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A comparison of agenda-setting functions of mainstream mass media and Chinese-language mass media

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A COMPARISON OF AGENDA-SETTING FUNCTIONS OF

MAINSTREAM MASS MEDIA AND CHINESE-LANGUAGE MASS MEDIA

A Thesis

Presented to

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by

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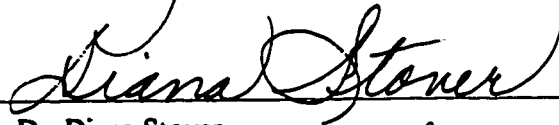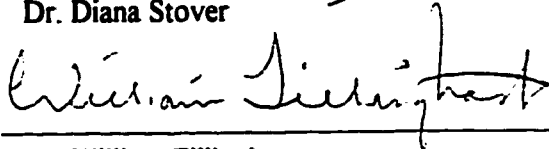
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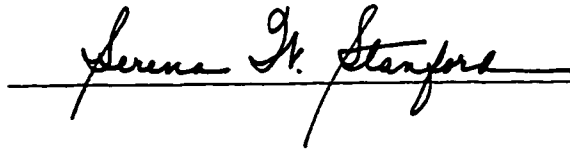
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Abstract

A COMPARISON OF AGENDA-SETTING FUNCTIONS OF
MAINSTREAM MASS MEDIA AND CHINESE-LANGUAGE MASS MEDIA

by YiYi Liao

The study, which used a classic design of agenda-setting research -- a cross-lagged content analysis and surveys at two points in time, examined the agenda-setting functions of mainstream and ethnic media in Santa Clara County. The agendas of the mainstream English-language media and the agendas of the Chinese-language media were compared, and their agenda-setting effect on the users was investigated.

The results showed that the agendas of the mainstream English-language media and those of the Chinese-language media were significantly different. However, the agendas of the Chinese-American audience were found to be highly correlated with those of the general public. The findings also suggested that the media studied had little influence on their users. It was found that the agendas of the audience were not significantly associated with the agendas of the media.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The world people can directly experience is so limited that most of it, like Lippmann described, is actually "out of reach, out of sight, out of mind" (1922, p. 29). Today, people depend heavily on mass media to obtain news and information. The mass media, therefore, have become the bridge between their audience and the world that their audience may not encounter. However, the limited capacity of the press to report the world, the need to select a small number of topics to fit in the restricted news space, and the professional values and criteria of journalism have directed reporters to pursue the key newsworthy events, personalities, and situations of the day. This selection process, instead of simply reflecting the reality, is the agenda-setting function of the mass media.

With the agenda-setting function, the mass media play an active role in sketching the daily version of reality. Through their day-by-day selection and presentation of the news, the mass media provide the relative importance and prominence of the various elements of issues and events to the audience. The perceived salience transmitted by the mass media then becomes the perceived salience in the audience's mind. This influence gives the mass media the power of setting the agenda of thought and discussion for the public.

The first empirical attempt at verifying the agenda-setting function of the mass media was conducted by McCombs and Shaw (1972) during the 1968 U.S. presidential

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election in Chapel Hill, NC. This initial study was the starting point of a rapidly widening array of agenda-setting research. Most of this research followed McCombs and Shaw's approach of combining a media content analysis with an audience survey of the ranking of agendas. The main concern is focused on the relationship between a media agenda and its corresponding public agenda.

Among more than 200 empirical reports on the agenda-setting process, the majority have emphasized the question of whether the media agenda affects the public agenda or how the public agenda is set (Rogers, Dearing, & Bregman, 1993). Only a handful focused on other domains, such as policy agenda setting and media agenda setting. These studies were mainly conducted by political scientists, sociologists, and other scholars (Rogers, Dearing, & Bregman, 1993).

Looking into these studies more specifically, almost all the agenda-setting research has been conducted either in predominantly Caucasian communities or in nationwide settings where Caucasians are the majority, and it has concentrated primarily on the mainstream media as a possible source of agenda-setting effects. Neither ethnically-oriented media nor ethnic minority groups have been examined.

In a changing social environment in the United States, there is a rapid growth of ethnic minority populations. Asian-Americans are the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States. Their population increased by 142% between 1970 and 1980 and by 108% between 1980 and 1990. The size of the Hispanic population increased by 53% in the 1980s. On the contrary, although the amount of Caucasian population slightly expanded

by 6%, they were 3% less of the U.S. population in 1990 than in 1980 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980, 1990).

Each specific ethnic culture keeps its own uniqueness, such as language, values, and lifestyle, which cannot be melted in the big pot of American society. Therefore, more and more ethnically-oriented mass media have emerged to cater to these ethnic minority groups. The city of San Jose, CA, for example, where "minorities" make up more than 50% of the population, has more than 30 ethnic media outlets covering a wide range of formats and target audiences (Alvarez, 1991).

In 1963, Bernard Cohen pointed out that "the world will look different to different people, depending on the map that is drawn for them by writers, editors, and publishers of the paper they read" (p. 13). Ethnic minorities, especially immigrants, tend to have a preference for mass media using their own languages rather than mainstream mass media. Cohen's argument suggests that different ethnic groups using different mass media may have different agendas of issues.

Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal (1981) have also indicated that "learning story content salience appear to be neither automatic nor uniform for different people or different subject matter, or in different contexts" (p. 20). This implies that different demographics, such as ethnicity, may have some relationship on learning from the media. Therefore, they may be a potential influence on the agenda- setting process.

How different are the media using behaviors between an ethnic minority group and the general public? How different are the agendas of an ethnic minority group from

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the general public? How diversified are the agendas between ethnic-language mass media and the mainstream mass media? To what extent and how is the audience's agenda affected by different media? These are the overlooked areas in agenda-setting research. This study will explore these questions to provide a new perspective.

Chapter II

Literature Review

The Emergence of Agenda-setting Research

Walter Lippmann's (1922) seminal book, *Public Opinion*, is the principal

antecedent of the theory of agenda setting. The first chapter titled "the world outside and

the pictures in our heads" sets the argument that the mass media are the principal

connection between events in the world and the images of these events in the audience's

mind. Without using the term, agenda setting, Lippmann wrote about what is called

public agenda setting.

Before agenda-setting research emerged, mass effects of media was a

concentration in mass communication research. Early studies focused on media's

persuasive effects on audience attitudes and behaviors. However, it was found that

attitudes were not clearly connected to behavior, and media were not clearly consistently

connected to either (Klapper, 1960).

Although some scholars were frustrated by studying the persuasive effects of mass

media on attitudes and behaviors, others felt that the media's main purpose was to

inform, rather than to persuade or change overt behavior. Cohen (1963), for example,

proposed a different view that the mass media "may not be successful much of the time in

telling people *what to think*, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers *what to*

think about" (p. 13). It was this classic statement that moved media effects researchers'

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attention away from attitude and behavioral change toward cognitive factors, such as agenda setting.

Agenda setting was still a theoretical idea until McCombs and Shaw (1972) gave it the name *agenda setting* in their exploratory study conducted during the 1968 U.S. presidential election campaign in Chapel Hill, NC. McCombs and Shaw measured the public agenda by surveying a random sample of 100 undecided voters in Chapel Hill, and they calculated the media agenda from a content analysis of nine principal mass media used by the voters.

The study found that there was a nearly perfect rank-order correlation between the issues considered most important by the voters and the coverage of those issues in the news media used by those voters. This finding suggests that the pattern of news coverage influences public perception of what are the most important issues of the day. And this proposition has become the basic hypothesis for public agenda-setting research.

Mass Media and Public Agendas

Agenda setting, in its most broad form, is called the "agenda-setting process" (Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 556; Rogers, Dearing, & Chang, 1991). This process includes three subfields: public agenda setting, media agenda setting, and policy agenda setting. Public agenda setting deals with the link between issues as portrayed in mass media content and the issue priorities of the public. Media agenda setting research includes those studies that conceptualize the mass media news agenda as the main

dependent variable of study. Policy agenda setting includes those studies that conceptualize the issue agenda of governmental bodies or elected officials as the main dependent variable of study.

Both media agenda setting and policy agenda setting are regarded as having little meaningful impact on the public agenda-setting work or have been treated as largely irrelevant to the public agenda setting (Kosicki, 1993). Increasingly, some agenda setting studies include two or three of these dependent variables in their design (Lang & Lang, 1983; Reese, 1991; Rogers, Dearing, & Chang, 1991; Shoemaker, 1989). However, public agenda has still remained as the dominant domain of agenda-setting research.

According to McCombs (1995), there are three compelling reasons why public issues have prevailed as the major focus of agenda-setting research:

> First, the obvious and easy fit of the metaphor to an agenda composed of public issues provided a strong, explicit theoretical link between mass communication and public opinion. Second, there exists a strong normative tradition in social science research on presidential elections that places great emphasis on the importance of issues to informed public opinion. Finally, the well-established practices of public opinion polling with its emphasis on public issues provided the methodology that most commonly has been used to measure the public agenda. (p. 2)

Public opinion polling combined with mass media content analysis is a specific research design of public agenda setting first created by McCombs and Shaw for their seminal 1972 study. And research has produced a significant amount of evidence supporting the basic agenda-setting proposition that the priorities of the media news coverage influence the priorities of issues on the public agenda.

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As a next step in the exploration of agenda setting, Shaw and McCombs (1977) conducted a larger panel study in Charlotte, NC, during the 1972 presidential election campaign. The study used a three-wave panel design to measure the public agenda and a content analysis of one local newspaper, the Charlotte *Observer*, and three evening television networks to measure the media agenda. The findings of McCombs and Shaw's initial study were replicated here.

Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal (1981) continued the exploration of the agenda-setting role of mass communication in the 1976 presidential election year. The major contributions of this research are sets of data covering the entire election year of 1976 and a particularly intensive focus on the agenda-setting role of the press through the use of both survey and content-analysis data. This study extended the inquiry to the agenda of candidate attributes as a means of analyzing the dynamics between the images presented in the news and the images held in the minds of voters. It was found that the agenda-setting influence applied to issues, to candidates and their images, and to interest in the campaign.

Like these studies, many other agenda-setting examinations were also conducted during political election campaigns (e.g. Carey, 1976; Siune & Borre, 1975; Tipton, Haney, & Basehart, 1975; Schoenabach & Semetko, 1992), while examination of agenda-setting effects in non-political election issue conditions is under serious inspection (Reese & Danielian, 1989; Funkhouser, 1973; Sohn, 1978).

After the mid-1980s, public agenda-setting scholars began to break out of the

McCombs and Shaw's traditional methodology, while still pursuing the basic question of how the public agenda is set. A variety of different research approaches have been used to probe agenda-setting questions, such as focusing on a single issue over an extended period of time, and sets of issues across time.

Instead of conducting research in local communities during presidential elections like McCombs and Shaw, Funkhouser (1973) conducted a national study examining an entire decade, the 1960s. He compared the trends in public opinion about the most important problems facing the United States during the 1960s with the ebb and flow of news coverage on these issues. Funkhouser found significant correspondence between the media agenda and the public agenda.

Winter and Eyal (1981) examined a single issue on the agenda, civil rights. Overlapping the decade of the 1960s studied by Funkhouser, Winter and Eyal discovered that the rise and fall of the public concern about civil rights from 1954 to 1976 reflected the rise and fall of media news coverage during those years.

Eaton (1989) investigated the salience of 11 different issues over a period of 42 months during the 1980s. Issues examined in this study were unemployment, crime, fear of war, poverty, and inflation. The shifting salience of 10 of these 11 issues on the public agenda was positively correlated with the media agenda of those issues.

Comparison of the media agenda and the public agenda across time was provided by a year-long study conducted in Germany by Brosius and Kepplinger (1990). The newscasts of four major German television stations for the entire year of 1986 were

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compared with 53 weekly national opinion polls. Brosius and Kepplinger found

significant agenda-setting effects of television news coverage for five issues: an adequate

energy supply, East-West relations, European politics, environmental protection, and

defense.

Audience Attributes and Agenda-setting Effects

Mass media do not have equal influence on all people in all settings (Winter,

1981), because people are not the same. Different people have different media usage, and

different media may have different agendas of issues. Scholars suggest that different

groups of people will be further apart cognitively if they do not share a common media

agenda (Shaw & Martin, 1992).

People today are commonly categorized into different reference groups by their

specific demographic attributes, such as gender, age, education, and ethnicity. These

attributes are regarded as meaningful predictors in the agenda-setting process (Shaw &

Martin, 1992; Weaver, Graber, McCombs, & Eyal, 1981). Researchers who have tested

agenda-setting hypotheses have paid special attention to contingent conditions in which

audience attributes are examined.

Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal (1981) found that there are differences in

the learning processes of men and women and in the saliences they perceive of certain

issues, and more significant differences were found among people going through different

stages of the life cycle.

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Atwood, Sohn, and Sohn (1976) discovered that women and those under 35 were more likely to discuss issues interpersonally, and thus concluded that they would be more easily influenced by the mass media. McLeod, Becker, and Byrnes (1974) found no media agenda-setting effects for voters under 25, but a positive relationship for those above that age.

Education is another important variable that confounds the findings about sex and age difference. Many of the age and sex distinctions in political learning were found disappearing when on controls for education (Kessel, 1980).

To measure the effects of education on learning the political issues from the media, Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal (1981) correlated data on learning from the presidential debates with the respondents' education status. They found that respondents with more formal education displayed greater knowledge throughout the election year and learned more from the mass media than those with less formal education.

In addition, Mullins (1977) found differences between young in-college voters and young working voters. He attributed these differences to the effects of education rather than differing lifestyles.

Shaw and Martin (1992) used statewide public opinion poll and media content analysis to compare media use and agenda agreement for different types of reference groups. The findings suggest that people do have unique contemporary agendas because of their gender, ethnicity, age, level of education, and economic status, but exposure to widely shared mass media makes them agree more on key social issues, although not

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necessarily on solutions. However, they acknowledged that, if different reference groups

of people are exposed to different media agendas, the result will be just the opposite.

Carrying Capacity and Diversity of Public Agendas

The number of issues that a person learns about from the mass media is relatively

limited, generally to "the magical number seven, plus or minus two" (Miller, 1956). It

was generalized in agenda-setting research (Shaw & McCombs, 1977) that the public

agenda typically included no more than five to seven issues at any one time.

Recently, this constraint on the size of the public agenda has received closer

theoretical attention (Zhu, 1992), where agenda setting is conceptualized as a zero-sum

game in which the addition of any new issue onto the public agenda is at the expense of

other issues. Evidence shows that there is no significant increase in the carrying capacity

of the public agenda over time (McCombs & Zhu, 1995).

A vast number of issues keeps rising to compete for public attention every day.

According to Norman and Bobrow (1975), when exposed to an information-overloaded

environment, the human cognitive system handles the situation with two strategies: either

by stopping intake of new information and continuing current tasks or continuing to

receive new information while decreasing current performance.

Researchers also attempted to find out whether the public agenda has expanded

over an extended period of time at all. The increased level of education among the public

has been regarded as an important influence on the expansion of the public agenda.

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Popkin (1991) observed that:

> Education affects politics not by 'deepening' but by *broadening* the electorate—by increasing the number of issues that citizens see as politically relevant, and by increasing the number of connections they make between their own lives and national and international events. (p. 36)

Popkin suggested that the attention of the more educated public has become broader, or less preoccupied by one or two dominant issues. That is, the public agenda has become more diversified on account of the increasing levels of normal education of the public.

Previous studies also have shown that issue diversity is affected by community structure and media environment (Chaffee & Wilson, 1977). In fact, McCombs and Zhu (1995) discovered that the public agenda did become more diverse over time. They asserted that the public agenda has been transformed from an era where one or two major issues dominated to the current stage where many voices compete for the public's attention.

These findings suggest that the rapid growth of ethnic minority populations and the expansion of diversified news outlets including more ethnic-language mass media in today's society may be determining factors of the more diversified public agenda.

Hypotheses

Based on the preceding literature review, the following hypotheses were tested in this study:

Hypothesis 1: The agendas of the Chinese-language media will be different from the agendas of the mainstream English-language media.

Hypothesis 2: The agendas of the Chinese audience will not be significantly associated with the agendas of the general public.

Hypothesis 3: The general public will have agendas significantly associated with the agendas of the mainstream English-language media; its agenda at Time 2 will be significantly associated with the media's agenda at Time 1.

Hypothesis 4: Chinese audience members who mainly use the English-language media will have agendas significantly associated with the agendas of the mainstream English-language media; their agenda at Time 2 will be significantly associated with the media's agenda at Time 1.

Hypothesis 5: Chinese audience members who mainly use the Chinese-language media will have agendas significantly associated with the agendas of the Chinese-language media; their agenda at Time 2 will be significantly associated with the media's agenda at Time 1.

Chapter III

Method

Santa Clara County was selected as the site of investigation because it is an almost perfect laboratory. According to the 1990 U.S. census, the county is made up of 68.9% Caucasians, 21% Hispanics, 17.5% Asians, 3.8% Blacks, and about 10% other racial groups. It is projected by the Advanced Planning Department of Santa Clara County that, by 2010, the Hispanic, Asian, and other ethnic groups combined will make up the majority as the Caucasian population drops to 48.8%. In this racial mosaic, almost every major ethnic group has its own media outlets. The Hispanic community, for example, is served in Spanish by at least three TV channels, four radio stations, and five newspapers published in the Bay Area. The Chinese community has access to a dozen or so Chinese-language media outlets, including three radio stations, three TV channels, and four major newspapers published in North America. Although such a community may not yet represent today's American society as a whole, it nevertheless represents many communities on both coasts of the country and reflects many of the on-going trends in the nation. By studying such a compressed cultural and media mosaic, this project can yield results that are not only valid for communities like Santa Clara County at the present time but also predictive of future trends and possibilities in the nation.

Part of the data collection was completed as part of a larger project led and coordinated by Professor Zhou He of the School of Journalism and Mass

Communications. The project used a classic design of agenda-setting research: a cross-lagged content analysis and surveys at two points in time (see Figure 1).

Time 1 (May/June 1996)   Time 2 (August 1996)

| Mdia Agenda (Two types of media, two levels) | | Mdia Agenda (Two types of media, two levels) |

| Audiences' Agenda | | Audiences' Agenda |
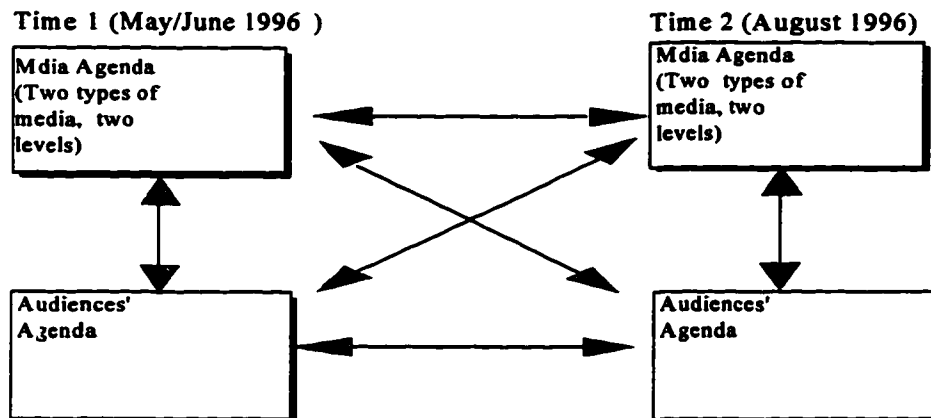
Figure 1. A Cross-lagged Research Design

This cross-lagged design was adopted for two reasons. First, by examining the media's agendas and the public's agendas at two points in time, it was expected that a somewhat causal relationship could be established. If the media's agendas preceded those of the public's, as found in classic agenda-setting studies, then it could be said with some confidence that the media influence the public's agendas. Otherwise, it is perhaps the public that influences the media's agendas. Second, as most agenda-setting studies have shown, it takes from three to six weeks for the media's agenda-setting effects to demonstrate themselves, although some recent studies have found the media's agenda-setting effect to be simultaneous. By using this cross-lagged design, it was able to examine the agenda-setting function of the media either simultaneously or over time.

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Sample of Audience

A probability sample of 1,000 Chinese-American subjects was drawn by Survey Sampling Inc. in Fairfield, CT, using telephone listings of residents in Santa Clara County. It was done through a multi-stage procedure. In the first stage, census tracts in which Chinese-Americans tend to live were selected. In the second stage, all residents whose family names look Chinese were chosen. In the third stage, 1,000 individuals were drawn through a systematic sampling procedure. For the subjects in the general public, 1,000 subjects were drawn from telephone listings of residents in Santa Clara County through a systematic sampling procedure. All subjects were listed by their names, addresses, and telephone numbers. To better detect the changes in the audience's agenda, the respondents were used as a panel. In other words, the same groups of subjects were surveyed at two points in time.

Two waves of telephone interviews of the panel were conducted, the first from May 28 to June 30, 1996, and the second from August 1 to August 31, 1996. Five graduate students who speak English, Spanish and/or Chinese (including Cantonese) worked fulltime on the surveys. A tremendous effort was made to get back valid responses. Except for those subjects who firmly refused to respond to the interviews and those who were not qualified for the survey, every connected telephone number was called at least four times. Despite such an effort, however, the return rate was fairly low. Table 1 summarizes the responses from the subjects of the Chinese-American community (see Table 1).

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The return rate for the Chinese-American sample was computed using the following formula:

$$A/ [N - (NC + DW)]$$

A is the number of subjects who completed the telephone survey, N is the total sample, NC is the number of non-Chinese subjects, and DW is the number of subjects who had disconnected phones, moved, died, or were not the people drawn for the sample. Thus:

$$203/ [1000 - (131 + 231)] = .318$$

Table 1

Distribution of Responses of Chinese Subjects to the Survey

Response	N	%
Answer	203	20.3
No Answer	292	29.2
Not Chinese	131	13.1
Refusal	143	14.3
Disconnected and wrong numbers	231	23.1
Total	1,000	100.0

Table 2 summarizes the responses from the general public.

Table 2

Distribution of Responses of Subjects in the General Population to the Survey

Response	N	%
Answer	186	18.6
No Answer	145	14.5
Refusal	458	45.8
Disconnected and wrong numbers	211	21.1
Total	1,000	100.0

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The return rate of the sample of the general public was computed using the following formula:

A/ (N - DM)

A is the number of subjects who completed the telephone survey, N is the total sample, and DW is the number of subjects who had disconnected phones, moved, died, or were not the people drawn for the sample. Thus:

186/ (1000 - 211) = .235

Obviously, the return rate was low and less than desirable. There were several reasons for this low return rate. First, it was found through the survey that residents in Santa Clara County have been excessively bombarded by telemarketers and pollsters. Many times people refused to answer the survey questions because they were tired of surveys and similar endeavors. Second, the survey was carried out in the summer when many people were on vacation. Because of the panel design of the study, if people missed the first wave, they weren't interviewed for the second wave. Third, a lot of Chinese-Americans were not used to interactions with strange callers, especially survey researchers. Despite the effort to speak the language or dialect they used, many declined to be interviewed.

Because of the low return rate, the complete interviews represented a somewhat

skewed sample. As Table 3 through Table 6 show, this sample was very well educated,

and a large number of respondents, especially Chinese-Americans, were engineers, other

professionals, and retirees. In the Chinese-American sub-sample, for example, about

81% of the respondents had a college degree, and about 46% had a graduate degree.

About 52% of them were engineers. In the general public sample, about 76% of the

respondents had a college degree, and about 21% had a graduate degree. About 28% of

the respondents from the general public were retirees (see Table 3 through Table 6).

Table 3

Demographics of the General Public Sub-group (Gender, Party Affiliation, and Household Income)

			N	%
Gender	Male		77	55.7
	Female		97	44.3
		Total	174	100.0
Party Affiliation	Republican		49	28.2
	Democrat		67	38.7
	Other		57	22.9
	Missing		1	.6
		Total	174	100.0
Household Income	Under $20,000		10	5.7
	$20,001-40,000		39	22.4
	$40,001-60,000		36	20.7
	$60,001-80,000		30	17.2
	$80,001-100,000		12	6.9
	Above $100,000		20	11.5
	Missing		27	15.5
		Total	174	100.0

Table 4

Demographics of the General Public Sub-group (Education and Occupation)

		N	%
Education	Primary Education	3	1.7
	Secondary Education	38	21.8
	College Education	97	55.7
	Graduate Education	36	20.7
	Total	174	100.0
Occupation	CEO & Large Business Owner	0	0
	High-pay Professional (Doctor, Lawyer, etc.)	7	4.0
	Engineer	17	9.8
	Other Professional (Professor, Artist, Realtor)	18	10.3
	Service Professional (Nurse, Sales, Secretary)	31	17.8
	Blue-collar Worker	21	12.1
	Self-employed	5	2.9
	Unemployed	1	.6
	Student	16	9.2
	Retiree	48	27.6
	Housewife	6	3.4
	Missing	4	2.3
	Total	174	100.0

Table 5

Demographics of the Chinese-American Sub-group (Gender, Party Affiliation, and Household Income)

			N	%
Gender	Male		160	78.8
	Female		43	21.2
		Total	203	100.0
Party Affiliation	Republican		32	15.8
	Democrat		16	7.9
	Other		140	69.0
	Missing		1	.5
		Total	203	100.0
Household Income	Under $20,000		16	7.9
	$20,001-40,000		22	10.8
	$40,001-60,000		32	15.8
	$60,001-80,000		27	13.3
	$80,001-100,000		24	11.8
	Above $100,000		31	15.3
	Missing		51	25.1
		Total	203	100.0

Table 6

Demographics of the Chinese-American Sub-group (Education and Occupation)

		N	%
Education	Primary Education	3	1.5
	Secondary Education	24	11.8
	College Education	71	35.0
	Graduate Education	93	45.8
	Missing	12	5.9
	Total	203	100.0
Occupation	CEO & Large Business Owner	2	1.0
	High-pay Professional (Doctor, Lawyer, etc.)	3	1.5
	Engineer	103	52.2
	Other Professional (Professor, Artist, Realtor)	11	5.4
	Service Professional (Nurse, Sales, Secretary)	18	8.9
	Blue-collar Worker	8	3.9
	Self-employed	5	2.5
	Unemployed	0	0
	Student	13	6.4
	Retiree	20	9.9
	Housewife	11	3.4
	Missing	10	4.9
	Total	174	100.0

However, even though the response rate was a bit below what had been expected and the sample was somewhat skewed, it still served the main purpose of this study, which was a ground-breaking investigation of the agenda-setting function among different ethnic groups using different media in a multi-cultural setting.

In the survey, the audience's agenda was measured by a standard question: "What are the most important issues today?" Because this study attempted to examine the media's agenda-setting function on both international and national issues, this standard question was slightly modified and broken into two questions: "What are the most important issues in the world?" and "What are the most important issues in the United States?" To measure the ranking of the issues, subjects were given a rank order for the issues.

In addition to agenda items, measures were taken of subjects' basic demographics, such as gender, income, occupation, education, and affiliation to political parties (see questionnaire in Appendix A).

Sample of Media

For the media sample, two media outlets were chosen from the English-language media: the *San Jose Mercury News* and KNTV Channel 11 (television). Copies of the newspaper from May 28 to June 30 and from August 1 to August 31 were collected. For the television sample, prime-time news programs at 6 o'clock were taped for the same periods. The sample of the Chinese-language media consisted mainly of two Chinese-

language newspapers: the *World Journal* and the *Sing Tao Daily*. Those two newspapers were chosen because they were the largest and most widely read Chinese-language newspapers in North America. If anybody reads a Chinese newspaper, he or she may most likely read one or both of these newspapers. The prime news programs of two Chinese-language stations were collected but found unsuitable for this study. First, they were each an hour long. Second and more important, they devoted their coverage almost exclusively to international news. In fact, they were relayed news programs either from Taiwan or from Hong Kong.

To measure the agenda of these media, a fairly comprehensive content analysis was carried out. Every story and photo in the news sections of all the newspapers was analyzed, and every news story in the television news programs was coded. The coding covered these categories: media type (which medium); position of the story; type of issues covered (international, domestic, or local); size of headline (in column inches); use of photos; use of graphics; total space of story (in column inches); quadrant on page; starting time of story from beginning (in seconds for television news stories); total length of story (in seconds for television); use of visual or video (for television); length of visual or video (in seconds for television); issue topic (a brief description); and responsibility placement (see Appendix B for details). All together, 19,207 stories and photos were analyzed.

The coding of the agendas took three steps. First, a brief description was taken from each story. Second, a code number was assigned to the story according to a coding

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scheme developed by Mocombs and Zhu (1995) and slightly modified for this study. All together, 200 categories were coded. Third, for the final analysis of media agendas, all these individual categories were lumped into 18 major categories (see Appendix C for details).

The ranking of issues in television stories was calculated using the following formula developed by Watt, Mazza, and Snyder (1993):

$$\text{Issue salience} = \frac{(TPT - TNS)}{TPT} + \frac{DS}{150} + FF$$

TPT is the total news program time (set at a constant 1,800 seconds), TNS is the time from beginning of newscast to the beginning of the story (in seconds), DS is the duration of the story (in seconds divided by 150 for the common length of a news story), and FF is the presence (coded 0.5) or absence (coded 0.0) of film or video.

The ranking of issues in newspapers stories was calculated by assigning different weights to the categories and then converting them to log numbers ranging from 1 as the lowest to 100 as the highest. The weights assigned to the categories were: .3 for the length of the story; .2 for the position of the story in the paper (the smaller the page number, the higher the weight); .2 for the size of the headline; .1 for quadrant, use of photo and use of graphic each.

A correlation analysis was done to see whether there was any correlation between

the results of the above calculation system and the simple count of stories in each category. The result was: $r = .89, p < .001$. This means that a simple story count would have obtained about the same results.

Three coders did the coding. An intercoder reliability test was conducted before the actual coding of all categories. Ideally, 10% of the content should be included in the test. However, because the sample of the media content was extremely large (19,207 items), it was impractical to test the intercoder reliability on 10% of them. Therefore, a random sample of 112 stories from a full week of the observed period was selected from all the media, averaging four per day for each medium.

The formula used to test the intercoder reliability was:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{M}{N + N + N}$$

M is the number of agreements, and N is the total number of judgments made.

Because of extensive training of the coders, fine-tuning of the category definitions, and the simplicity of the categories, the intercoder reliability score was quite high. For the intercoder reliability test of the coding of newspaper stories, 10 categories were entered into the equation: media type; position of the story; type of story; type of issue; size of headline; use of photos; use of graphics; total space of story; and issue topic. The result was:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{3(815)}{840 + 840 + 840} = .97$$

Most of the disagreement came in the coding of some stories that covered more than one issue. It was later decided to code only the issue that was mentioned first and given more coverage in the story.

For the test of intercoder reliability in the coding of television news, five categories were entered into the equation: starting time of story from beginning; total length of story; use of visual or video; length of visual or video; and issue topic. The result was:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{3(129)}{140 + 140 + 140} = .92$$

Chapter IV

Results

The results of the study showed an interesting mix of evidence that supported some hypotheses but rejected others.

Hypothesis 1: The agendas of the Chinese-language media will be different from the agendas of the mainstream English-language media.

This hypothesis, which was tested by three chi-square analyses, was well supported by the content data. Table 7 shows a comparison between the overall agenda of the Chinese-language media and that of the mainstream English-language media based on rankings of story salience in all stories. Statistically, there was a significant difference between the two agendas (χ^2 (17, N = 19,207) = 3,141.3, p < .001) (see Table 7). The parallel list of agenda items in Table 7 shows that the mainstream English-language media emphasized domestic issues on its agenda, whereas the Chinese-language media overwhelmingly emphasized international issues. On top of the English-language media's agenda were such items as "Government/Political," "Law and Order," "Social Relations," and "Environment." In contrast, on top of the Chinese-language media's agenda were such items as "Asia/China/Oceania," "General International," "Soviet/Europe," and "Government/Political." In fact, about 79% of the stories in the Chinese-language media ranked issues in Asia/China/Oceania as the most important and salient issues. This overwhelming devotion of salience to these issues differentiated the

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Chinese-language media from the mainstream English-language media even though the

Chinese-language media also included such domestic issues as "Government/Political"

and "Law and Order" in their top five agenda items.

Table 7

A Comparison of the Overall Agenda of Mainstream English-language Media and the Overall Agenda of Chinese-language Media

Media	Mainstream English			Chinese		
Rank	Issues	N	%	Issues	N	%
1	Government/Political	455	21.0	Asia/China/Oceania	13,398	78.6
2	Law and Order	301	13.9	General International	830	4.9
3	Social Relations	217	10.0	Soviet/Europe	624	3.7
4	Environment	180	8.3	Government/Political	591	3.5
5	Soviet/Europe	167	7.7	Law and Order	310	1.8
6	General International	141	6.5	Miscellaneous	213	1.3
7	Technology	127	5.9	Social Relations	201	1.2
8	Miscellaneous	103	4.7	Environment	200	1.2
9	Asia/China/Oceania	100	4.6	Middle East	173	1.0
10	Latin America/Africa	83	3.8	General Economic	141	.8
11	Middle East	76	3.5	Technology	111	.7
12	Education	58	2.7	Latin/America/Africa	108	.6
13	Health	51	2.4	Health	36	.2
14	Money	30	1.4	Education	30	.2
15	Spending	26	1.2	Money	28	.2
16	General Economic	22	1.0	Welfare	21	.1
17	Welfare	20	.9	Job	11	.1
18	Job	13	.6	Spending	11	.1
	Total	2,170	100.0		17,037	100.0

$\chi^2(17, N = 19,207) = 3,141.3, p < .001$

When the agendas of those two types of media were broken down and examined at the two different times observed for this study, the difference was still obvious and significant. Table 8 shows a comparison between the agendas of those media in May/June 1996 (or Time 1 in this study) based on rankings of story salience. All together, 9,977 stories were analyzed. The results of the statistical analysis demonstrated statistically significant differences (χ^2(17, N = 9,977) = 1,654.4, p < .001) (see Table 8). The general pattern of the two agendas at this point in time was similar to the overall pattern in both time periods. The mainstream English-language media emphasized such domestic issues as "Government/Political," "Law and Order," and "Social Relations," while the Chinese-language media emphasized international issues such as "Asia/China/Oceania," "General International," and "Soviet/Europe."

The analysis of the agendas of those two types of media in August 1996 (or Time 2 in this study) shows very similar results. Over time, the agenda of the mainstream English-language media remained fairly consistent although issues related to the environment moved several notches up to be part of the top three issues. The agenda of the Chinese-language media also resembled its agenda in May and June 1996. However, as the U.S. presidential election approached, the Chinese-language media paid much more attention to election-related issues, thus putting U.S. political affairs as one of the top three agenda items. Nevertheless, the agendas of the two types of media were still statistically different (χ^2(17, N = 9,230) = 1,504.3, p < .001) (see Table 9).

All these three analyses show that the agendas of the mainstream English-

language media and the Chinese-language media were significantly different over time

and at each point in time. The results, therefore, supported Hypothesis 1.

Table 8

A Comparison of the Agenda of Mainstream English-language Media and the Agenda of Chinese-language Media at Time 1 (May/June 1996)

Media	Mainstream English			Chinese		
Rank	Issues	N	%	Issues	N	%
1	Government/Political	230	19.2	Asia/China/Oceania	6,870	78.3
2	Law and Order	150	12.5	General International	508	5.8
3	Social Relations	129	10.7	Soviet/Europe	332	3.8
4	Soviet/Europe	98	8.2	Government/Political	231	2.6
5	General International	92	7.7	Law and Order	171	1.9
6	Environment	83	6.9	Social Relations	130	1.5
7	Technology	69	5.7	Middle East	105	1.2
8	Asia/China/Oceania	64	5.3	Environment	89	1.0
9	Miscellaneous	55	4.6	Miscellaneous	85	1.0
10	Latin America/Africa	51	4.2	General Economic	71	.8
11	Middle East	49	4.1	Technology	68	.8
12	Education	39	3.2	Latin/America/Africa	34	.4
13	Health	30	2.5	Money	20	.2
14	Spending	15	1.2	Education	17	.2
15	Money	14	1.2	Health	16	.2
16	General Economic	14	1.2	Welfare	11	.1
17	Welfare	11	.9	Job	9	.1
18	Job	8	.7	Spending	9	.1
	Total	1,201	100.0		8,776	100.0

χ^2 (17, N = 9,977) = 1,654.4, p < .001

Table 9

A Comparison of the Agenda of Mainstream English-language Media and the Agenda of Chinese-language Media at Time 2 (August 1996)

Media	Mainstream English			Chinese		
Rank	Issues	N	%	Issues	N	%
1	Government/Political	225	23.2	Asia/China/Oceania	6,528	79.0
2	Law and Order	151	15.6	Government/Political	360	4.4
3	Environment	97	10.0	General International	322	3.9
4	Social Relations	88	9.1	Soviet/Europe	292	3.5
5	Soviet/Europe	69	7.1	Law and Order	139	1.7
6	Technology	58	6.0	Miscellaneous	128	1.5
7	General International	49	5.1	Environment	111	1.3
8	Miscellaneous	48	5.0	Latin America/Africa	74	.9
9	Asia/China/Oceania	36	3.7	Social Relations	71	.9
10	Latin America/Africa	32	3.3	General Economic	70	.8
11	Middle East	27	2.8	Middle East	68	.8
12	Health	21	2.2	Technology	43	.5
13	Education	19	2.0	Health	20	.2
14	Money	16	1.7	Education	13	.2
15	Spending	11	1.1	Welfare	10	.1
16	Welfare	9	.9	Money	8	.1
17	General Economic	8	.8	Job	2	.0
18	Job	5	.5	Spending	2	.0
	Total	969	100.0		8,261	100.0

χ^2 (17, N = 9,230) = 1,504.3, p < .001

Hypothesis 2: The agendas of the Chinese audience will not be significantly associated with the agendas of the general public.

Overall, this hypothesis was not supported by the data. To test this hypothesis, the audience was divided into four groups: Group A (audience from the general public); Group B (Chinese-Americans who used mainly the mainstream English-language media); Group C (Chinese Americans who used mainly the Chinese-language media); and Group D (Chinese-Americans who used both English-language and Chinese-language media). Then, their agendas on world and domestic issues at Time 1 and Time 2 were aggregated and analyzed. Table 10 shows the Spearman correlation coefficients based on aggregated data (see Table 10).

Table 10

Spearman Correlations between the Agendas of Groups in the Chinese-American Audience and Agendas of the General Public

		Domestic Agenda	International Agenda
		General Public ($n = 174$)	
	Chinese-American		
	Group B ($n = 104$)	.70***	.73***
Time 1	Group C ($n = 37$)	.61**	.59**
	Group D ($n = 54$)	.62**	.77***
	Group B ($n = 104$)	.51	.71**
Time 2	Group C ($n = 37$)	.77***	.40
	Group D ($n = 54$)	.67**	.68**

$* p < .05$ $** p < .01$ $*** p < .001$

The results of the correlational analysis indicate that the agendas of the Chinese-American audience groups were moderately to highly correlated with the agendas of the general public. In other words, they were quite similar to each other. There were only two exceptions: the low and not significant correlation between Group C (Chinese-Americans using mainly Chinese-language media) and the general public on international issues at Time 2; and the low and not significant correlation between Group B (Chinese-Americans using mainly English-language media) and the general public on domestic issues at Time 1. The first exception apparently was in the hypothized direction. Indeed,

if there was any significant difference between the Chinese-American audience and the general public, it should be one between the group of Chinese-Americans who used mainly Chinese-language media and the general public on international issues. This statistic appears to support the hypothesis. However, because this difference showed only on international issues at Time 2, the evidence was not strong enough to suggest that the overall agendas of the Chinese-American audience were different from those of the general public. The second exception might be a statistical artifact resulting from low responses rate (see Table 10).

The similarities between the agendas of the general public and those of the different Chinese-American audience groups can be seen more clearly by comparing their agendas side by side. Table 11 and Table 12 present parallel comparisons of the agendas of the general public and those of the Chinese-American audience groups on both international and domestic issues at Time 1 and Time 2. The rank orders of issues among all those groups were not significantly different.

Table 11

A Comparison of the Agendas of the General Public and the Chinese Audience on U.S. Domestic Issues (All Mentions)

Issue	Group A (n = 174) Rank		Group B (n = 104) Rank		Group C (n = 37) Rank		Group D (n = 54) Rank	
	Time1	Time2	Time1	Time2	Time1	Time2	Time1	Time2
Job	8	9	10	12	12	18	9	8
Money	9	7	11	12	8	8	12	8
Spending	7	8	12	7	18	18	12	18
Welfare	11	18	9	10	12	5	7	11
General Economic	18	18	2	4	2	4	5	5
General International	1	1	1	5	1	18	1	6
Soviet/Europe	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Asia/China/Oceania	18	12	18	18	10	18	18	11
Middle East	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Latin America/Africa	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Law and Order	2	2	1	3	4	3	4	2
Health	6	6	7	8	10	6	8	11
Environment	10	10	8	10	7	18	12	12
Education	5	4	5	6	3	7	2	5
Government/political	3	3	4	3	1	2	3	3
Social Relations	4	5	3	1	5	1	1	1
Technology	12	11	13	18	18	18	18	18
Miscellaneous	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18

Table 12

A Comparison of the Agendas of the General Public and the Chinese Audience on World Issues (All Mentions)

Issue	Group A (n = 174) Rank		Group B (n = 104) Rank		Group C (n = 37) Rank		Group D (n = 54) Rank	
	Time1	Time2	Time1	Time2	Time1	Time2	Time1	Time2
Job	9	10	5	6	9	18	18	10
Money	7	7	18	7	6	18	3	18
Spending	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Welfare	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
General Economic	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
General International	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Soviet/Europe	11	9	18	11	18	18	18	18
Asia/China/Oceania	11	11	8	12	4	3	6	2
Middle East	8	8	7	11	18	18	18	18
Latin America/Africa	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Law and Order	2	3	18	18	3	6	18	7
Health	18	13	4	6	9	7	18	10
Environment	3	2	2	2	6	4	2	3
Education	5	5	18	4	3	3	4	5
Government/political	4	6	3	3	10	6	6	6
Social Relations	6	4	7	9	9	18	18	10
Technology	18	13	18	9	18	18	18	4
Miscellaneous	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18

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Hypothesis 3: The general public will have agendas significantly associated with the agendas of the mainstream English-language media; its agenda at Time 2 will be significantly associated with the media's agenda at Time 1.

This hypothesis was only partially supported. To test this hypothesis, two cross-lagged Spearman correlation analyses were run with three groups that used the mainstream English-language media: Group A (the general public), Group B (Chinese-Americans who mainly used the English-language media), and Group D (Chinese-Americans who used both Chinese-language and mainstream English-language media). One run was on the relationship between the agendas of these groups and the agendas of the English-language media on international issues at both Time 1 (May/June 1996) and Time 2 (August 1996), and the other run was on the same relationship in the area of U.S. domestic issues. The data was aggregated from the individual data.

As Figure 2 shows, the agenda of Group A (the general public group) was correlated with the agenda of the English-language media on international issues at both Time 1 ($r = .63, p < .05$) and Time 2 ($r = .56, p < .05$). These correlations apparently supported the first part of Hypothesis 3.

The cross-lagged correlations also show some moderate association. This group's agenda at Time 2 was moderately correlated with the media's agenda at Time 1 ($r = .57$, $p < .05$). If only this correlation were examined, it would appear that the media set the agenda for this group on international issues because the media's agenda served as an antecedent. However, when the other cross-lagged correlation was examined, the media's

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agenda-setting effect was dubious. Indeed, the correlation between the agenda of this group at Time 1 and the agenda of the media at Time 2 was slightly stronger ($r = .60$, $p < .05$) than the one between the agenda of the media at Time 1 and the agenda of the group at Time 2. Obviously, those two cross-lagged correlations did not clearly suggest who set whose agenda. The data appears to point to the possibility that the general public's agenda set the agenda for the English-language media. Based on these statistics, what can be said is that this hypothesis was only partially supported by the statistically significant correlations between Group A's agenda and media's agenda at all points in time in the area of international issues. However, because the cross-lagged correlations did not show a stronger association between the media's agenda at Time 1 and the audience's agenda at Time 2, the second part of the hypothesis was not well supported (see Figure 2).
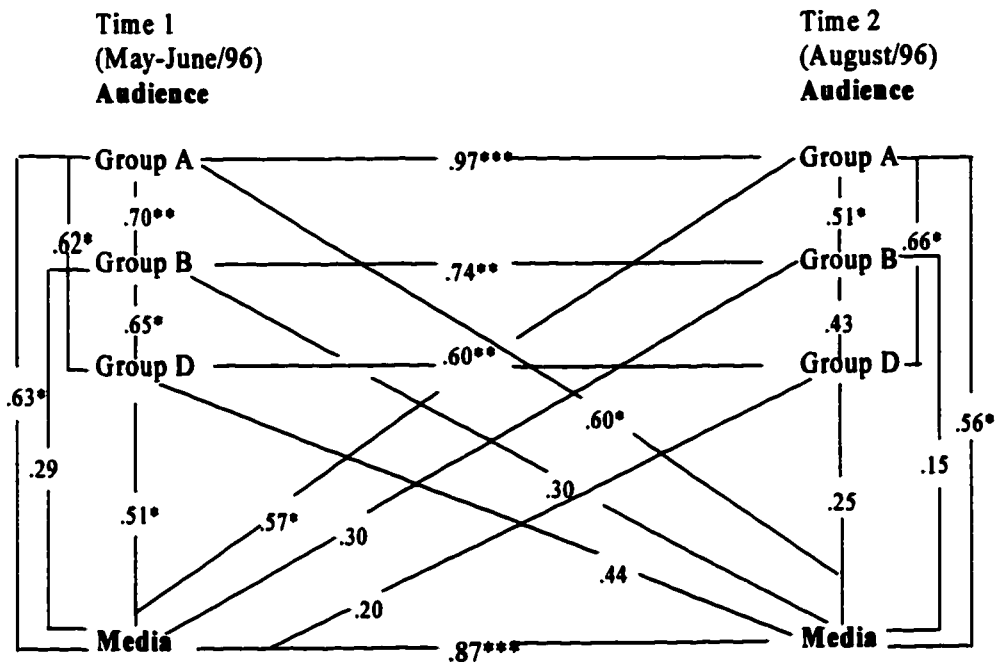
Figure 2. Cross-lagged Correlations between the Agendas of the English-language Media and Three English-media-using Groups on International Issues in May/June and August 1996

On U.S. domestic issues, the evidence for Hypothesis 3 was even weaker. As

Figure 3 shows, almost all the correlations between Group A's agenda and the media's

agenda was fairly weak and statistically insignificant. The only moderate correlation was

found between this group's agenda at Time 2 and the media's agenda at the same time

($r = .69, p < .05$). The coefficients for all the other correlations were between .42 and .51
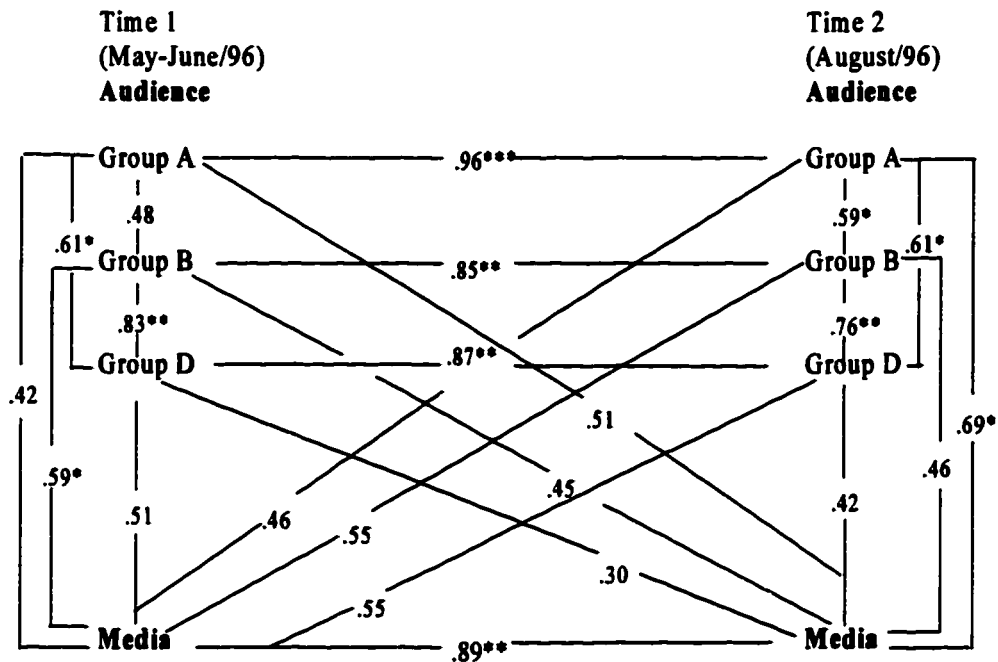
($p > .05$) (see Figure 3).

Time 1
(May-June/96)
Audience

Time 2
(August/96)
Audience

Group A ——————— .96*** ——————— Group A

.48 .59*

.61* Group B ——————— .85** ——————— Group B .61*

.83** .76**

Group D ——————— .87** ——————— Group D

.42 .51 .69*

.51 .45 .46

.59* .46 .42

.51 .55 .30

.55

Media ——————— .89** ——————— Media

Figure 3. Cross-lagged Correlations between the Agendas of the English-language Media and the Agendas of Three English-media-using Groups on U.S. Domestic Issues in May/June and August 1996

Hypothesis 4: Chinese audience members who mainly use the English-language

media will have agendas significantly associated with those of the mainstream English-

language media; their agenda at Time 2 will be significantly associated with the media's

agenda at Time 1.

Based on the assumption that people's agendas would be influenced more by what

media they use than by what race they belong to, this study attempted to establish such a

relationship. However, the data rejected Hypothesis 4 almost completely. As Figure 2

shows, the agenda of Group B (Chinese-Americans who used primarily the English-

language media) and the agenda of the mainstream English-language media on international issues was very weak and insignificantly correlated both in the same time periods or across time. The lowest Spearman correlation coefficient was .15 ($p > .05$) at Time 2, and the highest was only .30 ($p > .05$) for both cross-lagged correlations. For this group, their international agendas did not correspond to those of the English-language media, and there was no evidence at all that the English-language media set the agenda for the group on international issues.

The same was true between the agendas of Group D (Chinese-Americans who used both the English-language and the Chinese-language media) and the agendas of the English-language media. Except for a modest correlation at Time 1 ($r = .51, p < .05$), all the other correlations were weak and statistically insignificant. The lowest correlation was found between the media's agenda at Time 1 and this group's agenda at Time 2 ($r = .20, p > .05$), which directly rejected Hypothesis 4.

Almost exactly the same pattern was found in the area of U.S. domestic issues. The agendas of both Group B and Group D were weakly and insignificantly correlated with the agendas of the English-language media. The only exception was between Group B's agenda and the media's agenda at Time 1 ($r = .59, p < .05$) (see Figure 3).

Hypothesis 5: Chinese audience members who mainly use the Chinese-language media will have agendas significantly associated with those of the Chinese-language media; their agenda at Time 2 will be significantly associated with the media's agenda at Time 1.

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This hypothesis found some interesting -- and perplexing evidence. To test this hypothesis, all the three Chinese-American groups were entered into the analysis. The reason why Group B (Chinese-Americans who primarily used the English-language media) was included was that it might serve as a good comparison and a check on correlations by chance. As in the case of the English-language media, two correlational runs were carried: one on international issues and the other on U.S. domestic issues.

The Spearman correlation coefficients presented in Figure 4 show that on international issues, the three groups agendas did not correspond in any statistically significant way with the Chinese-language media's agendas either in the same time period or across time. Not surprisingly, Group B (Chinese-Americans who did not use the Chinese-language media) had the lowest correlations in its domestic agendas with the Chinese-language media ($r = .14, p > .05$, at Time 1; and $r = .12, p > .05$ between its agenda at Time 1 and media's agenda at Time 2). This indicates that other correlations might not have occurred by chance. Nevertheless, the correlations between the agendas of the other two groups (Group C and Group D) were not statistically significant enough to support either part of the hypothesis. Whether it was at the same time or across time, the correlations were all weak and insignificant, with the highest coefficient being .44, $p > .05$, for the correlation between Group D's agenda at Time 1 and the media's agenda at Time 2. All these statistics suggest that there was no media agenda-setting effect by the Chinese-language media on the Chinese audience groups in the area of international issues -- regardless of whether they read Chinese-language newspapers (see Figure 4).
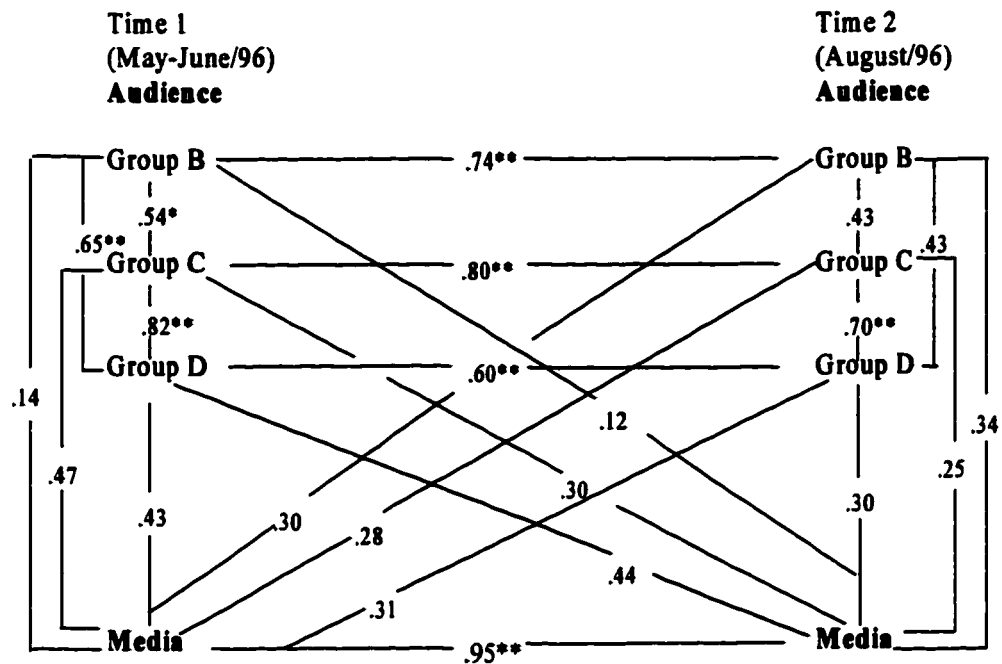
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Figure 4. Cross-lagged Correlations between the Agendas of the Chinese-language Media and Three Chinese-American Groups on International Issues in May/June and August 1996

However, in the area of U.S. domestic issues, the picture was quite different. As

Figure 5 shows, the agendas of Group C (Chinese-Americans who used primarily the

Chinese-language media) were correlated with the agendas of the Chinese-language

media from moderately to fairly strongly at all points in time. This appears to support the

first part of Hypothesis 5. However, when the cross-lagged correlations were checked,

the picture became fuzzy. The agenda of the media at Time 1 was significantly correlated

with the group's agenda at Time 2 ($r = .62, p < .05$). But the group's agenda at Time 1

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had a slightly stronger correlation with the media's agenda at Time 2 ($r = .70, p < .05$).

This means that it is not clear whether the Chinese-language media set the agenda for the

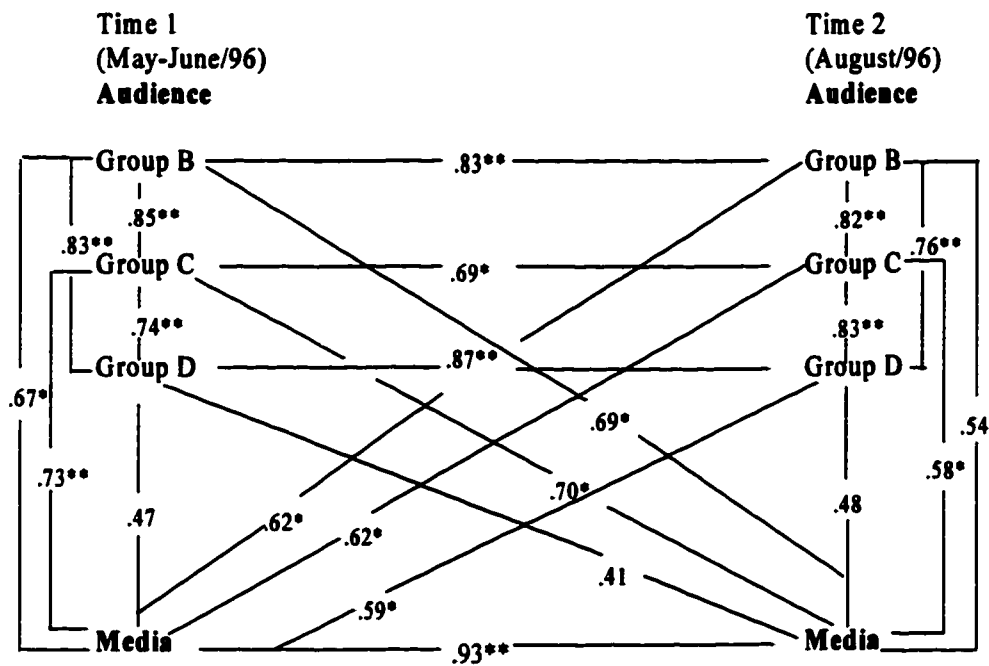audience or the other way around (see Figure 5).

Time 1
(May-June/96)
Audience

Time 2
(August/96)
Audience

Figure 5. Cross-lagged Correlations between the Agendas of the Chinese-language
Media and Three Chinese-American Groups on U.S. Domestic Issues in May/June and
August 1996

The relationship between the agendas of Group D (Chinese-Americans who used

both the Chinese-language and the mainstream English-language media) and those of the

Chinese-language media appeared to be a textbook agenda-setting case. At Time 1 and

Time 2, this group's agenda was not significantly correlated with the agenda of the media

($r = .47, p > .05$, at Time 1; and $r = .48, p > .05$, at Time 2). Its agenda at Time 1 was not

significantly correlated with the media's agenda at Time 2 either ($r = .41, p > .05$). The

only significant correlation was found between the media's agenda at Time 1 and this

group's agenda at Time 2. Given the fact that this group's own agenda changed to a

certain degree between Time 1 and Time 2 ($r = .87, p < .01$), the statistics seem to suggest

that the media's agenda went before the audience agenda and probably had an impact on

it (see Figure 5).

Very surprisingly, the agenda of Group B (Chinese-Americans who primarily used

the English-language media) had some moderately significant correlation with the agenda

of the Chinese-language media that it did not use. At Time 1, this correlation was at $r = .67, p < .05$. The correlation coefficient for the relationship between media's agenda at

Time 1 and the audience's agenda at Time 2 was $.62, p < .05$; and that for the relationship

between the audience's agenda at Time 1 and the media's agenda at Time 2 was $.69$,

$p > .05$. These results seem to indicate that the agendas of the different Chinese-

American audience groups might have been influenced by something else -- not

significantly by the Chinese-language media. Or both the audience and the Chinese-

language media might have been influenced by a source that was not measured in this

study.

Chapter V

Conclusion and Discussion

This study started with the observation and assumption that the United States has gradually grown from the myth of a "melting pot" to a "cultural and racial mosaic." In such a mosaic, there are more and more media outlets for the culturally and ethnically diverse groups. As a result, the conventional notion of the mainstream English-language media setting the agenda for all people may be obsolete.

Based on such observation and assumption, this study set out to test a number of hypotheses related to the differences in the agendas of various media and their influence on their users.

It was found that the agendas of different media were indeed different. This finding, of course, was nothing surprising and unexpected. In fact, it simply proved the obvious and confirmed our casual observation. But did the different agendas of those different media had a differentiating impact on their users?

Interestingly and somewhat surprisingly, the answer is perhaps not! The findings of this study rejected most of the primary hypotheses on the different media's differentiating agenda-setting effect. It was found that even people belonging to different racial groups had very similar agendas. As the data presented in Chapter Four show, the agendas of the Chinese-American respondents were fairly highly correlated with the agendas of the general public.

In a way, some data in this study have confirmed findings of previous agenda-setting studies. For example, the analyses of the cross-lagged correlations between the agendas of the mass media and different groups on international and U.S. domestic issues pointed in the direction that the mass media may have a more noticeable agenda-setting effect on unobtrusive issues than on obtrusive issues. The group from the general public had an agenda that was more similar to that of the English-language media on international issues than on U.S. domestic issues because international issues are normally unobtrusive issues for the general American public. On the other hand, the Chinese-American audience had an agenda that was more similar to that of the Chinese-language media on U.S. domestic issues than on international issues (which are mostly issues in Greater China) because U.S. domestic issues are more foreign to them.

However, it was just a surprise that substantial evidence of the different media's influence on the agendas of their users was not found in most cases. Given the fact that there were about 400 subjects in this study (about 200 for each ethnic group) and that the issues were lumped into 18 very broad categories, there should have been statistical evidence of media agenda-setting effects if the agenda-setting theory held true. There was simply little.

Several reasons might account for the lack of evidence of noticeable media agenda-setting effects in this study. First, there might be an effect of agenda duration. As McCombs and Zhu (1995) found in a study of the duration of the American public's agendas from 1954 to 1994, the average duration of the public's agendas was 18 months

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and that the public held its agendas for as long as 40 months or as briefly as 1.5 months. The two waves of the current study were carried out a month apart based on some literature of media's shortened agenda-setting time in today's information age. It might well be that the public was still holding its agendas that lasted before and after the study. As a result, even when the media changed their agendas during the time of this study, the public might not sway from its old agenda.

Second, the audience's agenda might be influenced more by other sources of information than by the media. This explanation was actually supported by some data in this study. For example, Group A (people from the general public who mainly used the English-language media) and Group C (people who primarily used the Chinese-language media) had very similar agendas on most issues, international and domestic. For another, Group B (Chinese-Americans who did not use the Chinese-language media) and Group C (users of the Chinese-language media) also had similar agendas on U.S. domestic issues. All of these people might have been influenced by other sources. One possible source might be the Internet. In Santa Clara County, a large number of people used the Internet because of their work or need, and many of the respondents were actually computer engineers who were normally avid users of the Internet. It might well be that this community of Internet users had its own agendas that were different from the agendas of the mass media, mainstream or ethnic. Another possible source might be interpersonal communication. Although it cannot be said for sure, the data about the similarities of the agendas among different groups of people appear to point in that direction.

Third, the high level of education of the respondents might make them reluctant followers of the media's agendas. As the data show, most of the respondents had college or higher degrees. Because of their education, they may be more critical and more deeply entrenched in their beliefs on what is important and needs to be done in the world and in the United States.

Contributions to the Field

This study contributes to the field in several ways. First, it has ploughed an area that has rarely been investigated -- the agenda-setting functions of diverse media in a multi-racial setting. Although the theoretical importance of the findings is limited because of the low return rate, the general conceptualization and many of the findings have laid a foundation for future investigations along an important line of agenda-setting research in an increasingly diverse American society.

Second, the findings have raised some serious theoretical questions. For example, do the traditional mass media set the agenda for the public in an information age as was suggested by many previous studies? Is there an Internet community, or are there several of them? What is the agenda-setting function of the Internet? Why do people have similar agendas even though they use different media that have different agendas?

Third, the findings apparently suggest that there has emerged a public sphere community that have different agendas from the mass media when it comes to important international and domestic issues.

Fourth, it has offered a very sophisticated content analysis of two types of media that has resulted in solid data that show systematically how different these media are.

Limitations of the Study and Future Research

Although this study started out as an ambitious project, it suffered from several limitations. The major limitation was the low return rate, which, to a great extent, could not be well controlled by the researcher. Because of this low return rate, the audience sample was skewed, making it extremely difficult to generalize the findings.

Another limitation was the broad categorization of issues, which was inherited from the long tradition of agenda-setting research. This categorization made the analyses less sensitive to the media content, especially the ethnic media's content.

Future research can build on what has been done in this study and avoid the limitations. Ideally, a much more diversified population should be studied, and a higher rate of response should be obtained. It is desirable to include other ethnic groups, especially the Hispanic group that has a lot of their own media outlets. The role of the Internet should be included in such research to see where the different groups agendas come from. Finally, the notion of a public sphere community should be systematically explored to see how it forms its agenda, where the agenda comes from, and how different this agenda is from the media agenda over time.

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Appendices

Appendix A

1996 Agenda-setting Survey in Santa Clara County

Serial Number _____ Phone Number_____
Time: _____ Date: _____

Hello! We are a research team at San Jose University. We are conducting a survey of what you think are the most important issues. It will take only a few minutes. Could you kindly answer the following questions?

1. What are the most important issues in the world today? I will give you a rank order.
(1) The number one issue is: _____ (1) Who is responsible? _____
(2) The number two issue is: _____ (2) Who is responsible? _____
(3) The number three issue is: _____ (3) Who is responsible? _____
(4) The number four issue is: _____ (4) Who is responsible? _____
(5) The number five issue is: _____ (5) Who is responsible? _____
(6) The number six issue is: _____ (6) Who is responsible? _____
(7) The number seven issue is: _____ (7) Who is responsible? _____

2. What are the most important issues in the United States today? Please rank the issues according to their importance.
(1) The number one issue is: _____ (1) Who is responsible? _____
(2) The number two issue is: _____ (2) Who is responsible? _____
(3) The number three issue is: _____ (3) Who is responsible? _____
(4) The number four issue is: _____ (4) Who is responsible? _____
(5) The number five issue is: _____ (5) Who is responsible? _____
(6) The number six issue is: _____ (6) Who is responsible? _____
(7) The number seven issue is: _____ (7) Who is responsible? _____

3. Could you tell us what media you use most often?
   (1) Which television channel?   _____
   (2) Which radio station?   _____
   (3) Which newspaper?   _____

4. Finally, we would like to know something about you.
   a. What is you occupation?   _____
   b. What is your education background?   _____
   c. What political party are you in?
      (1) Republican   (3) Other
      (2) Democrat

d. I would like you to indicate your annual household income under the following categories:
- (1) Below $20,000
- (2) Between $20,001 and $40,000
- (3) Between $40,001 and $60,000
- (4) Between $60,001 and $80,000
- (5) Between $80,001 and $100,000
- (6) Over $100,000

e. Could you tell me your ethnicity? _____

h. (Interviewer, please check the following. If you are unsure, ask.):
- (1) Male
- (2) Female

Appendix B

1996 Santa Clara County Agenda-setting Coding Sheet

	Codes	Verbal description
1. Coder #		
2. Story #		
3. Date: (Month, Day, Year)		
4. Media Type		
5. Page #		
6. Type of story		
7. Type of issue (world=3, national=2, local=1)		
8. Size of headline (inches)		
9. Use of photos (yes=1, no=0)		
10. Use of graphics (yes=1, no=0)		
11. Total space of story (in inches)		
12. Quadrant on page		
13. Starting time of story from beginning (in seconds)		
14. Total length of story (in seconds)		
15. Use of visual or video (yes=1, no=0)		
16. Length of visual or video (in seconds)		
17. Issue topic (be a little specific in verbal description)		
18. Responsibility placement		

Coding Criteria and Category Values

Coder #: Liao=1; Wu=2; He=3.

Story #: Give every story a serial number. Put this number both in the sheet and on the story. Stories coded by Liao uses a prefix of 1; by Wu a prefix of 2; by He a prefix of 3; and by Merroda a prefix of 4.

Type of media: 1= KNTV (channel 11); 2= KGO (radio); 3= Mercury News; 4= Channel 38 (Chinese); 5=World Journal; 6=Sing Tao; 7= China Press; 8= Channel 44.

Type of story: 1=straight news; 2=feature and analysis; 3=listing; 4= other.

Quadrant on page for English newspapers: 1=upper right; 2= upper left; 3=lower right; 4=lower left; 5=upper; 6=lower.

Quadrant on page for Chinese newspapers: 1=upper right; 2=upper left; 3=lower right; 4=lower left.

Type of issue: world = 3 (including all diplomatic and foreign relations issues, and all events and issues that take place in countries other than the United States); national =2 (all issues of national importance, implications and scale, excluding purely California and local issues).

Issue topic: For issue topic, check the headline and lead for the summary and be a bit specific. For example, put "China-Taiwan missile crisis," not "China-Taiwan tension," for a story that deals with this crisis.

Responsibility: For the placement of responsibility, also be a bit specific. For example, in the Serbia crisis, you need to put "Serbian government responsible" rather than "government responsible" in the coding sheet.

Total space: all space, including blank, headline and graphics. 1/3=0.5; 1/2=0.5; 2/3=1.

Column: the calculation of column inches of English-language newspaper stories is based on six columns per page.

Appendix C

Most Important Issue Codes

I. Job

101. Unemployment
104. Recession
105. Recovery
106. Labor/unions/strike
107. Labor problems, labor management
108. Imports/loss of American jobs
110. Downsizing
143. Trade deficit
601. Jobs/employment
602. Personal bankruptcy
603. NAFTA

II. Money

109. Inflation
110. Cost of living
112. Tax
114. Food prices
115. Gasoline/oil price
117. Housing prices
118. Wages/salaries
119. Interest rates
379. Housing shortage
605. Stock market

III. Spending

122. Budget/deficit/national debt
123. Government spending
124. Military spending
125. Social spending
126. Government spending too much for space
606. Clinton/House budget cuts
607. Closure of military bases/military budget cuts
608. Government size

IV. Welfare

128. Elderly/pension
131. Social security/welfare
132. Too much welfare
142. "Fairness" issue: government policies favoring rich
609. Child support
610. Welfare reform

V. General economic

134. General economic
135. Farms
137. Industrial competitiveness
144. Spending more for industry
145. Other economy (when "general economy" is present).
146. Small business
611. Economic boom
612. Business mergers

VI. General international issues

201. General war/peace/arms race/arms talks
209. Foreign aid
210. Defense/military/national security
211. Disarmament/nuclear disarmament
212. Atomic/nuclear/hydrogen bomb
215. Preparedness of navy and army
216. General international problems/foreign relations/foreign policy/international politics

217. Foreign policy, getting along with other nations/helping other countries
218. Failure of summit conference
219. SDI/space spending
220. Imprisoned flyers/POWs
241. Peace/war/nuclear war
244. Peace/war/atomic bomb
245. Second rate nation prestige
246. Nuclear testing/arm race
371. Fear of war
701. Wars
702. United Nations (operation, future and problems)/international organizations
703. World poverty/hunger
704. World population growth
705. International conflict
706. Global pollution
707. Global economy/distribution of world wealth
708. Trade wars
709. Trade barriers

VII. Soviet/Eastern Europe

221. Soviet
222. Relations/communications with Russia
223. Russia (threat of war with)
224. Republics in Russia
710. Bosnia war
711. Russian nuclear spread

VIII. Asia/China

203. Vietnam
204. Korea(s)
226. Japan
227. Southeast Asia
228. Quemoy, Formosa (Taiwan), China, Communist blockade of offshore islands

229. China, Asia, Taiwan, Hong Kong
230. Communist China
231. Laos
232. Indochina
712. China-Taiwan tension

IX. Middle East

205. Gulf
206. Saddam Hussein (Iraq)
207. Middle East.Persian Gulf crisis
239. Suez Cana, Egypt
240. Situation in Algeria
242. Iranian situation
713. Syria, Lebanon
714. Israel
715. Palestine

X. Latin America/Africa

234. South-Central/Latin America
235. Cuban problem
236. Fear of communism in Cuba
237. Central America
238. Africa
248. Dominican Republican
255. Somalia
375. Iran/Contra
382. Haiti

XI. Law and Order

301. Crimes/juvenile delinquency
302. Terrorism/hijacking
303. Amnesty
304. Spying/espionage
305. CIA/FBI
306. Crimes/law and order/riots
307. Lenient judiciary system
308. Courts/Supreme court
345. Drugs

381. Gun control
801. Gangs
802. Violence
803. TV violence

XII. Health

309. Health care for the elderly
310. Health/medical care
311. Number of people without health care
312. Rehabilitating returning veterans
313. Salk vaccine, polio
314. AIDS
346. Alcoholism
804. Medicare
805. Medical care reform

XIII. Environment

315. Environment
316. Water shortages
317. Water pollution
318. Litter and garbage
319. Air pollution
321. Nuclear power plant accidents
322. Nuclear test/wastes
372. Water/air pollution
806. Rain forest

XIV. Education

323. Education
324. Education costs (quality, tuition, credits)
325. Youth/children
807. Schools

XV. Government/political

243. Communism in U.S.A.

247. Federal control
326. Government leadership
327. Political corruption
328. Watergate
330. Distrust in government
331. Domestic politics, presidential elections
334. Apathy
335. Moral
337. Religion
338. Religion and politics
339. School prayer
340. Racial/civil rights
341. Protest/demonstrations
342. Draft
344. Campus unrest/riots
345. Abortion (pro)
346. Abortion (con)
348. Women issues
349. National unity
350. General unrest
370. Dissatisfaction with government
373. Communism/socialism in U.S.
374. Big government

XVI. Social Relations

351. Slums/urban ghettos
352. Poverty
353. Food shortages
354. Population explosion
355. Immigration
356. Refugee problems
357. Aliens
358. Senior citizens
360. Communication/lack of/generation gap
361. Family problems/child rearing
362. Children problems/parental discipline
364. Busing

378. Teen's problems
380. Racial tension/problems/relations
808. Social injustice
809. Minority participation
810. Gay/lesbian issues

XVII. Technology

320. Energy crisis
365. Space
366. Technology
367. Transportation
368. Mass transportation
376. Automation
391. Traffic
901. Energy
902. Computer issues
903. Internet
905. High-tech

XVIII. Miscellaneous

401. Miscellaneous (general)
402. Miscellaneous (domestic)
403. Miscellaneous (foreign)
405. Others