

Agenda Setting: Gun Control after Marjory Stoneman Douglas

High School Massacre

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The debate on gun control has been going on for a long time. After the massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas in Parkland Florida. Part of the issue has to do with the media and it's Media Agenda. Many Media outlets have the same agenda, for the Democratic and Republican Media Outlets it's not promoting stricter gun laws or keeping gun laws the same. It has turned into see how each media outlet can make the other outlet look bad. Both Republicans and Democrats have been using this new debate about gun control for their own personal gain, now I am not saying they both don't want either stricter gun control or lesser gun control but to me and everyone else it seems like it's about taking down the other network. If a Republican makes a threat

Abstract

The debate on gun control has been going on for a long time. After the massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas in Parkland Florida. Part of the issue has to do with the media and it's Media Agenda. Many Media outlets have the same agenda, for the Democratic and Republican Media Outlets it's not promoting stricter gun laws or keeping gun laws the same. It has turned into see how each media outlet can make the other outlet look bad. Both Republicans and Democrats have been using this new debate about gun control for their own personal gain, now I am not saying they both don't want either stricter gun control or lesser gun control but to me and everyone else it seems like it's about taking down the other network. Networks like CNN and MSNBC have always leaned more to the Democratic side while Fox News tends to lean more to the Republican. The Agenda Setting for both networks has become how they can get their audience into thinking that the other parties network is wrong.

Before I even get into my discussion, I first need to explain what Agenda Setting even is. Agenda Setting is a term we hear quite often but many of us don't actually know what it means. The term Agenda Setting means, according csufresno.edu, "the process whereby the mass media determine what we think and worry about". For example, when the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida happened, news networks such as CNN, Fox News or MSNBC often send reporters to the scene and there is what seems like 24/7 coverage of the event. This is a good example of agenda setting, when an event is being covered over and over again to the point where it causes worry to the point where it is on our minds. Many believe this is a way in which the News Network determine what we see, which often leads to worry and debate. Agenda setting is not a new term at all, it has been around for a long time. Walter Lippmann was one of the first people to study the concept of agenda setting. He noticed that media (newspapers, news networks, news articles) often tend to take over the pictures we have in our minds. Lippmann does not mean that media does not truly decide how one may think but, more so, can establish what we may believe in. Agenda setting often builds up an image, of a person or event, so the public can feel one way about said person or event. In Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw's book called, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media, they state that press "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." It's astonishing that many News Networks have this ability to make us think about certain things but yet can't get us to think about certain things.

On February 14th, 2018 a mass shooting took place at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida. Around 2:20 in the afternoon, a gunman by the name of Nikolas Cruz entered the school with a large duffle bag containing an AR-15, along with multiple rounds

of ammunition. After pulling the fire alarm, Nikolas Cruz began shooting his fellow students as they began to leave. As shooting began, the school went into lock down. The shooting in total lasted about 6 minutes. There was a resource officer on scene but did not go into the building because he thought the shoots were coming from the outside. Cruz left the scene on foot while blending with the other fleeing students. He was later arrested about an hour later, 2 miles from the school. Nikolas Cruz shot and killed 17, while injuring 17 more, of his fellow members of the school. After being arrested by Miami Police, he was later charged with 17 counts of murder, while also receiving 17 counts of attempted murder. On an interesting note, it was reported that during the 2016-2017 school year, the local Miami Sheriff's office received a tip that Nikolas Cruz was planning some sort of school shooting. The FBI also found a threatening message on YouTube, left by Cruz, saying that he was planning on becoming a school shooter. In January 2018 a direct death threat from Cruz was made but for some reason was not reported to the FBI (who was already was investigating Cruz for past threats). After the shooting a group of survivors (both students and teachers) started a movement towards stricter gun control, they are called Never Again. On the 9th of March 2018, Florida Governor Rick Scott signed a bill that raises the age to purchase a rifle from 18 to 21. As of right now Never Again led a nationwide school walk out in which schools all over the US walked out of school in supporting of stricter gun laws. Never Again has been in the news trying to get politicians in Washington to pass a law that will outlaw semi-automatic/automatic rifles. During the shootings, both sides of the networks (Democratic News Stations and Republican News Stations) networks reported that there had been a shooting at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida, both were reporting in similar styles with compassion and concern for what was going on. Both sides of the media were giving updates as soon as they got them in the studio. Since the shooting

networks such as CNN and MSNBC have been reporting about having stricter gun laws and guns laws that ban the sale of semi-automatic rifles, also while trying receiving backlash from the Republican Party and the National Rifle Association. On the other side we have media networks such as Fox news whose party, if you have not figured it out already, is more pro-gun and supports the rights of the people, as stated the United States Constitution, the right to bear arms, while also supporting the NRA and fighting stricter gun control. I plan on discussing how agenda setting impacted the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Massacre.

Prior to the massacre in Parkland Florida, there was another horrific school massacre in my home state of Connecticut. This was the Sandyhook Massacre, located in Newton CT, in which 20 innocent kids, along with 6 faculty/staff, were killed by a gunman. So after this shooting, I wanted to look up surveys that were done pre Sandy Hook. I found a survey that was conducted by the Rope Center at Cornell University, in this survey that was conducted between 1989 through 2015. The year I focused on was 2011, which was the year before Sandy Hook, where 50% of Americans supported stricter gun laws, while 50% opposed stricter gun laws. I found a survey that was conducted back in 2013, this was a year after to Sandy Hook, and about 68% of Democrats who were surveyed wanted some sort of stricter control when it comes to guns, while about 44% wanted less gun control and the 47% of Independents wanted. After the shooting in Parkland Florida, President Trump brought up the idea of paying for teachers to learn how to use a fire arm so they can be armed while they are in school to “protect” their students and fellow faculty. I discovered another poll that was conducted Post Sandy Hook and Marjory Stoneman Douglas. The website I discovered multiple polls in which but the couple I want to focus on are the ones that were conducted using Democrats and Republicans. In a CBS News poll, found on pollingreport.com, when asked the question, “If more school teachers were

allowed to carry guns, what impact do you think that would have on gun violence in schools? Do you think it would help prevent gun violence, would lead to more gun violence, or would it not have any effect on gun violence?”. It was reported that 52% of Republicans thought it would help to prevent gun violence. Only 19% of Republicans thought it would lead to more violence. On the Democratic side of the poll, 9% thought arming teachers in schools would prevent gun violence in schools. While 65% of Democrats thought it could lead to more school violence. The final poll I want to report about, also conducted by CBS, asked this question, to both Democrats and Republicans, "When you see students across the country discussing their views on gun policy and school safety, which comes closer to your view? Students should get involved in this issue. It's an issue that would be better left to adults.". According to this polling question, 39% of Republicans think that students should be involved while 59% think that this issue should better be left to the adults. On the Democratic side of the poll, 79% think students should be involved in this issue while 21% think it should be left up to the adults. I decided to report these polls to you because I believe these numbers that have been reported is one of the good examples of agenda setting by the media. Gun control has always been hot topic, not only for people but in media as well. Gun control debates have not been immune to the media, you can make the argument its actually the most talked about topic right (besides the turmoil taking place in the white house every day). I'm going to admit that I am a democrat so I often lean get my news from CNN, CBS and MSNBC. And I will admit, I would take what the news they gave me as the most accurate and when I would see a similar story on Fox News but they would twist it in a way to make the Republicans look bad. Since I've been attending Central Connecticut State University, I have taken Introduction to Journalism and Media Literature and those 2 classes have open my eyes to even more to the way media is produced and distributed to us. A lot of

what we watch on the news, depending on what network you watch, will tell a story different. For example, the Never Again advocacy group, from Parkland Florida, have been very outspoken about gun control and the need to ban semi-automatic weapons for public. The Democratic Stations have been very open about their support for stricter gun control. I recently read an article about a Sinclair TV Host resigning due her nasty comments towards Marjory Stoneman Douglas shooting survivor David Hogg. In the article CNN, written by Eliot C. McLaughlin, which stated, "Allman took to Twitter on March 26, two days before Ingraham ridiculed Hogg on Twitter for being denied admission to several universities, and boasted that he was planning to assault the teen with a fireplace implement." This honestly disturbed me. This made me sick to my stomach that anyone would say this about anyone and think it was okay to say. In order to satisfy my curiosity, I went over to Fox News to try to see if I could locate a similar article, just to see how they handled the situation. It was interesting, I could not find anything in regards to the incident. I believe this is an example of the media agenda. CNN caught wind of the situation and immediately reported it but I could not find anything about it. If the situation had been the other way around and a CNN reporter had made those claims about David Hogg, I am 100% sure Fox News and any other Republican leaning Media Outlet would have scooped it up and publish it. I believe that both Republic and Democratic Media Outlets often try to poke jabs at the other network. Like this David Hogg, not saying that it isn't about the threat because it is, but I believe another chunk of the reason as to why this story was published is because the guy who made these comments, Sinclair TV Host Jamie Allman, was a Republican who works for a Republican Media Outlet. CNN could use this story, for their media agenda, to not make us think badly about the Republicans, but how badly we should think about the Republicans. It's this constant back and forth between the Republicans and Democrats and both

trying to get their media agendas accomplished. The Media Agenda debate has been going on for a long time and it will for a long time more. Many media outlets often phrase or word their articles or broadcasts to make the other outlet look bad. With all this turmoil over gun control, it has become more a debate of which media outlet can get enough jabs in over the other. It is still about the gun control debate but it also has to do with the media's agenda. The debate is never going to end, the Republicans don't want any change to the gun laws and will fight every potential law that takes the rights away from Americans. Their agenda is keep gun control the way it has been. The Democrats are going to fight back, because that is their agenda, and get some sort of gun control to happen.

The Media Agenda of many News Agencies has turned from more of the interest in the public to let's see how we can make the other party look worse. I understand that the Democrats do what some sort of gun control but a majority of their time is finding anything to use that could make the Republicans look like the bad guys and vice versa. As was told in my into Agenda Setting means, according csufresno.edu, "the process whereby the mass media determine what we think and worry about". It does not mean that what Fox News or CNN, make us think about gun control one way or another, but it does mean that the way the present the news does not make us think of gun control in a certain way, like I explained before. They use their media agenda to not only get their stance on whether they want gun control while also getting you to think about how bad the other political parties side is. We need to be aware of the media's agenda, we need to understand that we should see both sides of the issue, not just the side we believe in. Yes we need some sort of gun control, we can't keep having these school shootings. Innocent people need to stop dying. Innocent people will stop dying when both sides of the new

agencies, to understand how we in some way, want the same thing. That same thing is protecting our own

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