & Shaw, 1977; Williams & Larsen, 1977) who used a prepared list of items which respondents were asked to rank. Using an open or closed-ended questioning approach has been found (Edelstein, 1973) to produce very different survey results. Edelstein wrote that selecting an open-ended approach is the more favorable of these options because a respondent is allowed "to define the problem in his own terms" (p. 88).

In using the Gallup Reports and Gallup Opinion Index surveys, this study had the advantage of using national data collected by independent researchers. This provides a good test of national media coverage and its relations to national public concerns. Also, the public opinion findings were collected without any introduction of researcher bias. Both survey

questions selected for this study meet the challenge of Westley (1976; 1978) to examine public agendas that experience rises and declines over longer time periods than the short-range election studies of McCombs and Shaw (1972; 1977).

The advantage of using the limited Gallup "defense spending" question is how it provided an opportunity to examine how the basic aspects of media agenda-setting affect public opinion on a specific issue. This question could be loosely defined as being stated, "Spending more funds for national defense programs is important to me." In this summarized form, the answers received by the Gallup pollsters of "too little" or "too much" for defense spending can be interpreted as indicating more or less public salience being placed on the idea of strengthening national defense resources. The public response to this question provides data with which to test the media effect related to agenda-setting that is mentioned in this study's third hypothesis. This variation of the agenda-setting concept encompasses comparisons of public and media agendas when the slant of media coverage is considered and competition with other issues is treated as a variable rather than a constant characteristic. It is based on media agenda-setting definitions that mention "telling its readers what to think about" (Cohen, 1963, p. 13) and how the media aid in the "creation of pictures" (Weaver et al., 1981, p. 5) for the public.

This variation of agenda-setting research was designed for testing because it parallels the approach used by mass

communication researchers (Douglas et al., 1970; Mendelsohn, 1973) who were studying media effects but using other theories to support their conclusions. Also, it is based on the recommendations of some agenda-setting researchers (Benton & Frazier, 1976; Zucker, 1978) who observed that the media can promote the different sides of issues. Zucker found that public opinion changed with regards to what aspect of an issue was most important as the media promoted public concern for it. The test of this agenda-setting variation will be described shortly. This portion of the description of this study's research method was basically to introduce what data sources were used in defining the public's agenda.

Media Agenda

The media's agenda to be compared with this representation of the public agenda will be drawn from a wide variety of newspapers and network television news broadcasts. Specifically, the media agenda to be compared with shifts in public opinion will be researched through a content analysis of these newspapers: Atlanta Constitution, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, Miami Herald, Milwaukee Journal, New York Times, St. Louis Post-Dispatch and Washington Post. These papers serve some of the nation's financial, political, social and regional population centers. The IMS '83 Ayer Directory of Publications (1983) lists their daily circulation at 4.62 million copies. Research (Lemert, 1977; McCombs & Shaw, 1976; Paletz & Entman, 1981) has found that a high degree of content similarity exists between these types of

regional media. This combination of factors suggests that by using this sample of newspapers that an adequate sample of the media agenda could be obtained.

In addition, to include a perspective of network television news agendas, the content analysis included descriptions of the evening news broadcasts of ABC, CBS and NBC. The broadcast analyses were performed by using information published in Vanderbilt University's Television News Index and and Abstracts. This publication provided a description of each story broadcast during the networks' evening news, listed how many seconds they lasted and gave enough details of the stories to meet the requirements of this study. Use of this source for television content studies has been reported (Tardy et al., 1981) and it was viewed as having provided satisfactory results.

Also, to gain an overview of what news might be reaching people from more local media than the regional and national sources listed, a content analysis was conducted of four Georgia newspapers which serve mid-sized cities. These newspapers included the Albany Herald, Columbus Ledger, Macon Telegraph and Savannah Morning News. Each of these publications is a daily paper and carries local and national news. They were selected because these newspapers represent to some degree the geographic regions of the state and they are prominent in those areas.

The specific editions and broadcasts that were analyzed in the media sources used in this study correspond with the

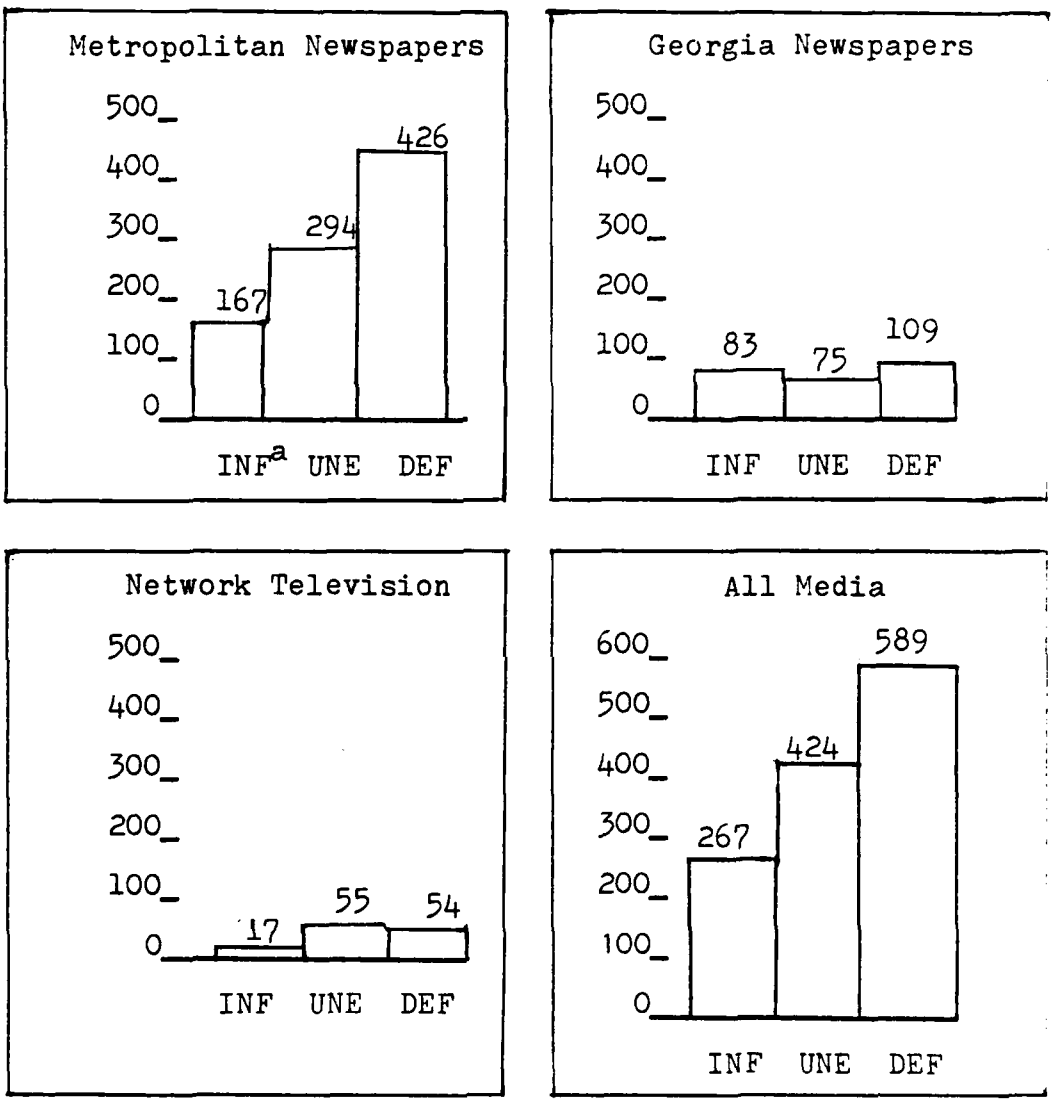
12 earlier-mentioned survey dates from which the public opinion data were obtained. A random selection process was used in designating 14 editions to be analyzed from a four-week period immediately preceding each survey date. This four-week period was the time frame recommended by Winter and Eyal (1981) and Zucker (1978). For the television content analysis, the entire randomly-selected broadcast was included, but the analyses of the 12 newspapers was limited to only the lead sections of each designated edition. This process gave an overview of the media attention given to defense spending, inflation and unemployment for approximately one month before the dates and the public opinion surveys were taken. A total of 2520 editions and 504 broadcasts were included in the content analysis.

These content analysis techniques produced a large sample of media emphases over the time span being studied. From this sample, the various media agendas of this study were constructed. When the various content categories of the three issues were combined, the result was a sample of 1280 total news stories (Figure 1). The total lengths of these stories equaled 41,509 square inches for the newspaper content and 16,820 total broadcast seconds for the television news. In Figure 1, the totals are grouped according to the media they represent.

To assess the reliability of this coding scheme, three coders were used on approximately 50 percent of the study and two coders were used on the remainder. "Coder reliability"

Figure 1

Number of Stories Representing the Media Agenda



[a]The abbreviations used in this figure are defined according to the following designations: INF, news of inflation; UNE, news of unemployment; and DEF, news of defense spending.

or the degree of reliability of measurements by coders was determined by using the definition and formula recommended by Wimmer and Dominick (1983, p. 154). Also, other procedures recommended by them were applied to how the content analysis was conducted. First, content categories were outlined to match the study's research questions. Next, coders were selected and trained to follow a systematic approach to describing the content to be examined. Also, a small pretest was conducted to investigate the appropriateness of the categories used to help quantify the media content.

The content categories were simple descriptions of stories and editorials that were directly about defense spending, inflation and unemployment. All other stories were not described in this study. On the stories that were analyzed, each was judged according to its headline and lead paragraph or more, if necessary, to be focused on reporting the occurrence of more or less defense spending, inflation or unemployment. The instructions given to the coders are contained in this study's Appendix.

After the coders had found a story that was judged to be about "more" or "less" of one of the study's three issues, the story was measured in square inches or broadcast seconds. For newspapers, the square-inch measurements included headlines, photos or illustrations and jumps if a story was continued on another page. This process equals that used by McCombs and Shaw (1972). To further apply their content analysis methods, stories were also judged to be either "major"

or "minor" news items. McCombs and Shaw defined "major" stories as any front-page story or any editorial in the lead (upper-left hand) position on the editorial page. Major stories also included all stories under three-column or larger headlines. For television news, any broadcast lasting more than 45 seconds was categorized as a major story. They defined "minor" stories as simply those which did not meet the qualification of a major story.

These analysis methods developed from observations of previous agenda-setting research (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Zucker, 1978) and through the pretest recommended by Wimmer and Dominick (1983, p. 152). The pretest helped clarify the definition of what types of stories fall into the three issue groups and, most importantly, what types of stories could be judged to indicate more or less "salience" or occurrence of the issues. By limiting these judgments to the information provided in the headlines and lead paragraphs, a basic slant for each story was able to be interpreted (Appendix A). At the conclusion of a coder training session, a pretest involving 28 editions of the Chicago Tribune was conducted for the coders involved in this study.

The coder reliability for this pretest resulted in a .89 agreement rating. The formula used for this computation (Wimmer & Dominick, 1983, p. 154) is stated as follows:

$$\text{Degree of Coder Reliability} = \frac{\text{Percent of Observed Agreements} - \text{Percent of Expected Agreements}}{1 - \text{Percent of Expected Agreements}}$$

Using this formula, the degree of coder reliability for the entire study was .87. This resulted from 3550 total agreements out of 3770 possible agreements between the three coders on the number of stories defined to indicate a general media slant of more or less occurrence for each of the issues. The percent of expected agreements stated in the Wimmer and Dominick formula was defined according to the guidelines offered by those researchers (Wimmer & Dominick, 1983, p. 154) as occurring on one half of the decisions strictly because of the laws of chance. For example, if all three coders noticed the same story on the national inflation rate rising and recorded it as a story suggesting more inflation, this would result in six agreements and three expected agreements. The results of the coders' observations were recorded and then analyzed on the stories which had agreement in subject and direction by at least two coders.

Agenda Comparisons

Instead of obtaining results with which to compare media and public agendas on six issues across two time periods as is usually done (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Stevenson & Ahern, 1979), the methods of this study provided an opportunity to compare these agendas using three issues across six time periods. Also, the methods allowed for flexibility in comparing all media coverage of an issue with the public agenda or different variations such as, major stories indicating less inflation or all minor stories mentioning inflation. The results were placed in these overlapping categories of all news,

all major news, all minor news, all more news, all less news, more major news, more minor news, less major news and less minor news. Further subdivisions were created for the number of stories and number of broadcast seconds or square inches of news.

The entries into these categories were statistically analyzed by using a nonparametric correlation approach known as the "Spearman rank-difference correlation" or "Spearman's rho" (Siegel, 1956, p. 202). It is described by Siegel as a "statistic based on ranks" (p. 202). This is the statistical analysis method most commonly used in agenda-setting research (Weaver et al., 1981, pp. 80-85) because the theory suggests similar media and public agenda rankings will indicate a media effect. When ties occurred between these rankings, the process recommended by Siegel (1956) with which to treat them was used. Each tied ranking was assigned "the average of the ranks which would have been assigned had no ties occurred" (p. 206).

Besides this common approach, a similar process to the one followed by Smith (1980) was used to further analyze the trends that developed between media and public agendas. This process involved a graphic plotting of different media and public agendas and these comparisons were evaluated for any indications of correlations by using a chi-square (X^2) (Williams, 1979, p. 109). In discussing this method, Williams wrote that "nonsignificant chi-square would support the assumption that the two distributions fit one another, whereas a significant chi-square would indicate lack of fit" (p. 109).

Since the chi-square was to be used as a follow-on evaluation of the findings obtained by using the Spearman rho, these secondary analyses were conducted in the general areas that appeared to be correlated when first examined. The use of these follow-on analyses only allowed for identification of comparisons that did not feature significant correlations between distributions. It required conversion of the public opinion data and media agenda totals to percentages. For example, inflation and unemployment answers to the "most important problem" question were isolated and their total percentages were adjusted to reflect 100 percent of the answers of that question.

This adjustment process was only possible with the defense spending question and with inflation and unemployment in competition with each other. This provided a slightly restricted secondary analysis of this study's results, but it still offered a good indication of the fit between the distributions being examined. As with the Spearman rho procedures, the correlations to be expected for issues in competition with each other would always tend to show less agreement between agendas. This natural advantage of having a competition-free environment for the defense issue as contrasted with the restrictions on other issues was heavily considered in the discussion of the significance of these results.

These methods are more easily evaluated for their usefulness in the review of the study's results that will be

discussed next. Basically, they follow the usual agenda-setting practices used by many researchers (MacKuen, 1979; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Weaver et al., 1981), but they are designed to more thoroughly evaluate agenda-setting as it is affected by personal influences. This study offers a variation to how public agenda items are affected by the media. This variation involved the evaluation of stories about the agenda items as indicating either "more" or "less" in the story and not just an accumulation of information as the media agenda-setting theory suggests. The results of this study have been obtained through use of systematic and objective methods designed to better understand the media's role in society.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The results of the comparisons that have been introduced generally confirm this study's hypotheses. The correlations between media and public agendas when using the Gallup public opinion data did not develop as in previous studies. An overall media agenda-setting effect in the tradition of McCombs and Shaw (1972) did not become apparent. However, the conditions necessary to indicate that media emphases on issues did raise the public's concern for them developed. This promotion of national issues developed along the same patterns as those trends of the media analyzed in this study. These patterns were more consistent and significant, though, on the unobtrusive issue of defense spending.

Correlations

To describe the results behind these conclusions, a section listing the Spearman rho correlation coefficients will first be composed. Second, the chi-square analysis results will be discussed. Concerning the correlations found by using the Spearman rho, the rankings of the three issues together were only conducted on two of the 12 surveys when the "most important problem" question and the "defense spending" question were asked on the same dates. This procedure was followed because defense spending as an answer on the "most

important problem" question never exceeded three percent of the total responses. This research design limitation and its application will be explained in detail in the next section of this chapter. Follow-on sections will report the results of the public and media correlations for each issue separately with the competition element removed.

Combined issues. According to the main agenda-setting hypothesis, the combined media agenda for the month preceding the Gallup polling dates (on the "most important problem" question) of Jan. 30-Feb. 2, 1981, and April 2-5, 1982, should have emphasized this study's issues (Table 1) as follows:

1. Inflation
2. Unemployment
3. Defense Spending.

Instead, the actual combined media rankings (newspapers only) for these time periods as judged by the number of stories for each of the issues follows:

1. Defense Spending
2. Unemployment
3. Inflation.

The complete results of the comparisons of the media and public agendas are contained in the diagram at the end of this paragraph. These rank-ordered lists should have been very similar for the conditions to exist that are necessary to support the agenda-setting concept. The issues receiving the highest percentage of respondents' answers are listed on the left (public agenda) and the issues receiving the most media

Table 1

Gallup Data Used to Represent the Public Agenda

Responses[a]	Survey Dates						
	Sept. 80	Feb. 81	Jan. 82	April 82	Aug. 82	Nov. 82	Means
Inflation	61%	73%	49%	24%	23%	18%	41.33
Unemployment	16	8	28	44	45	61	33.67
Defense Spending	1	3	2	3	1	1	1.83

Responses[b]	Survey Dates						
	July 77	Dec. 79	Jan. 80	Feb. 81	March 82	Nov. 82	Means
Too Little	27%	34%	49%	51%	19%	16%	32.67
Too Much	23	21	14	15	36	41	25.00
About Right	50	45	37	34	45	43	34.83

[a]Given as answers to the following question: "What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?"

[b]Given as answers to the following question: "There is much discussion as to the amount of money the government in Washington should spend for national defense and military purposes. How do you feel about this? Do you think we are spending too little, too much, or about the right amount?"

coverage for the periods preceding those survey dates (media agenda) appear on the right. These comparisons represent the total number of stories about each of the issues as follows:

1. Inflation (Feb. 1981)	1. Defense (April 1982)
2. Unemployment (April 1982)	2. Defense (Feb. 1981)
3. Inflation (April 1982)	3. Unemployment (April 1982)
4. Unemployment (Feb. 1981)	4. Inflation (April 1982)
5. Defense (Feb. 1981)	5. Unemployment (Feb. 1981)
(tied) Defense (April 1982)	6. Inflation (Feb. 1981)

As evidenced by these brief examples, the media and public agendas failed to show any significant correlation. In fact, the Spearman rhos for the comparisons of the three issues across these two time periods produced negative correlations (Table 2) for the "all news" category and in comparisons of "major news" stories. Even though some of these correlation coefficients are high, they are not statistically significant as they fall in the rejection region set for this study. The interpretation of the statistical significance of the correlation coefficients will be listed at the conclusion of each table in which these results are reported.

In following this same example with the content analysis findings of the television portion of the media agenda, the negative correlations (Table 2) are again contrary to those expected if a media agenda-setting effect is believed to exist under general conditions such as those evaluated in this study. Once again, these correlation coefficients were not significant according to the standard that has been set for this

Table 2

Results of Standard Agenda-Setting Research Procedures for Comparing Public and Media Agendas

Issues: Defense Spending, Inflation and Unemployment

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
(All Newspapers)		
All Major and Minor	-.78	-.58
All Major[a]	-.34	-.44
All Minor[b]	.07	.07
(Network Television)		
All Major and Minor	-.55	-.24
All Major	-.46	-.20
All Minor	-.60	-.80

[a]Front-page and otherwise large, significant stories.

[b]Relatively small and insignificant stories.

Note. To be judged as being statistically significant ($p < .05$), the Spearman rho correlation coefficients in this table (N=6) would have had to equal or exceed .829 (Siegel, 1956, p. 211). None of the values in this table met this significance test.

study. These correlations and those of the newspaper agenda resulted from standard agenda-setting research procedures which used the data collected to represent the media agenda (Appendices B-D).

This basic agenda-setting research approach has been cited (Weaver et al., 1981; Westley, 1978) as being an insensitive method of studying media effects, but it is the most commonly-used approach. To build more sensitivity into this approach, larger population sizes are sought (MacKuen, 1979; Zucker, 1978). This was done in this study by using six dates for each issue so that in some correlations a population of 12 was used. This gives allowance for accepting lesser critical rho values. An example of one of these findings was a comparison of to what degree media and public agendas agreed on only the "obtrusive" issues of inflation and unemployment. This comparison included four separate matchings in which (1) all of the newspaper coverage was measured, (2) all of the television coverage was used, (3) the eight metropolitan newspapers were separated for analysis and (4) only the four mid-sized Georgia newspapers were compared.

The results (Table 3) from these comparisons indicated some significant moderate and high correlations existed between the levels of media and public concern for inflation and unemployment across an approximate period of 27 months. With the defense spending issue removed and the comparisons expanded to include the six "most important problem" survey dates (Table 1), the standard media agenda-setting statistical

Table 3

Results of Standard Agenda-Setting Research Procedures when Comparing Agendas on Inflation and Unemployment News

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
(All Newspapers)		
All Major and Minor	.77*	.59*
All Major[a]	.76*	.60*
All Minor[b]	.50	.48
(Metropolitan Newspapers)		
All Major and Minor	.67*	.50
All Major	.47	.23
All Minor	.49	.07
(Georgia Newspapers)		
All Major and Minor	.74*	.60*
All Major	.76*	.58*
All Minor	.39	.38
(Network Television)		
All Major and Minor	.20	.45
All Major	.41	.43
All Minor	-.33	-.26

[a]Front-page and otherwise large, significant stories.

[b]Relatively small and insignificant stories.

*Significant value ($p < .05$) for Spearman rho correlations.

Note. To be judged as being statistically significant ($p < .05$), the coefficients in this table (N=12) would have had to equal or exceed .506 (Siegel, 1956, p. 211).

analysis for all of the newspapers used in this study found significant correlations in four out of the six possible comparisons. In contrast, the similar set of comparisons (Table 2) which included defense spending showed correlations in opposite directions as those predicted by the agenda-setting concept. The comparisons between inflation and unemployment for all of the newspaper coverage and public concern for those issues only resulted in insignificant correlations for minor news stories.

When more segregated comparisons were made, an interesting set of correlations developed for the four Georgia newspapers as contrasted with the eight metropolitan publications (Table 3). For the category of combined major and minor stories, the Georgia papers produced a high correlation (.74) for the number of stories and a moderate correlation for the length of stories, while the nationally-prominent metropolitan papers only had one significant moderate correlation (.67, number of stories) for these categories. The Georgia papers also showed a moderate (.58) correlation for the lengths of major stories and a high correlation (.76) for the number of major stories when compared to the public agenda. However, the coefficients for the corresponding categories when studying the agenda of the metropolitan papers were not significantly correlated. Both sets of papers revealed insignificant correlations in the tests which isolated the minor news stories.

In this series (Table 3), the results for how television coverage compared with public concerns indicated that there

were not significant correlations in any of the categories. This lack of correlation was similar to that seen earlier (Table 2) for television agenda-setting results. In this case, though, the minor story categories were the only cases of negative correlations. The other television news comparisons produced small, insignificant correlations that were, at least, grouped in the right direction for the conditions necessary to support media agenda-setting being cited as an influence in this case.

As mentioned earlier, one of the unconventional aspects of this study was to borrow the suggestions of Benton and Frazier (1976) and Zucker (1978) who recommended further agenda-setting research should consider how the media can set the public agenda for the different sides of issues. Using this recommendation, comparisons were made similar to those conducted by following the basic agenda-setting research procedures. However, these next results to be reported were obtained by including the observation of story "slant" by this study's coders (Appendix A). Such observations allowed comparisons to be made which introduced general decisions of whether a story indicated more or less occurrence of the three issues being studied.

The results from this series of comparisons for the inflation and unemployment combinations indicated that when using a standard agenda-setting question such as, the Gallup "most important problem" question that such elaborations as "more" (Table 4) and "less" (Table 5) categories may often be

Table 4

Results of Modified Agenda-Setting Research Procedures Which Used News Slant in Comparing Media and Public Agendas

Issues: Inflation and Unemployment

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
MORE[a]		
(All Newspapers)		
Major and Minor	.59*	.51*
Major	.55*	.44
Minor	.63*	.70*
(Metropolitan Newspapers)		
Major and Minor	.55*	.47
Major	.45	.46
Minor	.69*	.46
(Georgia Newspapers)		
Major and Minor	.61*	.51*
Major	.69*	.58*
Minor	.39	.44
(Network Television)		
Major and Minor	.32	.33
Major	-.22	.07
Minor	.05	.03

[a]News that mainly indicates increasing rates for these issues.

*Significant value ($p < .05$) for Spearman rho correlations.

Note. To be judged as being statistically significant ($p < .05$), the coefficients in this table (N=12) would have had to equal or exceed .506 (Siegel, 1956, p. 211).

Table 5

Results of Modified Agenda-Setting Research Procedures Which Used News Slant in Comparing Media and Public Agendas

Issues: Inflation and Unemployment (Spearman rho correlations)

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
LESS[a]		
(All Newspapers)		
Major and Minor	.05	.10
Major	.06	.33
Minor	-.01	-.24
(Metropolitan Newspapers)		
Major and Minor	-.16	.29
Major	.30	.32
Minor	-.48	-.11
(Georgia Newspapers)		
Major and Minor	.37	.34
Major	.24	.21
Minor	.34	.29
(Network Television)		
Major and Minor	.10	.12
Major	.04	.13
Minor	-.09	-.09

[a]News that mainly indicates lower rates for these issues.

Note. To be judged as being statistically significant ($p < .05$), the coefficients in this table (N=12) would have had to equal or be lower than -.506 (Siegel, 1956, p. 211). None of the values met this significant test.

unnecessary. For example, the correlation coefficients (Table 4) for stories that indicated "more" inflation or unemployment were lower in each case than the values (Table 3) produced in the comparisons which ignored story slant. This result was especially visible when examining the number and length of "less" stories (Table 5) as compared to the results of standard agenda-setting analyses.

The values for these stories that were judged to feature a slant suggesting less inflation or unemployment consistently fell below the significance levels set for this study. The method which produced these correlations demanded that the results would have had to be between $\pm$.506 and $\pm$1.000 for them to be statistically significant and support following this practice in further agenda-setting research. The correlations, though, were generally positive and almost all of them were low and slight correlations, not significant at the established level.

In further comparisons between the results of standard agenda-setting procedures (Table 3) and the "more/less" comparisons of agendas for inflation and unemployment, the practice of separating "less" stories (Table 5) proved insignificant. It did not raise the level of correlation for these reports above the levels of the combined major news groups. However, in the case of the metropolitan newspapers, the practice resulted in somewhat higher correlations for the minor stories. One of these coefficients rose to surpass the critical value necessary for it to be judged as having

moved out of the rejection region set for this study. Generally, the coefficients produced for the "more" major and minor stories (Table 4) were very similar with those of the standard comparison procedures for the two issues used in this case (Table 3).

In summary, the results indicated that evidence of media agenda-setting is not prevalent in these cases and that the support for this study's hypotheses is mixed. The overall agenda-setting concept in which media and public agendas will tend to be correlated in a rank-ordered manner could easily be rejected as not having occurred in this study. This result was as predicted in this study's first hypothesis because of the personal influences assumed to be involved. The media agenda would be secondary to direct experiences and social communication. When the defense spending issue was removed from competition with the other two issues, the public and media correlations showed a dramatic shift that supported the second hypothesis. Many of the correlations were significant under this circumstance and some of those were moderate and high correlations. All of these results including a continued analysis of the "more/less" agenda-setting procedure are used again in this study and they are reported before discussing the study's third hypothesis.

Defense spending. In separate comparisons in this study, significant agenda-setting evidences were found when considering story slant on an issue removed from competition with others. The results of this study indicate that this media

agenda-setting variation is best seen on an issue which does not involve significant personal influences. Specifically, defense spending news (Tables 6-7) was highly correlated with the importance or salience the public placed on it. Overall, the newspaper results featured high and very high correlation coefficients, but these correlations were again absent for network television news.

In these tests, significant results were usually found when comparing the agendas of all of the newspapers used in this study. In a change from other comparisons, the "less" stories (Table 7) produced the most substantial of these correlations. For example, the combination of all newspapers when "less" stories were used as the media agenda produced (Table 7) two correlations at .94 (number and length of major stories). The remaining correlations resulted in perfect rankings (1.00). The comparisons did result in two coefficients that fell into the rejection region. These were in the category of more major stories (number of stories, .51; length of stories, .68).

With the defense spending issue (Tables 6-7) as contrasted with inflation and unemployment (Table 3), all of the significant correlation coefficients were found when considering the metropolitan newspapers only as compared to the results produced by considering the smaller newspapers' agenda. The Georgia newspapers in this series of comparisons produced no significant indication of correlation between their news and public concerns. This was the total reverse

Table 6

Results of Modified Agenda-Setting Research Procedures which Used News Slant in Comparing Media and Public Agendas

Issue: Defense Spending

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
MORE[a]		
(All Newspapers)		
Major and Minor	.90*	.83*
Major	.51	.68
Minor	.89	.83
(Metropolitan Newspapers)		
Major and Minor	.94*	.94*
Major	.84*	.83*
Minor	.94*	.80
(Georgia Newspapers)		
Major and Minor	.56	.03
Major	.40	.23
Minor	.28	.37
(Network Television)		
Major and Minor	.28	.31
Major	.10	.03
Minor	.34	.35

[a]News that mainly indicates increasing rates for these issues.

*Significant value ($p<.05$) for Spearman rho correlations.

Note. To be judged as being statistically significant ($p<.05$), the coefficients in this table ($N=6$) would have had to equal or exceed .829 (Siegel, 1956, p. 211).

Table 7

Results of Modified Agenda-Setting Research Procedures which used News Slant in Comparing Media and Public Agendas

Issue: Defense Spending

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
LESS[a]		
(All Newspapers)		
Major and Minor	1.00*	1.00*
Major	.94*	.94*
Minor	1.00*	1.00*
(Metropolitan Newspapers)		
Major and Minor	1.00*	1.00*
Major	.97*	1.00*
Minor	1.00*	.94*
(Georgia Newspapers)		
Major and Minor	.51	.77
Major	.76	.75
Minor	.71	.66
(Network Television)		
Major and Minor	.76	.76
Major	.04	.54
Minor	.81	.81

[a]News that mainly indicates lower rates for this issue.

*Significant value ($p < .05$) for Spearman rho correlations.

Note. To be judged as being statistically significant ($p < .05$), the coefficients in this table (N=6) would have had to equal or exceed .829 (Siegel, 1956, p. 211).

of the situation that was found when comparing inflation and unemployment news with public concern.

Inflation. When using the inflation data in an analysis of how varying levels of media coverage correspond with higher and lower levels of public concern, these fluctuations were marked by many high and very high correlation ratings (Tables 8-11). Those correlations were limited, though, to only the comparisons involving the "all" and "more" news categories. The "less" news categories resulted in correlations that were not significant in any case. Also, these correlations usually indicated public and media agenda agreement in the wrong direction as discussed in earlier results. The exception to this finding was the "less" television news (Table 11) and public agenda comparisons, but these directionally-correct correlation coefficients were still not significant.

The strongest media and public agenda correlations which involved inflation (Table 9) as the only issues being examined were discovered in the area of "more" news as published in metropolitan newspapers. The effect of these papers led to high, significant correlation coefficients for the similar comparisons involving all of the newspapers (Table 8). The coefficients for the Georgia newspapers (Table 10) that were produced in this portion of the statistical analysis were not significant in any of 18 possible cases. The findings in this case of which media were more closely related to the public agenda was contrary to the results reported in Table 3 concerning metropolitan versus Georgia newspapers.

Table 8

Results of Modified Agenda-Setting Research Procedures Which Used News Slant in Comparing Media and Public Agendas

Issue: Inflation

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
(All Newspapers)		
All Major and Minor	.83*	.83*
All Major	.93*	.71
All Minor	.88*	.88*
MORE[a]		
Major and Minor	.94*	.88*
Major	.93*	.94*
Minor	.94*	.94*
LESS[b]		
Major and Minor	.43	.42
Major	.41	.43
Minor	.61	.66

[a]News that mainly indicates increasing rates for this issue.

[b]News that mainly indicates lower rates for this issue.

*Significant value ($p < .05$) for Spearman rho correlations.

Note. To be judged as statistically significant ($p < .05$), the coefficients in this table (N=6) would have had to equal or exceed .829 (Siegel, 1956, p. 211).

Table 9

Results of Modified Agenda-Setting Research Procedures Which Used News Slant in Comparing Media and Public Agendas

Issue: Inflation

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
(Metropolitan Newspapers)		
All Major and Minor	.88*	.71
All Major	.71	.71
All Minor	.88*	.88*
MORE[a]		
Major and Minor	.94*	.88*
Major	.94*	.94*
Minor	.94*	.88*
LESS[b]		
Major and Minor	.13	.14
Major	.47	.37
Minor	.07	-.26

[a]News that mainly indicates increasing rates for this issue.

[b]News that mainly indicates lower rates for this issue.

*Significant value ($p < .05$) for Spearman rho correlations.

Note. To be judged as being statistically significant ($p < .05$), the coefficients in this table (N=6) would have had to equal or exceed .829 (Siegel, 1956, p. 211).

Table 10

Results of Modified Agenda-Setting Research Procedures Which Used News Slant in Comparing Media and Public Agendas

Issue: Inflation

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
(Georgia Newspapers)		
All Major and Minor	.43	.48
All Major	.43	.48
All Minor	.74	.77
MORE[a]		
Major and Minor	.43	.43
Major	.48	.43
Minor	.80	.77
LESS[b]		
Major and Minor	.08	.13
Major	.48	.48
Minor	.16	.16

[a]News that mainly indicates increasing rates for this issue.

[b]News that mainly indicates lower rates for this issue.

*Significant value ($p < .05$) for Spearman rho correlations.

Note. To be judged as being statistically significant ($p < .05$), the coefficients in this table ($N=6$) would have had to equal or exceed .829 (Siegel, 1956, p. 211). None of these coefficients met this significance test.

Table 11

Results of Modified Agenda-Setting Research Procedures Which Used News Slant in Comparing Media and Public Agendas

Issue: Inflation

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
(Network Television)		
All Major and Minor	.34	.77
All Major	.54	.73
All Minor	.00	-.56
MORE[a]		
Major and Minor	.80	.80
Major	.80	.80
Minor	.84*	.84*
LESS[b]		
Major and Minor	-.53	-.54
Major	-.38	-.31
Minor	-.60	-.61

[a]News that mainly indicates increasing rates for this issue.

[b]News that mainly indicates lower rates for this issue.

*Significant value ($p < .05$) for Spearman rho correlations.

Note. To be judged as being statistically significant ($p < .05$), the coefficients in this table (N=6) would have had to equal or exceed .829 (Siegel, 1956, p. 211).

Unemployment. As with inflation as covered by the media and viewed by the public, the unemployment issue was placed through an identical series of comparisons. The results (Tables 12-15) of the Spearman rank-difference correlations conducted to evaluate these comparisons indicated a pattern very similar to the correlations reported for inflation news. For unemployment, the most consistent correlations (Tables 12-13) developed when the major news of metropolitan papers was included in the comparisons. However, this finding only appeared for this category when the media content being considered included news about rising unemployment rates. The isolation of this category (Table 13) resulted in a correlation coefficient of .93 for the number of stories and .88 for length of stories.

Other similar results developed in how the unemployment news (Table 14) in the Georgia newspapers was in all cases not significantly related with the public opinion data analyzed in this study. Also, the news of less unemployment was not significantly correlated with the public agenda in any case (Tables 12-15). However, the comparisons (Table 15) of network television news with the public agenda on the unemployment issue resulted in the only cases of significant correlation findings for this media source in this study.

Summary. As expected, the levels of agreement between the media and the public concerning the degree of importance to be placed on an issue across different points on a time span of several years increased when these issues were all

Table 12

Results of Modified Agenda-Setting Research Procedures Which Used News Slant in Comparing Media and Public Agendas

Issue: Unemployment

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
(All Newspapers)		
All Major and Minor	.83*	.80
All Major	.91*	.91*
All Minor	-.06	.20
MORE[a]		
Major and Minor	.68	.77
Major	.88*	.88*
Minor	.31	.48
LESS[b]		
Major and Minor	-.20	.03
Major	-.21	.14
Minor	-.58	-.54

[a]News that mainly indicates increasing rates for this issue.

[b]News that mainly indicates lower rates for this issue.

*Significant value ($p<.05$) for Spearman rho correlations.

Note. To be judged as being statistically significant ($p<.05$), the coefficients in this table (N=6) would have had to equal or exceed .829 (Siegel, 1956, p. 211).

Table 13

Results of Modified Agenda-Setting Research Procedures Which Used News Slant in Comparing Media and Public Agendas

Issue: Unemployment

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
(Metropolitan Newspapers)		
All Major and Minor	.83*	.88*
All Major	.94*	.94*
All Minor	.30	.30
MORE[a]		
Major and Minor	.83*	.88*
Major	.93*	.88*
Minor	.51	.51
LESS[b]		
Major and Minor	-.56	-.54
Major	.13	.14
Minor	-.51	-.48

[a]News that mainly indicates increasing rates for this issue.

[b]News that mainly indicates lower rates for this issue.

*Significant value ($p < .05$) for Spearman rho correlations.

Note. To be judged as being statistically significant ($p < .05$), the coefficients in this table ($N=6$) would have had to equal or exceed .829 (Siegel, 1956, p. 211).

Table 14

Results of Modified Agenda-Setting Research Procedures Which Used News Slant in Comparing Media and Public Agendas

Issue: Unemployment (Spearman rho correlations)

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
(Georgia Newspapers)		
All Major and Minor	.37	.37
All Major	.66	.66
All Minor	-.17	.08
MORE[a]		
Major and Minor	.18	.37
Major	.77	.77
Minor	-.08	.03
LESS[b]		
Major and Minor	.37	.21
Major	-.08	-.08
Minor	.31	.31

[a]News that mainly indicates increasing rates for this issue.

[b]News that mainly indicates lower rates for this issue.

Note. To be judged as being statistically significant ($p < .05$), the coefficients in this table ($N=6$) would have had to equal or exceed .829 (Siegel, 1956, p. 211). None of these coefficients met this significance test.

Table 15

Results of Modified Agenda-Setting Research Procedures Which Used News Slant in Comparing Media and Public Agendas

Issue: Unemployment

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
(Network Television)		
All Major and Minor	.83*	.83*
All Major	.82*	.83*
All Minor	.66	.00
MORE[a]		
Major and Minor	.83*	.83*
Major	.82*	.83*
Minor	.66	.00
LESS[b]		
None for this media source.		

[a]News that mainly indicates increasing rates for this issue.

[b]News that mainly indicates lower rates for this issue.

*Significant value ($p<.05$) for Spearman rho correlations.

Note. To be judged as being statistically significant ($p<.05$), the coefficients in this table (N=6) would have had to equal or exceed .829 (Siegel, 1956, p. 211).

separated from the competition-type comparisons used in standard agenda-setting research. The strongest correlation coefficients that resulted from these comparisons were in the cases in which major news stories (number and length) emphasized higher rates for the three issues used in this study. The slight exception to this observation was the series of very high correlations (Table 7) for all of the news judged to be about decreases in defense spending. The series was the only one for the three issues in which "less" stories even showed significant correlations.

Another difference in which the results were mixed came from the analyses using the three issues for network television news as compared to public opinion. The inconsistent finding developed in how the television agenda usually differed from the public's agenda with the exception (Table 15) of broadcasts concerning higher unemployment rates. In this case, the television news and public agendas on unemployment showed significant, high correlations for the categories which included major stories. All television unemployment coverage during this period was judged to be focused on more or rising unemployment so this finding also applied to a comparison involving "more" stories.

Secondary Analysis

With the correlations found in these comparisons, some supportable conclusions could have been made to answer this study's hypotheses. However, another statistical analysis was conducted to further investigate these results. The

justification for this analysis was based on recommendations (Siegel, 1956; Williams, 1979) to use other methods in determining indications of causality. This analysis, chi-square, was briefly described in the research methods chapter. As a reminder, chi-square values that indicate a statistical difference exists between distributions are considered to reject the type of agenda match being sought for media agenda-setting support.

Defense spending. For this use of the chi-square analysis, the Gallup percentages for the defense spending data were adjusted so that the "neutral" answers were dropped from the comparisons and the total percent of answers still equaled 100 percent. These altered percentages represented the ratio of respondents who answered "too little" versus "too much" in response to the Gallup "defense spending" question. Also, the media agenda totals were converted to percentages which reflect the categories of "more" and "less" news. This process was also repeated for the inflation and unemployment issues, but the metropolitan newspapers were the only media compared using the chi-square because the Spearman rho results generally indicated correlations developed by isolating these newspapers.

In this additional comparison of the "fit" between metropolitan newspapers and public agendas on the defense spending issue only one case (Table 16) resulted in a correlation that could be described as being significantly different. This case was in the category of the length of major stories which

Table 16

Results of Chi-Square Analyses Using Story Slant when Comparing Public and Media Agendas on Defense Spending

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
(Metropolitan Newspapers)	(Chi-Square Values)	
MORE[a]		
Major and Minor	1.47	3.61
Major	5.79	7.90
Minor	6.02	6.27
LESS[b]		
Major and Minor	2.84	11.12
Major	14.79	18.79*
Minor	5.74	10.21

[a]News that mainly indicates increasing rates for this issue.

[b]News that mainly indicates lower rates for this issue.

*Significant value ($p<.05$)

Note. The values above 16.75 indicate that the fit between the media and public agenda in those cases were statistically significant differences ($p<.05$).

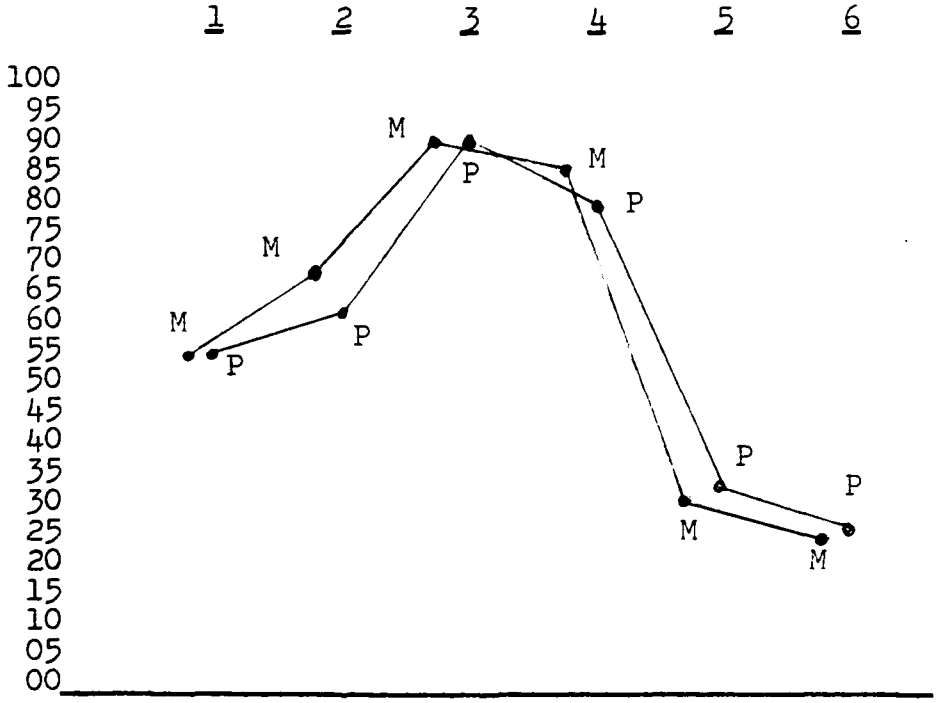
indicated less defense spending. Its chi-square value of 18.79 indicated a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$ between the two distributions. The other 11 categories when tested in this manner resulted in low chi-square values which indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the distributions or agendas in these cases.

The categories which resulted in the lowest chi-square values were those general comparisons of "more" or "less" news (Table 16). The major and minor news categories revealed more divergent trends in these comparisons. The key finding, however, was that the media and public agendas followed a nearly identical pattern when comparing the percentages derived for the chi-square computations. This pattern (Figures 2-3) were found to be consistent over a time span of a little more than five years and remained very close despite large fluctuations in the direction of both agendas.

To better illustrate the relationship between the agendas in this case, the percentages of public and media emphasis used in calculating the chi-square values have been plotted in two selected graphs (Figures 2-3) and all of these percentages are listed in Table 17. The two graphically presented comparisons represent the most favorable fits according to their chi-square values. The remaining categories are presented (Table 17) in a manner which aids interpretation of the comparisons they represent.

Figure 2

Graphic Depiction of Agenda Comparisons Which Include Major and Minor Stories of "More" Defense Spending



(M) Media Agenda- metropolitan newspapers.

(P) Public Agenda- Gallup public opinion data as adjusted for chi-square analyses. See Table 1 for survey question.

[a]Since the media agenda represents the emphases of the four weeks prior to the Gallup Survey dates, it has been plotted slightly ahead of the public agenda to clarify this relationship. The following list represents the numerical designations of the Gallup survey dates listed above:

1. July 8-11, 1977
2. Nov. 30-Dec. 3, 1979
3. Jan. 25-28, 1980
4. Jan. 30-Feb. 2, 1981
5. March 12-15, 1982
6. Nov. 12-15, 1982.

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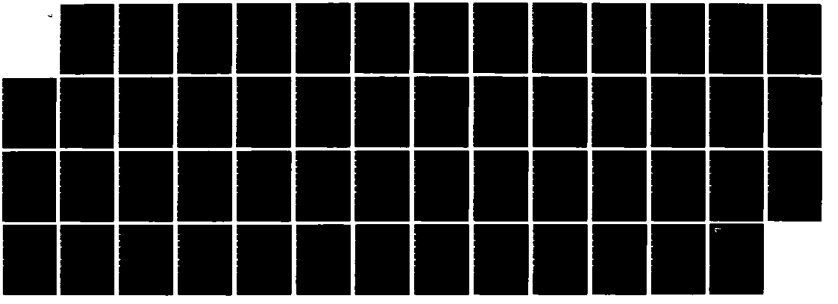
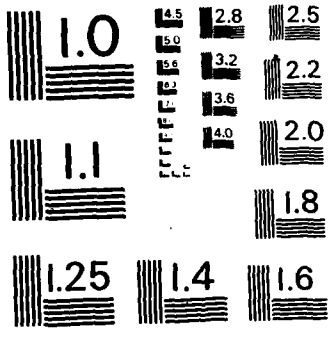
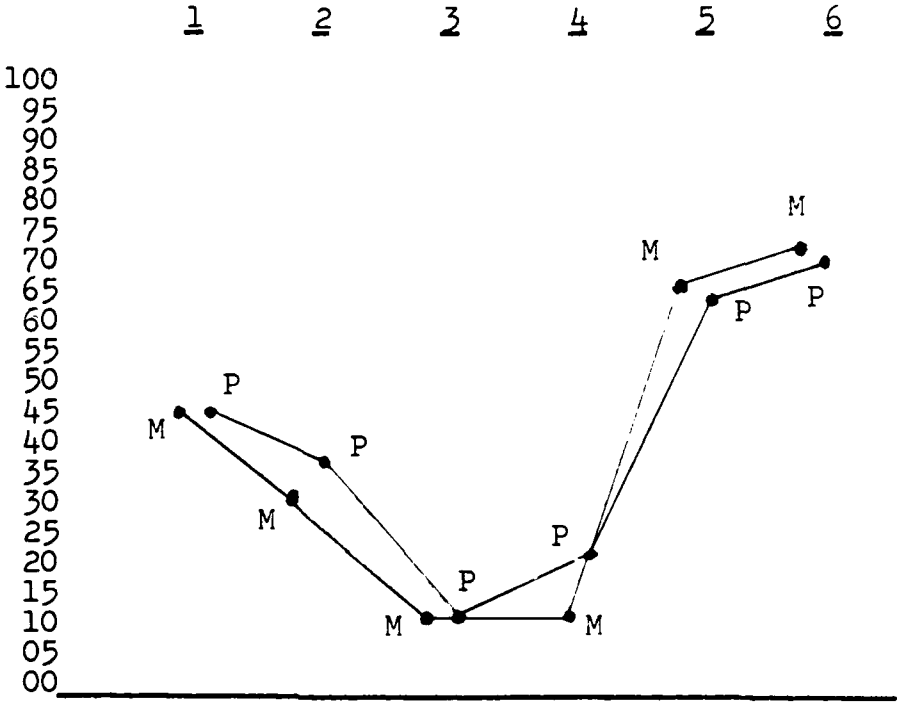




MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS - 1963 - A

Figure 3

Graphic Depiction of Agenda Comparisons Which Include Major and Minor Stories of "Less" Defense Spending



(M) Media Agenda- metropolitan newspapers.

(P) Public Agenda- Gallup public opinion data as adjusted for chi-square analyses. See Table 1 for survey question.

[a]Since the media agenda represents the emphases of the four weeks prior to the Gallup survey dates, it has been plotted slightly ahead of the public agenda to clarify that relationship. The following list represents the numerical designations of the Gallup survey dates listed above:

1. July 8-11, 1977
2. Nov. 30-Dec. 3, 1979
3. Jan. 25-28, 1980
4. Jan. 30-Feb. 2, 1981
5. March 12-15, 1982
6. Nov. 12-15, 1982.

Table 17

Percentages Used to Compute the Defense Spending Chi-Square Values

Survey Dates and Answers[a]	Gallup Data	Total News[b]	Major News	Minor News
July 1977		(Metropolitan Newspapers)		
Too Little (More)[c]	.54	.54	.50	.58
Too Much (Less)[d]	.46	.46	.50	.42
Dec. 1979				
Too Little (More)	.62	.67	.68	.65
Too Much (Less)	.38	.33	.32	.35
Jan. 1980				
Too Little (More)	.88	.88	.96	.79
Too Much (Less)	.12	.12	.04	.21
Feb. 1981				
Too Little (More)	.77	.85	.90	.81
Too Much (Less)	.23	.15	.10	.19
March 1982				
Too Little (More)	.34	.33	.37	.23
Too Much (Less)	.66	.67	.63	.77
Nov. 1982				
Too Little (More)	.28	.26	.21	.33
Too Much (Less)	.72	.74	.79	.67

[a]See Table 1 for question.

[b]Major and Minor news combined.

[c]This represents the Gallup and media content category for "more" defense spending.

[d]Likewise for "less" defense spending.

Inflation and unemployment. When applying the same chi-square analysis to an evaluation of the relationship between the media and public agendas on the inflation and unemployment issues, the results (Table 18) indicated very little agreement on issue importance. The trends established by these distributions were significantly different in all cases. This statistical analysis technique gave a different interpretation of the comparisons as judged by the Spearman rho correlation measurements (Table 3). The very high chi-square values found in this secondary analysis indicated a lack of correlation existed. This condition was not noted when using the Spearman rank-difference correlation method.

This lack of correlation in this second evaluation (Table 18) was best seen in the selected graphic depictions of these comparisons (Figures 4-5) and the overall comparisons of the percentages used to calculate the chi-square values (Table 19) reported for these issues. Even though the Spearman rho rankings may have indicated media and public agenda agreement, the distributions' percentages of issue emphasis produced significantly different patterns of changing concern over time. This time span covered approximately two years and resulted in very divergent agendas.

Conclusion

The results of using the Spearman rank-difference correlation and the follow-on chi-square evaluation produced mixed results with which to evaluate the agenda-setting concept. These results, though, are useful as evidence for

Table 18

Results of Chi-Square Analyses Using Story Slant when Comparing Public and Media Agendas

Issues: Inflation and Unemployment

Type of Story	Number of Stories	Length of Stories
(Metropolitan Newspapers)	(Chi-Square Values)	
All Major and Minor[a]	61.18*	64.76*
All Major	82.16*	61.57*
All Minor	79.30*	84.24*
MORE[b]		
Major and Minor	76.41*	105.61*
Major	110.00*	121.72*
Minor	45.39*	83.22*
All Major and Minor[c]	167.70*	190.47*
All Major	244.62*	177.50*
All Minor	157.21*	225.04*
MORE[b]		
Major and Minor	163.24*	196.82*
Major	284.62*	268.82*
Minor	103.29*	172.95*

*Significant value ($p < .05$)

[a]Inflation news only

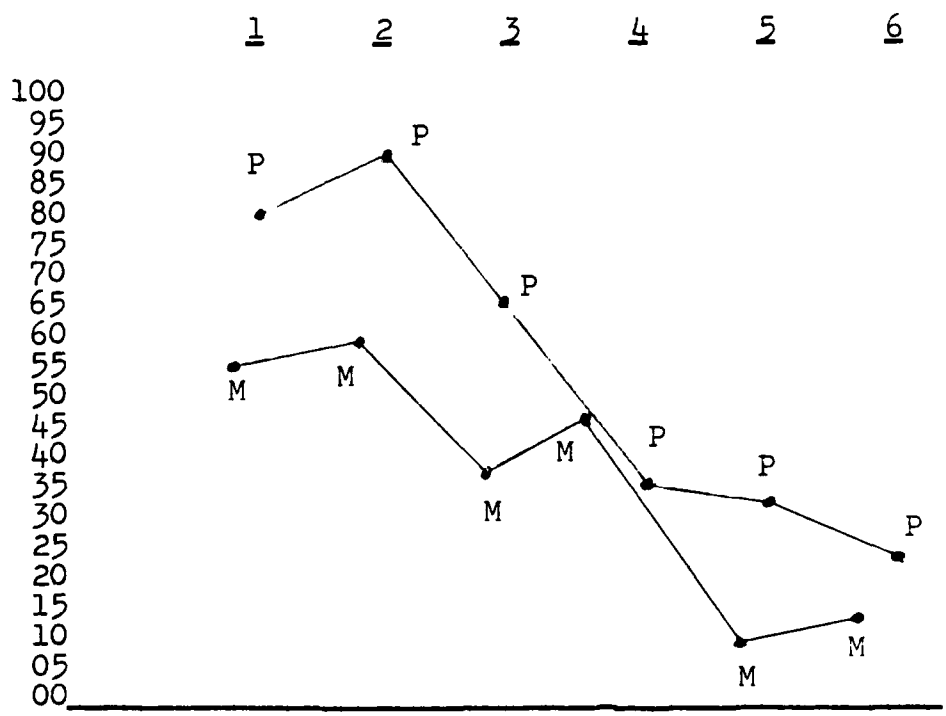
[b]News that mainly indicates increasing rates for this issue.

[c]Unemployment news only

Note. The values above 16.75 indicate that the fit between the media and public agenda in those cases were significantly different ($p < .05$).

Figure 4

Graphic Depiction of Agenda Comparisons Which Include Major and Minor Stories About Inflation



(M) Media Agenda- metropolitan newspapers.

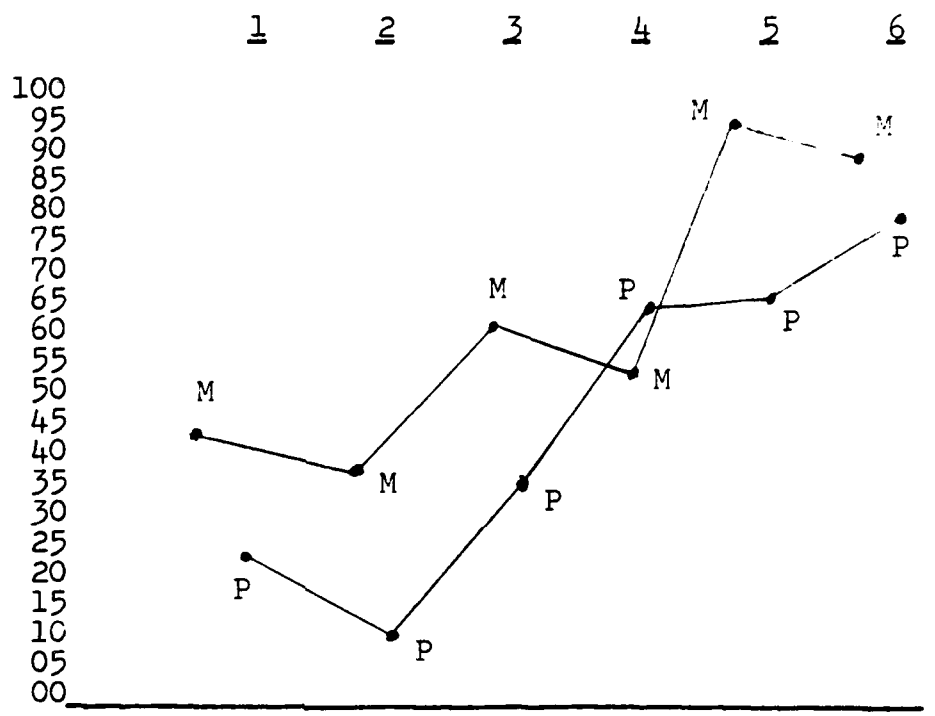
(P) Public Agenda- Gallup public opinion data as adjusted for chi-square analyses. See Table 1 for survey question.

[a]Since the media agenda represents the emphases of the four weeks prior to the Gallup survey dates, it has been plotted slightly ahead of the public agenda to clarify this relationship. The following list represents the numerical designations of the Gallup survey dates listed above:

1. Sept. 12-15, 1980
2. Jan. 30-Feb. 2, 1981
3. Jan. 8-11, 1982
4. April 2-5, 1982
5. Aug. 13-16, 1982
6. Oct. 15-18, 1982.

Figure 5

Graphic Depiction of Agenda Comparisons Which Include Major and Minor Stories About Unemployment



(M) Media Agenda- metropolitan newspapers.

(P) Public Agenda- Gallup public opinion data as adjusted for chi-square analyses. See Table 1 for survey question.

[a]Since the media agenda represents the emphases of the four weeks prior to the Gallup survey dates, it has been plotted slightly ahead of the public agenda to clarify this relationship. The following list represents the numerical designations of the Gallup survey dates listed above:

1. Sept. 12-15, 1980
2. Jan. 30-Feb. 2, 1981
3. Jan. 8-11, 1982
4. April 2-5, 1982
5. Aug. 13-16, 1982
6. Oct. 15-18, 1982.

Table 19

Percentages Used to Compute the Inflation and Unemployment Chi-Square Values

Survey Dates and Answers[a]	Gallup Data	Total News[b]	Major News	Minor News
Sept. 1980		(Metropolitan Newspapers)		
Inflation	.79	.56	.62	.54
Unemployment	.21	.44	.38	.46
Feb. 1981				
Inflation	.90	.59	.54	.63
Unemployment	.10	.41	.46	.37
Jan. 1982				
Inflation	.64	.37	.36	.31
Unemployment	.36	.63	.64	.69
April 1982				
Inflation	.35	.47	.32	.65
Unemployment	.65	.53	.68	.35
Aug. 1982				
Inflation	.34	.06	.10	.08
Unemployment	.66	.94	.90	.92
Oct. 1982				
Inflation	.23	.12	.05	.19
Unemployment	.77	.88	.95	.81

[a]See Table 1 for question.

[b]Major and Minor news combined.

discussing the study's hypotheses. Also, they provide another test of the media's possible effects on society.

In many cases, the national print media were the news sources most significantly correlated with public concern on the issues researched by Gallup. These agreements on agendas were judged on a basis of emphases concurring across the separate survey dates used in this study. The results obtained in this study generally reflect the occurrence of some type of effect experienced by the public. As seen in the discussion of prior research of mass communication effects, the conclusion from these results that is still difficult to form concerns the degree to which the media affect society.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

The results that have been discussed generally support this study's hypotheses. The media and public agendas did not feature any rank-ordered similarity as to which issues are viewed as most important when considering defense spending, inflation and unemployment (Table 2). When the possibility of a rank-ordered agreement was tested, defense spending and inflation were in opposite positions on the media agenda as compared to the public agenda. When only "obtrusive" issues or those issues most likely to involve personal influences (inflation and unemployment) were compared, the results for the agenda comparisons of public and media across six survey dates revealed considerable amounts of agreement in viewing the importance of defense spending (Tables 6-7), inflation (Tables 8-11) and unemployment (Tables 12-15). These results developed when competition for public concern with other issues was eliminated or reduced.

Agenda-Setting Comparisons

These similarities between media and public agendas are important in studying the effects of mass communication on society because they indicate that conditions exist for media agenda-setting to have occurred. McCombs and Shaw (1972) began the discussion of their research results by stressing

this need for certain conditions to exist for agenda-setting to be supported as follows:

> The existence of an agenda-setting function of the mass media is not proved by the correlations reported here, of course, but the evidence is in line with the conditions that must exist if agenda-setting by the mass media does occur. (p. 184)

In this study, the conditions to support the agenda-setting concept only appeared under certain conditions. This "agenda-setting concept" was broadly defined as the result of the media telling people what to think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and, more specifically, it was described as a "causal" relationship "between the emphases of mass communication and what members of the audience come to regard as important" (McCombs, 1981, p. 126). This social impact of the mass media was measured in a variety of situations.

In answer to this study's hypotheses, the conditions for agenda-setting to have occurred as it is measured in most agenda-setting research did not appear. Instead of the public agenda reflecting a rank-ordered image of the media agenda, it was dominated at the lead positions by the social and political issues (inflation and unemployment) that most frequently affect the general public. This occurred in spite of the media placing more emphasis on the "unobtrusive" issue of defense spending. However, the media and public agenda to a significant degree demonstrated a moderate and high correlation on the emphases placed on inflation and unemployment

when standard agenda-setting comparisons were conducted in cases involving only those issues. This conclusion generally matched the second hypothesis of this study even though the correlations were somewhat higher than expected.

The strongest impact of the role of personal influences in affecting the media's agenda-setting function was seen in the promotion of the two obtrusive issues in spite of more media emphasis on defense spending. Also, inflation and unemployment were considered most important by the public during time periods when the media emphasized many international problems which had direct implications for involvement with the United States. These included frequent coverage of conflicts in Afghanistan, El Salvador, Iran and Poland. Although these news categories were not measured in this study, informal observations by the coders mentioned how much more heavily the media covered these subjects than the issues at the focus of the content analysis.

The conditions as predicted in the third hypothesis which best indicated that a media agenda-setting effect had occurred were seen when testing the changes on the media and public agenda of only one issue over a time span without reference to other issues. This was a consistent finding with all of the issues viewed in this study. It was most visible with the defense spending issue.

Defense spending had a natural advantage over the other two issues measured in this study, though, because of the public opinion data used in constructing the public agenda.

This view of the public agenda for defense spending was derived from a question which already eliminated the important factor of competition from this agenda. The amount of public importance placed on inflation and unemployment was, in contrast to defense spending, always measured in relation to each of the issues. Therefore, the agenda agreements seen for the "obtrusive" issues would always be some degree lower than the correlation measurements for defense spending.

When applying this allowance to the analysis of the media's agenda-setting effects on the three issues viewed in this study, all of the aspects of the study's third hypothesis did not receive strong support. The media agenda was consistently more related to the public agenda across the time span measured when each issue was compared by itself. This level of public concern for the three issues consistently agreed with the levels of media coverage given them. When only the stories suggesting higher rates of inflation and unemployment were considered, the media agenda had a high degree of correlation with the public agenda. This condition was not found with stories mainly indicating lower rates of these issues. Defense spending news, though, was generally correlated to a high, significant degree in all categories.

These correlations described as having been the results of this study were mainly found when studying the agendas of large metropolitan newspapers. With a few exceptions, the agendas of the Georgia newspapers (Tables 3-4) and network

television (Table 15) were not found to be significantly correlated with the public's concerns. This was remarkably most consistent with the television agenda (Table 3). Even though this study was not designed as an attempt to measure such agenda-setting factors, it could be concluded from this study that in comparing national public opinion data with the agendas of these media sources that significant correlations would be unlikely to develop.

In summary, the conditions found in this study indicate that a variation of a media agenda-setting effect may have occurred. This effect was secondary in promoting issues on to the public agenda or removing them from it. However, conditions did exist for the media to have influenced the degree of importance with which individual issues were viewed by the public at different times. Basically, this study provides support for a conclusion that members of the public select various issues as salient items for their personal agendas from the problems that most directly impact their lives. The average of these concerns forms the public agenda. The media can influence variations, however, in how people view these issues by announcing higher or lower rates for them or describing specific cases of how these issues impact individuals.

Real-World Cues

In discussing how media and public agenda correlations may indicate media causality in public opinion changes, the media have been described by McCombs and Shaw (1972) as the

most plausible explanation. Other studies (Erbring et al., 1980) found "real-world cues" more important in setting the public agenda than the influence of the media. In this study, the research method only tried to establish a relationship between media and public agendas to evaluate the effect of personal influences on agenda-setting. This limited effect has been defined according to the results of this study, but a brief explanation of some "real-world" information related to the three issues that have been discussed may be important in further evaluating it.

According to the Gallup findings (Table 1), the public agenda made a strong shift from holding inflation as the nation's most important problem to replacing it with unemployment in April 1982. Figures compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Handbook of basic economic statistics, 1983) indicate the largest shifts toward higher unemployment during the time span of this study took place in June 1981 (6.9 to 7.7 percent) and January 1982 (8.2 to 9.2 percent). These unemployment rates represent all persons in the labor force who are unsuccessful in seeking work. They correlate with the public agenda to some degree because the trend for unemployment as with the Gallup findings was a general rise in more concern for unemployment.

A similar comparison for inflation using the same source (Handbook of basic economic statistics, 1983) also revealed a close relationship between "real-world cues" and the public agenda. Based on the Consumer Price Index which reflects

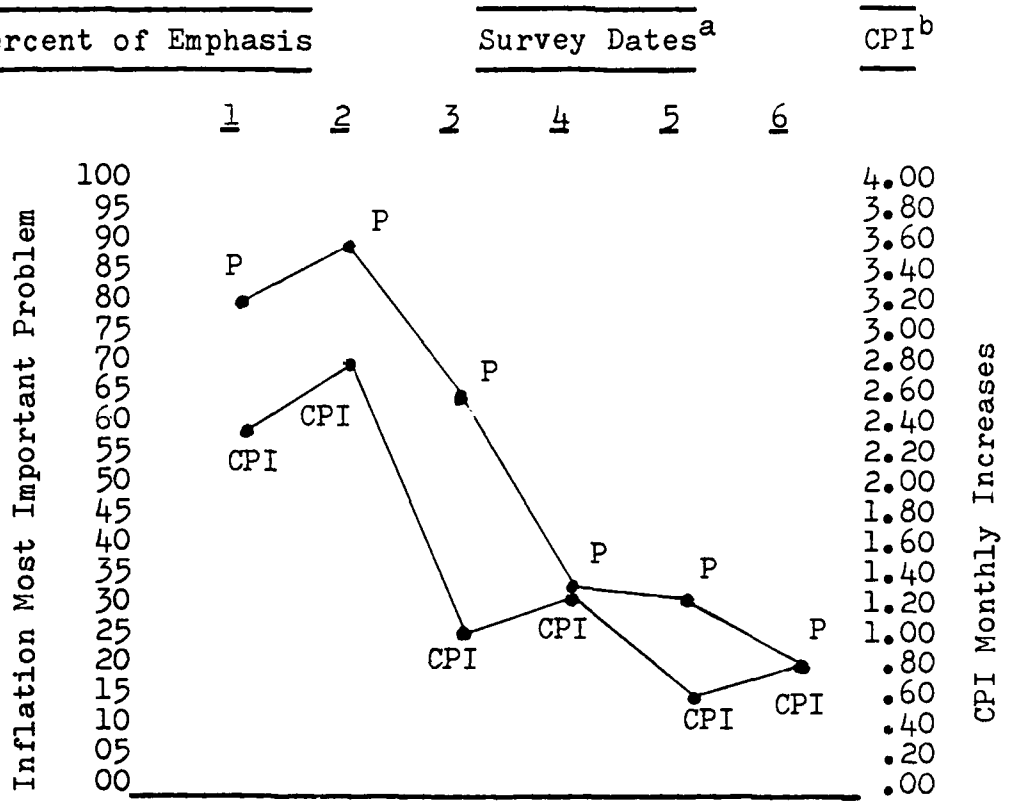
changes in the retail prices of consumer goods and services as compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the two fastest six-month inflationary periods ended in February 1981 (251.7 to 263.2) and August 1981 (265.1 to 276.5). After those dramatic rises, the growth rate slowed considerably and one six-month period (July through December 1982) only led to an increase in this index of .2 (292.2 to 292.4). This basic trend of a very high inflation rate dropping off at the end of 1981 was followed by the public agenda. These key changes for "real-world cues" for inflation (Figure 6) and unemployment (Figure 7) have been graphically depicted in a comparison with the public agenda (Table 1) to better describe these relationships.

These real-world conditions would definitely have had to exist for the media to be linked with rises and declines in public perception of an issue's importance unless the media were viewed as painting distorted and inaccurate maps of the world. When Weaver (1982) wrote that the media do not reflect reality, he was describing how the media place greater emphasis on different issues according to some standard. Therefore, the media may distort the size of some issues, but, in spite of this distorting effect, accurate news on issues is generally still presented. This news would report changing rates for inflation and unemployment with which members of the public could evaluate how much concern they need to have about an issue. This news of changing rates would be naturally reinforced by actual living conditions or the opposite effect could have occurred.

Figure 6

Graphic Depiction of Consumer Price Index Changes

As Compared to the Public Agenda on Inflation Rates



(P) Public Agenda- Gallup public opinion data as adjusted for chi-square analyses. See Table 1 for survey question.

(CPI) Consumer Price Index- consumer cost growth for the month preceding these survey dates.

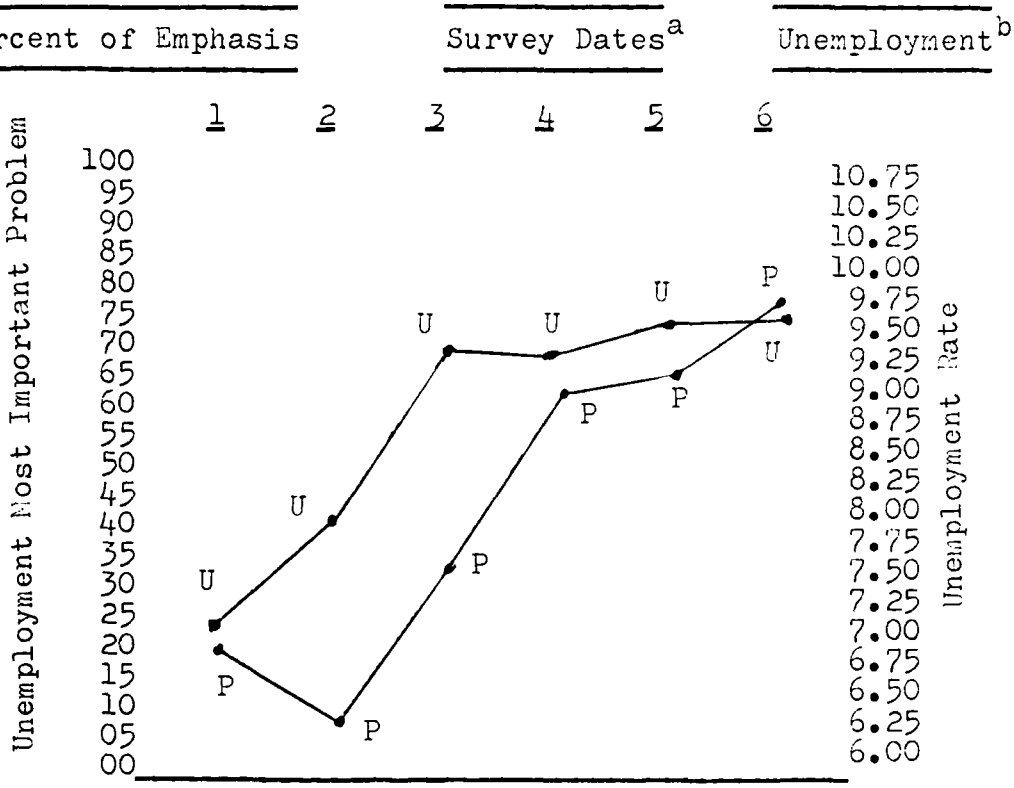
[a]The following list represents the numerical designations of the survey dates listed above:

1. Sept. 12-15, 1980
2. Jan. 30-Feb. 2, 1981
3. Jan. 8-11, 1982
4. April 2-5, 1982
5. Aug. 13-16, 1982
6. Oct. 15-18, 1982.

[b]The Consumer Price Index is a statistical measure of change, over time, in the prices of goods and services in major expenditure groups--such as food, housing, apparel, transportation--typically purchased by urban consumers (Handbook of basic economic statistics, 1983, p. 97).

Figure 7

Graphic Depiction of National Unemployment Rate Changes as Compared to the Public Agenda on Unemployment



(P) Public Agenda- Gallup public opinion data. See Table 1 for survey question.

(U) Unemployment Rate- U.S. average.

[a]The following list represents the numerical designations of the survey dates listed above:

1. Sept. 12-15, 1980
2. Jan. 30-Feb. 2, 1981
3. Jan. 8-11, 1982
4. April 2-5, 1982
5. Aug. 13-16, 1982
6. Oct. 15-18, 1982.

[b]Percentage of the total U.S. labor force who are seeking work but are unemployed. (Handbook of basic economic statistics, 1983, p. 11).

On the defense spending issue, the real-world conditions have little relevance to the change of public opinion that occurred during the time span measured in this study. The portion of the federal budget that was designated for defense spending remained fairly constant for this period (Budget of the United States Government, 1976-1982). During the Carter presidency, the defense portion of the federal budget remained very steady while the public agenda (Table 1) reflected a concern for more defense spending. This public concern dramatically changed to a reverse position after President Reagan submitted his first federal budget in January 1982. This budget increased defense expenditures according to a small percentage of the total budget, but it really indicated very little actual growth. The proportion shift occurred because of budget cuts in other areas more than the effect of added military programs.

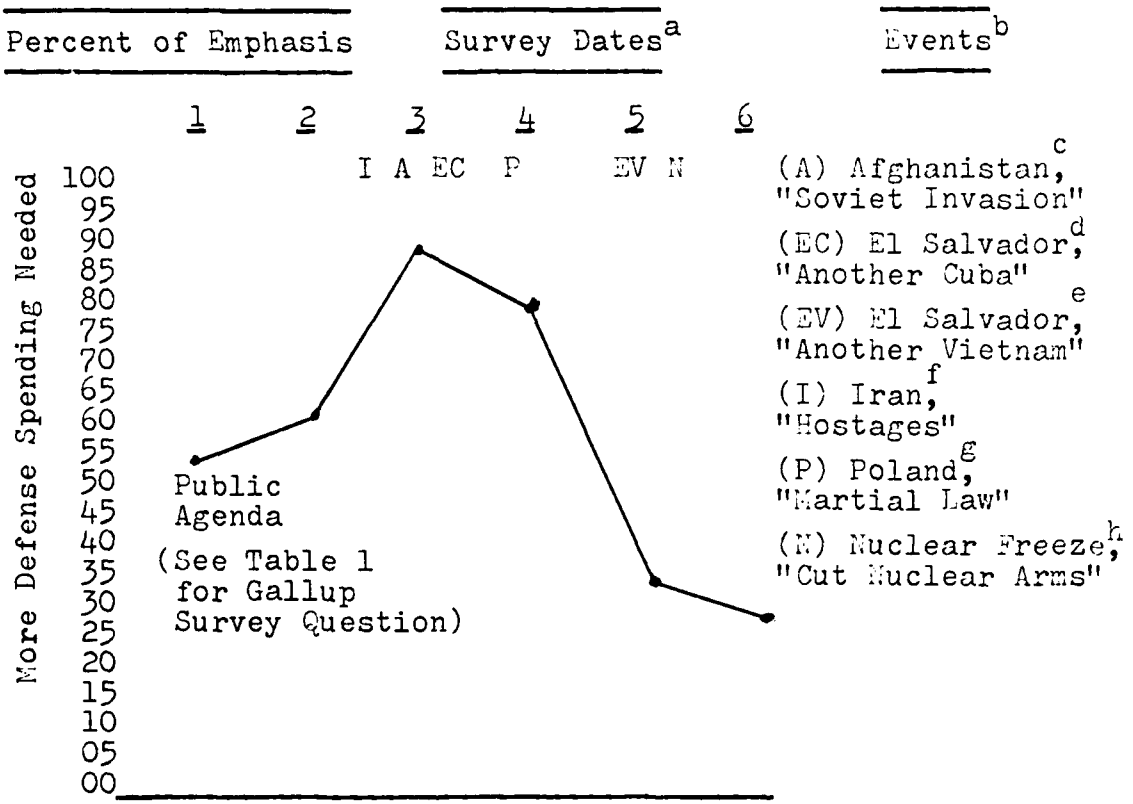
In the defense spending case, the real-world agenda was not closely related to the public or the media agenda. Instead of a relatively stable amount of money being spent on defense purposes, the media and public agendas experienced several dramatic periods of change concerning this issue. This could be attributed to the assumption of this study that the media provide the members of the public with the only agenda-building information about defense spending that is available. The media according to the comparison of how reality and accuracy were described with the other issues may be presenting a distorted and inaccurate picture of the defense spending patterns of the federal government.

On the other hand, the media emphasis on the international problems mentioned earlier which were informally judged by the coders involved in this study to be more heavily covered than defense spending, inflation and unemployment may have had an impact on the public's concern for national defense. Because several international conflicts had direct implications for involvement with the U.S. Armed Forces, public concern for increasing national defense resources at that time may have risen as a result of anxiety created by these situations. If related to these events, this increased concern could be described as a spin-off of the media emphasis on them. To demonstrate this possible link whether attributed to the media coverage or only to the "real-world cues" themselves, the critical periods were graphically depicted (Figure 8). This comparison demonstrated a general correlation between these events and the public's concern for more defense spending.

The results of this study indicated that the best agenda correlations developed with the defense spending issue, but it was followed very closely by inflation and unemployment. The difference between the comparisons may be attributed to the checking nature of the personal influences people experience with the obtrusive issues that are absent with defense spending. This study has presented the conditions which must exist for these arguments to support its hypotheses, but it cannot prove the media have actually affected public opinion. The shifts that have occurred could be all

Figure 8

Graphic Depiction of Comparison between International Events and the Public Agenda on Defense Spending



[a]The following combinations represent the numerical designations of the survey dates listed above:

1. July 8-11, 1977
2. Nov. 30-Dec. 3, 1979
3. Jan. 25-28, 1980
4. Jan. 30-Feb. 2, 1981
5. March 12-15, 1982
6. Nov. 12-15, 1982.

[b]Key periods for these events which may have affected U.S. public opinion on national defense spending are listed below the survey date representing their most prominent occurrences or starting points.

[c](Matthews et al., 1980b)

[d](Migdail, 1980)

[e]("Reagan's blueprint," 1982)

[f](Matthews et al., 1980a)

[g](Singer, 1981)

[h]("U.S. makes its bid," 1982)

strictly related to real changes in living standards for the average citizen or to the force of interpersonal communication.

These influences could be what is promoting the public's opinion shifts on inflation and unemployment, but the lack of agreement between public and the main real-world agenda on defense spending may indicate that the media is the main agenda-setting factor in this case. Also, the inaccessibility of direct contact with defense matters or international conflicts suggest the likelihood of a media effect on this issue. This study strongly supports the hypothesis that media influence the public agenda on the need for more or less defense spending.

Information Campaign

One of the purposes of this study was to apply its findings to a brief discussion of how information or public relations campaigns could be better designed. Hyman and Sheatsley (1947) were some of the first researchers (Hovland et al., 1949) to identify the difficulty of conducting successful information campaigns. They attributed influences similar to those described in this study as affecting how people interpret media messages. However, the agenda-setting concept (Weaver et al., 1981) suggests that these influences can be overcome. This study found that these influences help form the public agenda and they are effective in altering priorities but not in ignoring news of changing conditions.

When trying to transfer this agenda-setting finding to use it as a support for an information campaign (Baade, 1980) that will be aimed at affecting national public opinion, this study suggests that the campaign will find little success. To affect the public's concern for an issue that is to be regarded as one of the nation's most important problems, the issue being advocated must actually impact a large number of people. However, this study supports the likelihood of success for campaigns that are only aimed at increasing public concern or opinion on an issue's main directions. This type of change was seen to occur very rapidly in this study for the defense spending issue and even somewhat for the issues which involved personal influences. The main conclusion of this study is that on issues with which the media is the main or only source of information that the perceptions of the public may be affected because of media exposure. None of the evidence of this study or any agenda-setting research (Cook et al., 1983), though, indicates that a behavioral or long-term change has resulted from the media's agenda-setting effect.

Further Research

Another goal of this study was to avoid raising questions more than providing answers. Unfortunately, a large number of questions were raised in this study which add to the conflicting findings of agenda-setting research. These questions, of course, can be interpreted as suggested by Roberts and Bachen (1981) as being the basis for further research in this area.

The debate (Toggerson, 1981; Weaver et al., 1981; Williams & Larsen, 1977) over which media are more effective in agenda-setting continued in this study. The degree of agreement between the public and television agenda was significantly less than the comparisons which involved mid-sized and metropolitan newspapers. The television coverage of the issues was only significantly correlated with the public agenda on one occasion (Table 15).

The media agenda-setting research variations used in this study proved very effective in one area and the benefit of another technique appeared inconclusive. Constructing comparisons in which media and public agendas are measured across many time periods was a good approach to follow. It allowed for use of competitive or noncompetitive research styles (Tables 6-15). The inclusion of direction or story slant as a content category appeared to be a significant practice in constructing media agendas on some occasions. However, the results of using this method were often inconsistent because it was insensitive to balanced coverage of issues during periods of heavy debate about them (Table 5).

These areas were the main problems and questions that developed in this study that could be used to construct research questions for further study. A proven method of statistical analysis used in this study, the chi-square, should also be used in further agenda-setting studies. In this case (Tables 16-19; Figures 2-5), it proved very effective in analyzing the degree of correlations between the distributions

which were compared and helped support the hypotheses of this study. The use of the chi-square as a secondary analysis gave a closer view of the relationships between media and public agendas. Unfortunately, this study was limited in applying this secondary analysis because of the nature of the Gallup public opinion findings that were used. Also, cross-lagged correlations such as those conducted in other agenda-setting research (Sohn, 1978; Tardy et al., 1981) could not be used because the study's survey dates were spaced too far apart. This type of test would have given a better indication of causality for the public opinion changes.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

This study applied the basic thrust of McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting concept to another evaluation of the media's effect on society. The media's agenda-setting function was seen as a process in which media emphases helped individuals view issues as being important. This concept served as the focus of the research described in this thesis which was centered on defining the role of personal influences in how people react to media agendas. By comparing public and media agendas, statistical analyses determined that in many of the cases examined that agenda-setting existed.

The main role of personal influences in altering the media's agenda-setting function was seen in how priorities or rankings of issues occurred. The public agenda was dominated by issues that involve personal influences on individual's daily lives in spite of media emphases that other issues were more important. As the competition element or the need to rank one issue against others was removed, a high degree of correlation developed between what the media and public viewed as being important changes on individual issues. For example, if the media reported more inflation, the public tended to view inflation as more of a problem. This relationship was especially strong for the defense spending issue, but it was

not totally restricted to only being effective for those issues with which people have little experience as hypothesized.

The hypotheses of this study for which strong support was found included the lack of a rank-ordered agreement between the media and public agendas on the nation's most important problem and the role of personal influences on agenda-setting results as described previously. This study recommended use of several research method alternatives that provide more of a view of what happens to public opinion as a result of the media telling people what to think about. These methods generally aided in providing information of value to individuals' who are interested in understanding the media's role in society or to the designers of information campaigns who are eager for an effect upon their target audiences.

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Appendix A

The content analysis instructions given to this study's coders for evaluating whether a story indicates "more" or "less" defense spending follow:

> Defense spending stories include news of how more or less money is being spent on the U.S. Armed Forces and those stories which indicate through a spokesman or editorial writer that more or less such expenditures are needed. This category does not include discussion of U.S. money for foreign military aid. Also, it does not include general military news about accidents, promotions, scandals and the draft. An example of a story that would be judged to be about more defense spending is the report of a presidential campaign speech calling for a national rearmament. The reverse example is the account of a congressional committee calling for a reduction in the Department of Defense budget to use those funds on social programs.

The instructions given to the coders for judging whether a story indicates "more" or "less" inflation and unemployment follow:

> Inflation and unemployment stories include news focused on reporting a rise or fall in such rates. This category includes statements by politicians or economists

who predict that such changes are likely to occur. For inflation, this category includes all stories judged to be discussing rising or falling prices for any consumer or industrial commodity. It does not include stories of changes in taxes or interest rates, however, since these items are treated by Gallup as separate issues from inflation or cost-of-living rates. For unemployment, this category includes all stories which discuss national or regional rates and feature stories which depict the everyday struggle of the jobless. Stories of new industries hiring more people should also be recorded as stories indicating "less" unemployment.

Appendix B

Total Number and Length of Stories Which Comprise The Media Agenda on Defense Spending

Metropolitan Newspapers	Survey Dates[a]					
(Number of Stories)*	1	2	3	4	5	6
Atlanta Constitution	5	11	6	8	6	4
Chicago Tribune	1	6	8	6	3	3
Los Angeles Times	3	8	3	5	3	2
Miami Herald	4	4	5	6	3	2
Milwaukee Journal	4	5	2	0	4	4
New York Times	5	3	5	2	0	4
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	3	4	8	7	0	0
Washington Post	6	6	9	7	8	5
Totals	31	47	46	53	31	24

*Stories mainly indicating "more" defense spending.

(Number of Stories)**						
Atlanta Constitution	2	5	0	0	9	8
Chicago Tribune	1	3	0	0	8	13
Los Angeles Times	4	5	0	2	4	6
Miami Herald	4	2	2	1	5	5
Milwaukee Journal	3	3	0	1	6	8
New York Times	5	3	1	2	8	8
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	3	2	1	1	6	6
Washington Post	4	3	2	2	16	14
Totals	26	23	6	9	62	68

**Stories mainly indicating "less" defense spending.

[a]The following list represents the numerical designations of the media content analysis periods which preceded the Gallup survey dates:

1. June 11-July 5, 1977
2. Nov. 6-30, 1979
3. Dec. 29, 1979-Jan. 21, '80
4. Jan. 3-26, 1981
5. March 6-30, 1982
6. Oct. 11-Nov. 5, 1982.

Metropolitan Newspapers	Survey Dates[a]					
(Length of Stories)*	1	2	3	4	5	6
Atlanta Constitution	170	337	262	336	220	92.5
Chicago Tribune	38	80.5	375.5	133	103	104
Los Angeles Times	99	217	123.5	172	140	105.5
Miami Herald	172	125	259	290	81	56
Milwaukee Journal	60	68	27.5	0	115	131
New York Times	171	111	180	591	163	136.5
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	76	162	259.5	204.5	0	0
Washington Post	195.5	209	477	498.5	486	267
Totals (rounded)	981	1309	1964	2225	1308	892

*Stories mainly indicating "more" defense spending (square inches).

(Length of Stories)**						
Atlanta Constitution	55	108	0	0	209	292
Chicago Tribune	34	92	0	0	265	464.5
Los Angeles Times	94	217	0	29	247	158
Miami Herald	167	96	54	42	179	192.5
Milwaukee Journal	152	31	0	48	208	363
New York Times	137	66	40	38	352	370.5
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	98	79	18	24	223	139
Washington Post	191	98	31	29	880	866
Totals (rounded)	928	726	143	210	2563	2845

**Stories mainly indicating "less" defense spending (square inches).

[a]The following list represents the numerical designations of the media content analysis periods which preceded the Gallup survey dates:

1. June 11-July 5, 1977
2. Nov. 6-30, 1979
3. Dec. 29, 1979-Jan. 21, 1980
4. Jan. 3-26, 1981
5. March 6-30, 1982
6. Oct. 11-Nov. 5, 1982.

Georgia Newspapers		Survey Dates[a]				
(Number of Stories)*	1	2	3	4	5	6
Albany Herald	3	1	2	3	8	0
Columbus Ledger	3	1	5	4	1	3
Macon Telegraph	3	1	2	2	6	0
Savannah Morning News	2	1	3	3	6	3
(Number of Stories)**	11	4	12	12	21	6
Albany Herald	2	0	0	1	4	3
Columbus Ledger	2	0	1	0	6	4
Macon Telegraph	2	0	1	1	4	1
Savannah Morning News	1	0	0	1	3	4
	7	0	2	3	17	12
(Length of Stories)*						
Albany Herald	72	31	36.5	85.5	205	0
Columbus Ledger	164	56	418	132	40	75
Macon Telegraph	98	35	66.5	61	254	0
Savannah Morning News	71	15	103	68	155	104
(Length of Stories)**	405	137	624	346.5	654	179
Albany Herald	116	0	0	40	120	82
Columbus Ledger	47	0	28	0	193	222.5
Macon Telegraph	78	0	25	30	160	28.5
Savannah Morning News	8	0	0	24	95	134.5
	249	0	53	94	568	467.5

*Stories mainly indicating "more" defense spending. Length is measured according to total number of square inches.

**Stories mainly indicating "less" defense spending. Length is measured according to total number of square inches.

[a]The following list represents the numerical designations of the media content analysis periods which preceded the Gallup survey dates:

1. June 11-July 5, 1977
2. Nov. 6-30, 1979
3. Dec. 29, 1979-Jan. 21, 1980
4. Jan. 3-26, 1981
5. March 6-30, 1982
6. Oct. 11-Nov. 5, 1982.

Network Television	Survey Dates[a]					
(Number of Stories)*	1	2	3	4	5	6
ABC	4	0	0	4	1	1
CBS	3	1	0	0	2	0
NBC	4	2	1	2	2	1
	11	3	1	6	5	2
(Number of Stories)**						
ABC	2	0	0	0	2	1
CBS	1	0	0	1	3	3
NBC	4	0	0	0	3	1
	7	0	0	1	8	5
(Length of Stories)*						
ABC	430	0	0	730	50	230
CBS	470	100	0	0	290	0
NBC	370	360	1	30	190	240
	1270	460	120	760	530	470
(Length of Stories)**						
ABC	370	0	0	0	360	30
CBS	240	0	0	40	520	250
NBC	580	0	0	0	450	20
	1190	0	0	40	1330	300

*Stories mainly indicating "more" defense spending. Length is measured according to total number of broadcast seconds.

**Stories mainly indicating "less" defense spending. Length is measured according to total number of broadcast seconds.

[a]The following list represents the numerical designations of the media content analysis periods which preceded the Gallup survey dates:

1. June 11-July 5, 1977
2. Nov. 6-30, 1979
3. Dec. 29, 1979-Jan. 21, 1980
4. Jan. 3-26, 1981
5. March 6-30, 1982
6. Oct. 11-Nov. 5, 1982.

Appendix C

Total Number and Length of Stories Which Comprise The Media Agenda on Inflation

Metropolitan Newspapers	Survey Dates[a]					
(Number of Stories)*	1	2	3	4	5	6
Atlanta Constitution	4	5	2	3	0	0
Chicago Tribune	5	5	2	0	2	2
Los Angeles Times	6	8	4	0	0	1
Miami Herald	3	5	2	2	0	0
Milwaukee Journal	3	5	2	2	1	0
New York Times	6	3	2	0	0	0
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	4	4	1	2	0	1
Washington Post	3	3	2	1	0	1
Totals	34	38	17	10	3	5

*Stories mainly indicating "more" inflation.

(Number of Stories)**						
Atlanta Constitution	3	2	2	3	1	0
Chicago Tribune	1	1	0	5	0	1
Los Angeles Times	2	0	1	4	1	0
Miami Herald	1	1	1	3	0	4
Milwaukee Journal	1	2	1	3	0	2
New York Times	1	0	3	5	0	0
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	0	1	1	2	0	1
Washington Post	1	0	1	3	2	0
Totals	10	7	10	28	4	8

**Stories mainly indicating "less" inflation.

[a]The following list represents the numerical designations of the media content analysis periods which preceded the Gallup survey dates:

1. Aug. 16-Sept. 9, 1980
2. Jan. 3-26, 1981
3. Dec. 12, 1981-Jan. 4, 1982
4. March 6-29, 1982
5. July 18-Aug. 12, 1982
6. Sept. 18-Oct. 14, 1982.

Metropolitan Newspapers	Survey Dates[a]					
(Length of Stories)*	1	2	3	4	5	6
Atlanta Constitution	63	86	74	85	0	0
Chicago Tribune	135.5	141	51.5	0	63.5	30
Los Angeles Times	271.5	221.5	60	0	0	10
Miami Herald	116	149	78	84	0	0
Milwaukee Journal	108	87	28	54	6	0
New York Times	93.5	66	33	0	0	0
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	125	103.5	40	19	0	12
Washington Post	170.5	148	74	23	0	22
Totals (rounded)	1081	1002	438	265	69	74

*Stories mainly indicating "more" inflation (square inches).

(Length of Stories)**						
Atlanta Constitution	72	66	47.5	73.5	18	0
Chicago Tribune	29	40	0	243	0	48
Los Angeles Times	83.5	0	26.5	101	29.5	0
Miami Herald	64	52	58	128	0	124
Milwaukee Journal	38	72	28	83.5	0	37.5
New York Times	25.5	0	56	196.5	0	0
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	0	8	86	33	0	34.5
Washington Post	49	0	40	134	56	0
Totals (rounded)	361	238	342	992	103	244

**Stories mainly indicating "less" inflation (square inches).

[a]The following list represents the numerical designations of the media content analysis periods which preceded the Gallup survey dates:

1. Aug. 16-Sept. 9, 1980
2. Jan. 3-26, 1981
3. Dec. 12, 1981-Jan. 4, 1982
4. March 6-29, 1982
5. July 18-Aug. 12, 1982
6. Sept. 18-Oct. 14, 1982.

Georgia Newspapers	Survey Dates[a]					
(Number of Stories)*	1	2	3	4	5	6
Albany Herald	6	6	2	0	1	1
Columbus Ledger	5	6	2	0	0	1
Macon Telegraph	5	3	1	1	0	1
Savannah Morning News	2	6	2	0	0	0
	18	21	7	1	1	3
(Number of Stories)**						
Albany Herald	3	2	1	1	3	0
Columbus Ledger	8	1	3	3	0	0
Macon Telegraph	1	1	1	2	0	0
Savannah Morning News	1	0	2	3	0	0
	13	4	7	9	3	0
(Length of Stories)*						
Albany Herald	204	108	49	0	23	12
Columbus Ledger	86	128	40	0	0	16
Macon Telegraph	131	98	26	48	0	14
Savannah Morning News	60	123	42	0	0	0
	481	457	157	48	23	42
(Length of Stories)**						
Albany Herald	81	21	39	25	38	0
Columbus Ledger	93	8	49	119	0	0
Macon Telegraph	21	32	28	69	0	0
Savannah Morning News	47	0	69	94	0	0
	242	61	185	307	38	0

*Stories mainly indicating "more" inflation. Length is measured according to total number of square inches.

**Stories mainly indicating "less" inflation. Length is measured according to total number of square inches.

[a]The following list represents the numerical designations of the media content analysis periods which preceded the Gallup survey dates:

1. Aug. 16-Sept. 9, 1980
2. Jan. 3-26, 1981
3. Dec. 12, 1981-Jan. 4, 1982
4. March 6-29, 1982
5. July 18-Aug. 12, 1982
6. Sept. 18-Oct. 14, 1982.

Network Television	Survey Dates[a]					
(Number of Stories)*	1	2	3	4	5	6
ABC	2	1	0	0	0	0
CBS	1	0	0	0	0	0
NBC	1	1	0	0	0	0
	4	2	0	0	0	0
(Number of Stories)**						
ABC	0	1	1	2	1	1
CBS	0	0	1	1	0	1
NBC	0	0	0	1	0	1
	0	0	2	4	1	3
(Length of Stories)*						
ABC	290	100	0	0	0	0
CBS	170	0	0	0	0	0
NBC	200	160	0	0	0	0
	660	260	0	0	0	0
(Length of Stories)**						
ABC	0	10	90	110	30	20
CBS	0	0	170	20	0	140
NBC	0	0	0	20	0	150
	0	10	260	150	30	310

*Stories mainly indicating "more" inflation. Length is measured according to total number of broadcast seconds.

**Stories mainly indicating "less" inflation. Length is measured according to total number of broadcast seconds.

[a]The following list represents the numerical designations of the media content analysis periods which preceded the Gallup survey dates:

1. Aug. 16-Sept. 9, 1980
2. Jan. 3-26, 1981
3. Dec. 12, 1981-Jan. 4, 1982
4. March 6-29, 1982
5. July 18-Aug. 12, 1982
6. Sept. 18-Oct. 14, 1982.

Appendix D

Total Number and Length of Stories Which Comprise The Media Agenda on Unemployment

Metropolitan Newspapers	Survey Dates[a]					
(Number of Stories)*	1	2	3	4	5	6
Atlanta Constitution	3	3	4	5	4	10
Chicago Tribune	0	2	6	7	5	14
Los Angeles Times	3	3	5	6	5	8
Miami Herald	5	2	1	2	5	14
Milwaukee Journal	1	1	4	5	6	11
New York Times	6	8	7	6	5	6
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	0	5	9	3	5	13
Washington Post	1	3	8	6	6	16
Totals	19	27	44	40	41	92

*Stories mainly indicating "more" unemployment.

(Number of Stories)**						
Atlanta Constitution	5	0	0	1	0	0
Chicago Tribune	3	1	0	1	0	0
Los Angeles Times	0	2	0	0	0	0
Miami Herald	0	1	0	0	2	1
Milwaukee Journal	4	0	1	2	0	0
New York Times	2	1	0	0	0	1
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	2	0	0	1	0	0
Washington Post	0	0	0	0	1	1
Totals	12	5	1	5	3	3

**Stories mainly indicating "less" unemployment.

[a]The following list represents the numerical designations of the media content analysis periods which preceded the Gallup survey dates:

1. Aug. 16-Sept. 9, 1980
2. Jan. 3-26, 1981
3. Dec. 12, 1981-Jan. 4, 1982
4. March 6-29, 1982
5. July 18-Aug. 12, 1982
6. Sept. 18-Oct. 14, 1982.

Metropolitan Newspapers	Survey Dates[a]					
(Length of Stories)*	1	2	3	4	5	6
Atlanta Constitution	84	73	58	155	99.5	236
Chicago Tribune	0	75	161	520	184	617
Los Angeles Times	83.5	159	92	223.5	185	239
Miami Herald	240	53	26	129	189.5	715.5
Milwaukee Journal	480	10	138	493	210	324.5
New York Times	247.5	287	239	226.5	270.5	451
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	0	148	292	70.5	148	493
Washington Post	15	91.5	540	384.5	317	998.5
Totals (rounded)	1150	896	1546	2202	1603	4074

*Stories mainly indicating "more" unemployment (square inches).

(Length of Stories)**						
Atlanta Constitution	53	0	0	36	0	0
Chicago Tribune	50	40	0	9	0	0
Los Angeles Times	0	36	0	0	0	0
Miami Herald	0	36	0	0	64	76
Milwaukee Journal	100.5	0	9	51	0	0
New York Times	43.5	25	0	0	0	18
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	75.5	0	0	40	0	0
Washington Post	0	0	0	0	20	39.5
Totals (rounded)	322	137	9	136	84	133

**Stories mainly indicating "less" unemployment (square inches).

[a]The following list represents the numerical designations of the media content analysis periods which preceded the Gallup survey dates:

1. Aug. 16-Sept. 9, 1980
2. Jan. 3-26, 1981
3. Dec. 12, 1981-Jan. 4, 1982
4. March 6-29, 1982
5. July 18-Aug. 12, 1982
6. Sept. 18-Oct. 14, 1982.

Georgia Newspapers	Survey Dates[a]					
(Number of Stories)*	1	2	3	4	5	6
Albany Herald	6	2	5	6	2	4
Columbus Ledger	1	1	4	5	1	4
Macon Telegraph	0	1	3	3	1	3
Savannah Morning News	0	4	2	4	1	3
	7	8	14	18	5	14
(Number of Stories)**						
Albany Herald	1	0	0	0	1	0
Columbus Ledger	3	0	0	1	0	0
Macon Telegraph	0	0	0	0	0	1
Savannah Morning News	1	0	0	0	0	1
	5	0	0	1	1	2
(Length of Stories)*						
Albany Herald	187	31	95	113	49.5	234
Columbus Ledger	20	28	106	204	38	134
Macon Telegraph	0	30	79	72	19	97
Savannah Morning News	0	134	38.5	160	36	113.5
	207	223	318.5	549	142.5	578.5
(Length of Stories)**						
Albany Herald	62	0	0	0	10.5	0
Columbus Ledger	62	0	0	38	0	0
Macon Telegraph	0	0	0	0	0	5
Savannah Morning News	15	0	0	0	0	22.5
	139	0	0	38	10.5	27.5

*Stories mainly indicating "more" unemployment. Length is measured according to total number of square inches.

**Stories mainly indicating "less" unemployment. Length is measured according to total number of square inches.

[a]The following list represents the numerical designations of the media content analysis periods which preceded the Gallup survey dates:

1. Aug. 16-Sept. 9, 1980
2. Jan. 3-26, 1981
3. Dec. 12, 1981-Jan. 4, 1982
4. March 6-29, 1982
5. July 18-Aug. 12, 1982
6. Sept. 18-Oct. 14, 1982.

Network Television	Survey Dates[a]					
(Number of Stories)*	1	2	3	4	5	6
ABC	2	1	3	1	3	6
CBS	3	0	3	2	5	5
NBC	1	1	4	2	4	9
	6	2	10	5	12	20
(Number of Stories)**						
ABC	None...					
CBS	None...					
NBC	None...					
(Length of Stories)*						
ABC	590	100	380	10	560	1320
CBS	200	0	520	220	550	1170
NBC	200	40	380	630	440	1500
	990	140	1280	860	1550	3990
(Length of Stories)**						
ABC	None...					
CBS	None...					
NBC	None...					

*Stories mainly indicating "more" unemployment. Length is measured according to total number of broadcast seconds.

**Stories mainly indicating "less" unemployment. Length is measured according to total number of broadcast seconds.

[a]The following list represents the numerical designations of the media content analysis periods which preceded the Gallup survey dates:

1. Aug. 16-Sept. 9, 1980
2. Jan. 3-26, 1981
3. Dec. 12, 1981-Jan. 4, 1982
4. March 6-29, 1982
5. July 18-Aug. 12, 1982
6. Sept. 18-Oct. 14, 1982.

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