

# THE ROLE OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND GENDER IN THE AGENDA-SETTING PROCESS<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*In this article we empirically explore how interpersonal communication and gender influence the agenda-setting process. Two explanations of the role of interpersonal communication can be found in the literature: (1) a two-step flow theory of communication and (2) the concept of contextualization. The two-step flow theory argues that opinion leaders recognize important issues in the media and then – because they influence discussions – disseminate these to the rest of the society. Contextualization refers to the concept according to which interpersonal exchanges influence how incoming issues are understood and set criteria for which issues are perceived as important. Morley (1995) and Fiske (2003) explain the role of gender as follows: (1) the division of household labour leads to the different modes of television viewing and (2) different ideas about relevant topics lead to different discussions. In our analyses we have found moderate support for – and thus validation – the concept of contextualization and Morley’s and Fiske’s ideas. In our conclusion we suggest a more thorough research design to better understand the investigated problem.*

## KEYWORDS

*agenda-setting – interpersonal communication – gender – gender stereotypes and communication – media communication*

## 1. Introduction

This article deals with the role of interpersonal communication in the agenda-setting process. Using the concept of contextualization, we also try to take into account the way in which gender acts as a variable in the interpersonally mediated agenda-setting process. This problem has not been solved yet. Thus, a better understanding of the relationship between interpersonal communication and gender leads to a better understanding of the agenda-setting process in general.

The study of the agenda-setting process explores how topics become a part of public discourse and how they become an important topic. The basic tenet developed by the advocates of agenda-setting was aptly summarized by Shanto Iyengar: “the themes and issues that are repeated in television news coverage become the priorities of viewers”.

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(Iyengar 1991: 2, as quoted in Edwards 1999: 5) Thus, this theory postulates the ability of media to direct public attention and influence the selection of themes.

The ability of media to introduce important issues and topics in public opinion was pointed out by Walter Lippman and Robert Ezra Park already in the 1920s and later by Harold Lasswell in the 1940s. (Dearing 1996: 10-12) In his book *The Press and Foreign Policy* (1963), Bernard Cohen then described this ability using the following metaphor: "The 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." (Cohen 1963: 13) For the first time, these theoretical premises were empirically tested by Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in the *Chapel Hill Study* in which the authors managed to demonstrate that public opinion attributes more importance to topics which appear more often in the news coverage in media. (McCombs 1972)

This groundbreaking study marks the beginning of a new research tradition. At first, only the relation of media and public opinion during an election campaign was studied, as in the case of the *Chapel Hill Study*, but the tradition developed further. According to James W. Dearing and Everett M. Rogers (1996: 3-5), nowadays researchers study the *political agenda* (i. e. what issues and topics become priorities for politicians), the *media agenda* (i. e. whether and how markedly various topics and issues appear in media content) and the *public agenda* (i. e. what topics and issues the public considers important). Researchers study (1) reasons for the inclusion of topics and issues in individual agendas, (2) ways in which individual agendas mutually influence one another, (3) how these agendas are formed by the conditions of the "real" (*non-mediated*) world,<sup>2</sup> personal experience and interpersonal communication. Special attention is paid to the media agenda; in this context, researchers pose the question: "Who or what sets the media agenda? A wide stream of organizational analyses fall into this area indisputably, with concepts like gatekeeping, news values, media routines etc." (Trampota 2007: 12)<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Role of interpersonal communication in the agenda-setting process

In the following sections we elaborate on how the media agenda influences the public agenda and the role of interpersonal communication in this process. Thus, we pose the following research question:

**Q1:** *What is the role of interpersonal communication in the process of agenda-setting?*

Jin Yang and Gerald Stone (2003) suggest that researchers have dealt with this issue for over thirty years. The first author interested in the role of interpersonal communication in the agenda-setting process was Jack McLeod. Together with his team, he published the results of his research already in 1974,<sup>4</sup> when he dedicated his study to the public

2 In media studies research on this topic this is a classic term that distinguishes the "real" world and "real world" indicators from indicators of the mediated, virtual world. Ray G. Funkhouser was the first one to introduce this differentiation in agenda-setting theory. (1973; cf. also Nečas 2006)

3 A more detailed general survey of the agenda-setting theory can be found in books by James W. Dearing and Everett M. Rogers *Agenda-Setting* (1996) and by Maxwell McCombs *Setting the Agenda* (2004). In Czech, the agenda-setting research tradition is summarized in an article by František Kalvas and Martin Kreidl (2007) – besides a general theoretical survey, this article provides a detailed summary of previous research methods and attempts at defining the causal effect. Research on media agenda-setting is summarized in Czech by Tomáš Trampota and Vlastimil Nečas (2007).

4 In this text, we do not work with the original published article, but with its reprint in a collection edited by David L. Protes and Maxwell McCombs (1991) on the basis of classic works of the agenda-setting research tradition.

agenda-setting during an election campaign, and alleged that interpersonal communication has a more significant effect only near the end of election campaigns when newspapers lose the role of the primary source of information. (McLeod 1991: 59)

To be entirely accurate, though, McLeod together with his colleagues did not survey the presence, range or intensity of interpersonal communication among respondents – he only worked with a new conceptualization of the variable of public agenda. In the agenda-setting research tradition, public agenda is conceptualized in three basic ways: (1) *intrapersonal agenda* – the given individual's personal preferences in respect of important topics and issues; (2) *perceived agenda* – topics and issues which the given person understands as important on the basis of conversations with their friends, colleagues, acquaintances, and of newspapers and viewing television reporting; and (3) *interpersonal agenda* – unlike the previous two concepts, it is not surveyed on the individual level because it concerns topics that are verbalized and discussed in public. (Ibid.: 58-59)

The most frequently used concept in agenda-setting research is the *intrapersonal agenda*, for example, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw used it in their *Chapel Hill Study*.<sup>5</sup> McLeod was, on the contrary, interested in what topics individuals identify as important as a result of conversations and newspaper reading,<sup>6</sup> so he used the concept of *perceived agenda*. (ibid: 48) His conclusion about the more significant role of interpersonal communication is therefore based on the finding that from a late stage of an election campaign the *perceived agenda* correlates with the preference of a political candidate more than the variable of *rely on newspapers*. (ibid: 58-59)

McLeod's research played an important role – it directed the attention of researchers to the role of interpersonal communication in the agenda-setting process. The findings of studies analyzed by Yang and Stone (2003) can be summed up in four basic points:

- (1) interpersonal communication is an important part of political life;
- (2) interpersonal communication encourages media agenda-setting;
- (3) some studies have contradictory findings;
- (4) some studies deny the role of interpersonal communication in supporting media agenda-setting.

The points (2), (3) and (4) are of course crucial for us since, in the present text we focus on the relationship between interpersonal communication and the agenda-setting process (and we are not concerned with the general significance of interpersonal communication for political life).

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5 They used the question: "What are you *most* concerned about these days? That is, regardless of what politicians say, what are the two or three *main* things which you think the government *should* concentrate on doing something about?" (McCombs 1972: 178)

6 McLeod together with Becker and Byrnes (1991: 49) presented a list of six issues to respondents "which you may have heard or read about in the current presidential campaign". (ibid) This list of issues includes: *Defense Spending, Combating Crime, Honesty in Government, America's World Leadership, the Vietnam War and the Tax Burden*. Respondents were then asked to organise this list from the most important issue up to the least important issue. (ibid)

Media agenda-setting through interpersonal communication is most often explained using the theory of the two-step flow of communication.<sup>7</sup> (Yang 2003: 58-60) The key mechanism of the two-step flow is the transmission model of communication.<sup>8</sup> Assumptions based on the transmission model then focus on how topics and issues “flow” to the audience in interpersonal communication. In some cases, research monitors how this “flow” of interpersonal communication increases, or in which situations it substitutes the direct “flow” of topics from mass media to their audience (see the above mentioned work by McLeod and his colleagues, for example).

If we were to provide a simplified outline of the mechanism described in these studies, it would probably resemble this: topics are transmitted from mass media to interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication then affects the audience (in case the given individual or segment of the audience uses both information channels), or the topics are carried further only by interpersonal communication itself, mainly when the audience does not monitor mass media (any more), or in case the mass medium stops generating the given topics.

Some studies, however, discovered more or less serious gaps in this linear, or even simple, concept. It appears, for example, that mass media have, at least in some cases, a weak influence on interpersonal communication channels which “provide a variety of items that are unlikely to be reported in the media”. (Atwood 1991: 124) Such a statement indeed implies a denial of the hypothesis that mass media would determine the content of interpersonal communication.

Tony Atwater, Michael B. Salwen and Ronald B. Anderson (1985, according to Yang 2003: 60) discovered, for example, that an active discussion about environmental problems might block media agenda-setting. Wayne Wanta and Yien-Chen Wu (1992: 854) add that it depends on circumstances: discussions encourage media agenda-setting in case they concern topics dominant in mass media. Interpersonal communication then involves a competition in agenda-setting in the case of topics that media pay less attention to. And finally, interpersonal communication has an ability to introduce such topics into the agenda that have been ignored by media.

Lutz Erbring, Edie Goldenberg and Arthur Miller were probably the first people who tried to go beyond the frame of the transmission model within the agenda-setting research – unfortunately, nobody has yet caught up with them in this respect. Their fundamental contribution lied in their suggestion that interpersonal communication: “[H]as both a social and an individual dimension. As a social process, it generates a collective definition of the situation [...] [and] as a resource for the individual, it opens an alternative channel of information...” (Erbring 1980: 41)

The concept of an alternative information channel basically describes the two-step flow of communication. Besides topics indirectly mediated by media, even topics unacknowledged by mass media flow towards an individual through the channel.

In this respect, Erbring and his colleagues do not contributed anything new – the function of interpersonal communication was described in this way already in the older, above quoted studies.

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7 For example Jeřábek (2006: 109-112), in line with Paul Felix Lazarsfeld, defines the two-step flow of communication as a specific role of opinion leaders who monitor mass media and then transmit thoughts presented in them to the rest of the population, in interpersonal communication.

8 For a description of this model see Shannon 1948: 380-381. We can briefly mention that this model is based on the mathematical theory of communication and it focuses mainly on the description of the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver and on possible sources of distortion to the transmitted message.

What is rather innovative, however, is the understanding of discussions that constitute a collective definition of a situation. Besides the mere transmission of information, the influence of discussions can also show in two other ways:

(1) They create the context for an identification of a topic which is carried by the communicated information or a message. The bankruptcy of a big industrial company can then be linked to the condition of economy in one discussion, with unemployment in a different one, with danger to a local community and economic criminality in another, and finally with a threat to personal well-being in others. Thus, those news topics that we work with in our content analysis do not necessarily correspond to topics that are identified by the audience.

(2) Discussions can shape criteria for the evaluation of a topic's importance. A criterion of importance then does not necessarily involve the mere frequency of a topic as the classic version of agenda-setting presumes and which two-step-flow theory works with in its application, but it can be a consequence of interpersonal communication.

In our text, we will label these effects as *contextualization*. According to this concept – which we base on the work developed by Erbring, Goldenberg and Miller – a respondent's individual agenda should, in the end, be more similar to the structure of discussed topics than to the structure of the media agenda. The underlying principle of contextualization is testable only indirectly. To directly prove or disprove the validity of the effect of contextualization, we would need to include qualitative data-gathering methods or an experiment into the research design.<sup>9</sup> The form of a suitable design will be discussed in detail in the conclusion of the paper.

The hypothesis that the individual agenda should be more similar to the structure of discussed topics than to the structure of the media agenda can also be arrived at based on the theory of two-step flow. According to this theory, variously influential opinion leaders change the structure of topics generated by media, in that they promote particular topics by bringing them up in discussions. But we are missing key variables which would verify whether the entire mechanism is mediated by a deviated dissemination of topics (*two-step flow*), or by a different understanding of upcoming news (*contextualization*), or whether these are complementary processes which take place simultaneously. Both explanations for the role of interpersonal communication in the agenda-setting process lead us to the formulation of the following hypothesis:

**H1:** *Among the most important topics, respondents tend to mention topics which are discussed by them rather than topics which are present in the media agenda.*

If we found a group with a specific method of television news coverage consumption, we could try to search for a different process of agenda-setting in this group. In other words: if we knew that the surveyed group differs from the rest of the audience *only* in respect of using the television news coverage as a source of topics, and still this group did not differ in preferences of important issues and significant events, we would know that the use of news coverage does not play a key role in the surveyed process. If the mentioned preferences differed we could accord this difference to the different use of televised news coverage.

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<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, available quantitative data cannot help us directly verify the concept of contextualization because we do not have exact data about information received by the respondents and data on how they contextualized this information. How people understand topics on the basis of discussions can be found out only indirectly from their answers to questions on which topics they discussed – it is clear that they will reply to us only on issues that they understand the news about.

By analogy, we can search for a group with a specific content of interpersonal communication. If such a group did not differ in any way in respect of news coverage viewing, but discussed different topics, we could account the different preferences of important topics to the different discussions.

### 3. Gender differences

The surveyed set can be divided into two different groups according to gender.<sup>10</sup> Current feminist literature engaging the problem of media and gender tends to address media re-presentations of gender categories and their reproduction in media. (cf. for example Gauntlett 2000; Binková 2004) Less attention is paid to ways in which gender influences participation in media communication. The second and third questions that we ask in this research are:

**Q2:** *What role does gender play in the agenda-setting process in mass media?*

**Q3:** *What role does gender play in the agenda-setting process in interpersonal communication?*

Authors using feminist critical theory focus their attention not on the ways in which gender enters mediated communication as a variable, but on the ways in which media influence gender images and stereotypes held by the audience (in the society). Feminist critical theory attempts to analyze the consequences and effects of media on the reproduction of gender images and stereotypes, and it draws attention to the ways in which media often promote rigid gender ideologies. (Stewart et al. 2003: 174; regarding the aims of feminist theory in media studies cf. also Dow 2006) Our article does not use feminist critical theory, we do not study ideological consequences and the reproduction of gender images and stereotypes. Our analysis could be understood more as an analysis of the ways in which gender images and stereotypes, whose existence we assume in the interpretation of our analyses, can by return influence mediated communication in that they enter the mediated communication process as relevant variables. In other words: culturally conditioned images and stereotypes connected to gender influence the ways in which individuals interpret media content. We do not understand these variables – gender images and stereotypes – primarily as *consequences* of media communication,<sup>11</sup> but as variables which influence the character and nature of mediated communication.

Although they are not numerous, we can still find several references focusing on the different approach of men and women to media. John Fiske, for example, suggests that men and women can have different routines of watching television, and this can be the result of different schedules of domestic work which is culturally attributed to women and men during the day, and (this is significant for us) also during evenings spent together; sports broadcasting and television news are largely considered a male domain, for example. (Fiske 2003: 72-74)

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10 In this text, we use the term gender and we prefer it to the term "sex". We are not so much interested in respondents' biological sex of respondents, rather we are concerned with the effect of social roles and cultural concepts which are attributed to men and women based on their biological sex. We do not expect that the surveyed processes would be influenced by the biological sex itself. Besides that, in sociological research, we can never fully test the variable "sex" as a biological fact, but we always test respondents' *declared* gender – i.e., an aspect of social structure and not biological sex in the strict sense of the word.

11 We would like to point out that this study is not concerned with understanding media communication as such, but with the understanding of a specific aspect – agenda-setting in mass media.

Another of Fiske's observations that is important for our analyses is that dialogues in the form of mere "gossiping" and "chit-chat" are feminized and considered a contrast to men's "weighty debate". (Fiske 2003: 77) If this observation is valid also in the Czech context, then the concept of "weighty men's debates" should shape the content of discussions held by men, and we should observe a greater frequency of political topics in their discussions (because according to the dominant culture it is "appropriate" to discuss them among men) and a lower frequency of personal topics (because it is not "appropriate" to talk about them among men, unlike among women).

David Morley complements Fiske's observation and he states that:

women are more willing than men to talk with other people about watching television; the only case when men like to admit to watching television is when they talk about sports programmes – as if the confession of excessive television watching could be a threat to their masculinity.  
(Morley 1995: 521)

If the fear of a threat to masculinity was indeed the reason for the lesser willingness to discuss the content of television broadcasting on the interpersonal level, it is appropriate to assume that men will be more willing, similarly as in the case of sports programmes, to admit to watching television news. According to Morley, discussions are, thus, shaped by the image of what is acceptable to admit to in terms of television content for individual gender categories in a given cultural context.

It is, of course, relevant to ask what form such a confession to television watching has. Certainly it will not be an answer to a direct question whether the concerned person was watching television. It will very probably be an "indirect confession" in the form of a comment in a discussion on television content, eventually an explicit reference to television broadcasting as the source of the discussed topic. In any case, Fiske's and Morley's observations lead to a common conclusion: the content of discussions is influenced by culturally conditioned concepts of what is acceptable to discuss for whom in the given cultural context. Therefore, we can formulate the following hypothesis:

**H2:** *In their discussions, men engage in political topics more than women.*

What are the consequences of the fact that men tend to discuss political topics more than women for the role of interpersonal communication in the agenda-setting process? According to the two-step flow theory, the consequences are evident. If men discussed public topics more than women in their debates, it would be more likely that these topics would be set into their intrapersonal agenda. If women were willing to discuss other topics as well, according to the two-step flow theory, it should decrease the chance that public issues would be set in women's intrapersonal agendas. Based on the concept of contextualization, we arrive at the following assumption: With regard to discussions which are related mainly to public issues, men (according to our assumption) are more prone to contextualize incoming topics as public. Since women discuss public issues less, we can assume that this tendency will be reduced in their case. Whether we work with the two-step flow theory or the concept of contextualization, we always arrive at the conclusion that men's personal agendas should be more similar to the media agenda than women's personal agendas. Therefore, we can formulate the last hypothesis:

**H3:** *Men understand topics presented in the media agenda as important more frequently because they discuss them more than women.*

#### 4. Methodology

In the analysis we use data from two different sources. The first source of data is a repeated cross-sectional survey conducted by CWM within the *Our society* project. The second source is media content analysis conducted by the InnoVatio civic association. The CWM data gathering took place in the period between 27th June 2005 and 4th July 2005, and 1,069 respondents participated in it. The surveyed sample is representative of the Czech population aged over fifteen years, and a quota selection method (quota attributes are age, gender and education) was used. The sample's territorial representation was ensured in the very construction of the interviewer network, where the size of the place of residence and regions (former districts) are controlled attributes. The data were gathered in a standardized questionnaire used in a personal interview with a respondent.

We reduced the data set for our purposes. Since the main dependent variable relates to the evaluation of the significance of events or importance of public issues, we only left those respondents in our set who are eighteen years old and older. Further, we only left those respondents in our set who answered all questions which were necessary to construct dependent and influencing variables. Thus, we excluded all respondents who did not answer questions dealing with significant events, important issues and topics which they discussed. We also excluded respondents who did not state their education and how often they watch television news coverage. The analyzed set includes 825 respondents who provided answers to all the essential questions. The reduced set is representative in all characteristics which were observed in the quota selection. A logical exception is the proportion of the youngest age category and the proportion of respondents with elementary education. Compared to the original set, these two categories have a lower proportion in the reduced set because we excluded persons younger than eighteen years. The set was not weighed subsequently.

For information on the content of the main television news coverage, we use data provided by the InnoVatio civic association that carries out a continual content analysis of main television news coverage in the Czech Republic. The data we have at our disposal refer to the station, the date of broadcasting, and the main topic<sup>12</sup> of all news items broadcast in the main news coverage of nationwide television stations (Czech Television, Nova and Prima) for the period between 1st January 2001 and 31st December 2005. As a surveyed period, we set 30 days<sup>13</sup> before the last day of the official end of the CWM survey. Since the survey was concluded on 4th July 2005, we connected the data from the survey with data on media coverage for the period from 4th July 2005 to 3rd July 2005. For this period, we calculated the frequency of individual categories of topics in news coverage topics.<sup>14</sup>

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12 We are aware that media contents are polysemic in their substance and, thus, a mere detection of the main topics of a news item involves a certain reduction. But we do not have access to data that would identify secondary topics in the news items. We are convinced that the mere monitoring of the main topic of news items is nonetheless an acceptable reduction and the frequency of main topics is an appropriate estimate of the representation of topics in the media agenda.

13 Wayne Wanta (1997a: 76, 1997b: 149) argues that the impact of television news demonstrates itself after 4 – 7 weeks and fades away after 2 – 8 weeks. For this reason, we consider the selected period a suitable approximation.

14 There are even more detailed ways of media agenda measurement, as e.g. the size of newspaper columns, time in seconds given to a topic in television news or an item in a news broadcast. We did not use these more detailed ways for two reasons: (1) there is no known existing data set which would contain such information about the Czech media landscape and (2) the number of contributions dealing with a monitored topic is a traditional and established way of measurement. (Dearing – Rogers 1996: 18, 35-36)



At this point it would be useful to briefly characterise features of the media agenda in June 2005 and the immediately preceding period. As for abroad, main Czech television news programmes paid attention to terrorism and the expected integration into the European Union, in particular to referenda in which the European constitution was refused. As for domestic events, attention was paid to the purchase of Prime Minister Stanislav Gross' apartment which eventually led to the Prime Minister's resignation and the establishment of a new government with Jiří Paroubek becoming the Prime Minister. Another widely discussed event involved the escape of the entrepreneur Radovan Krejčíř during the attempt to arrest him and Krejčíř's subsequent getaway to the Seychelles. A lot of attention was also paid to the corruption scandal in professional Czech football which was associated with the FK Viktoria Žižkov employee Ivan Horník.

table 1: Number of television news items according to thematic categories and a combination of individual channels. Number of items, sequence. (N=2 198)

Topics in television news items	Prima		CT1 <sup>15</sup>		Nova		Prima a CT1		Prima a Nova		CT1 a Nova		Prima, CT1 a Nova	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
"Criminality, police, judicial proceedings"	179	1.	150	1.	218	1.	329	1.	397	1.	368	1.	547	1.
"Politics, government, budget"	55	2.	93	2.	56	3.	148	2.	111	3.	149	2.	204	2.
"Economy, unemployment"	44	4.	59	4.	73	2.	103	4.	117	2.	132	3.	176	3.
"Social policy, healthcare, education system"	54	3.	50	5.	53	4.	104	3.	107	4.	103	4.	157	4.
"EU"	31	5.	66	3.	32	5.	97	5.	63	5.	98	5.	129	5.
"Foreign countries"	16	6.	41	6.	29	6.	57	6.	45	6.	70	6.	86	6.

Note: The table does not include data about the category "Personal" as it is not included in the news and the category "Other".

If we focus on frequent topics in domestic television news, besides significant events, the clearly dominant category is "Criminality, police, judicial proceedings", as shown in table 1. This category appears most frequently in all seven possible combinations of the main television news of three nationwide stations, and it contains a markedly higher number of contributions than the other categories. Further in the text, therefore, we will define the category "Criminality, police, judicial proceedings" as the dominant category of television news.

In the analysis, we use two different variables for the measurement of interpersonal agenda based on open questions and one variable for measuring discussed topics, also based on an open question. Therefore, it was necessary to unify the coding of these questions with the coding used for the categorization of television news topics. The incom-

<sup>15</sup> Czech Television 1

patibility of the original codes can be overcome through implementation of a classification with eight categories and the conversion of all four original variables into this classification. The use of this rather abstract classification with a low number of categories is not unusual in the tradition of agenda-setting research. (Cf. e.g. Yang 2003: 66)

Our classification consists of the following categories: (1) *EU*; (2) *Politics, government, budget*; (3) *Social policy, healthcare, education system*; (4) *Economy, unemployment*; (5) *Criminality, police, judicial proceedings*; (6) *Foreign countries*; (7) *Personal (non-political)* and (8) *Other*. The category *Politics, government, budget*, covers processual and institutional aspects of politics (*politics and polity*) and the category *Social policy, healthcare, education system*, incorporates the execution of particular policies (*policy*). In the original coding, the processual and institutional aspects of politics were only barely differentiated but, on the other hand, they differed from the execution itself rather clearly. The mentioned classification stems primarily from respondents' answers to open questions; only then were the topics of television news items subsequently and accordingly recorded.

The intrapersonal agenda is first measured as the most significant recent event. Respondents stated their answers spontaneously and they had an option to name up to three events.<sup>16</sup> A second way of measurement which we use is an inquiry about "the most important issue the Czech Republic is confronted with". Respondents answer, and they have the option to name one issue which they consider the most significant.<sup>17</sup> The content of discussions is traced with the help of an open question where respondents are asked about what political topics they discussed last week.<sup>18</sup> Respondents had an option to name up to three discussed topics.

For the purposes of logistic regression, we create dichotomous variables. The first one determines whether a respondent considers as important at least one event that corresponds to the dominant category of television news; this variable has a value of 1 in case the respondent listed, among important events, at least one event that belongs to the category "Criminality, police, judicial proceedings". The second variable clarifies whether the respondent chose an issue which corresponds to the category "Criminality, police, judicial proceedings"; it has a value of 1 in case the respondent did so, and a value of 0 in case they chose a different issue. Further, we create a set of eight dichotomous variables for discussed topics, one variable for each category of the above specified classification. Every variable has a value of 1 in case at least one of the listed topics corresponds to the respective category.

The watched news programme is determined on the basis of an open question which allows the respondent to list up to three news programmes which they watch regularly.<sup>19</sup> Based on their answers, we determine which combination of main television news programmes is watched regularly by the respondent. We also monitor

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16 "What three recent events do you consider the most significant?"

17 "In your opinion, what is the most important issue our country is confronted with?"

18 "What political topics and events did you discuss last week? (It does not matter who you discussed it with)"  
This question immediately follows the question: "Try to estimate how many times you discussed political topics and events in the last week: a) with a family member, b) with friends, acquaintances, colleagues, c) with strangers, d) with a publicly active persons?"

19 "What news programmes do you watch regularly?"

the frequency of watching the given combination of news programmes in a question about how many times the respondent watched news during the last week.<sup>20</sup> Based on these questions, we construct a variable for the amount of time which the respondent spent watching television news during the last week. First of all, we state how much time the respondent spent watching news every day. If they only watched news on the Prima station, we count 15 minutes. If they only watched CT1 news we count 45 minutes and if they only watched news on the TV Nova station, we count 30 minutes. For combinations of individual news programmes, we assign to respondents values of totalled times for individual stations, with two exceptions. Because the news programmes of CT1 and TV Nova coincided during 30 minutes of broadcasting time in 2005, we counted the time of their combination as 45 minutes, and if respondents stated that they regularly watched all three programmes, we counted this combination as 60 minutes devoted to watching news. Thereafter, these stated times are multiplied by the number of days during which the respondent watched news one week before the inquiry. The final variable, thus, gives an estimate of how much time the respondent spent watching news during the last week, and it has values ranging from 0 to 420 minutes.

We are aware of inaccuracies that are present in the variable structure. The respondent might not watch the usual news programmes combination on all given days. Respondents may also not always watch the given combination from the beginning to the end, they might stop watching the news just before its end, start to watch it some time after the beginning and of course, they may leave the vicinity of their television set during the news programme. Thus the time of watching assigned to a respondent may not correspond exactly to the time which the respondent really spent watching news programmes. And finally of course, the discussed extent does not detect how much attention the respondent devoted to individual items of the main television news. Our estimate of the time spent watching the main television news is, however, the best and the most exact approximation which our data set allows. At the same time, we are convinced that the chosen extent is sufficiently exact for our purposes.

We use education and age as control variables. We use education as a dichotomous variable which has a value 1 for school leaving exam or higher degrees of education, and a value 0 for a qualification lower than the school leaving exam. Age is categorized in completed decades: 18 – 20 years, 21 – 30 years, 31 – 40 years, 41 – 50 years, 51 – 60 years and 61 – 80 years.

Respondents' gender is the last variable which we work with in this article. We determine it based on the variable of sex which is not detected through a direct inquiry but interviewers themselves judge respondents' sex after the interview is completed.<sup>21</sup>

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20 "And how many times did you watch television news during the last week?"

21 "Questions for interviewers: The respondent is: 1) man 2) woman."

### 5. Analysis

Table 2 clearly demonstrates that the share of men and women is almost identical when watching TV news. Morley points out that it is usually men who decide about what will be watched on television. He explains that this is based on the structure of power relations reigning in the household, which allow men to control the choice of television programmes to be watched by the whole family. (Morley 1995: 518-519) This situation is enabled by the fact that individual family members usually do not have their own television sets. If a Czech household owns more television sets, it is very likely that they will be at the disposal of children – that can be at least concluded from findings published by the agency Mediasearch, a.s. (2008) and by British researchers. (Livingstone 2007)

table 2: TV news watching by gender. Column %. (N=825).

Combination of watched news programmes	Men (n=410)	Women (n=415)
None	16%	17%
TV Prima only	1%	1%
CT1 only	14%	15%
TV NOVA only	21%	21%
TV Prima and CT1	6%	4%
TV Prima and TV NOVA	4%	4%
CT1 and TV NOVA	21%	20%
TV Prima, CT1 and TV NOVA	17%	17%
Total	100%	99%

Note: Differences between men and women are statistically insignificant; totals in the last column do not equal 100% due to rounding off.

Table 2 does not necessarily confirm the hypothesis about masculine control of watched content – even if such control was feminine or independent of gender, table 2 could still be the same. Men do not differ from women in what combination of main television news programmes they watch, but that does not necessary mean that they spend the same time with television news.

The traditional division of housework, for example, might prevent women from watching news daily. Such a division of housework would not limit men, and at the same time it might enable them to exercise control over which news programme will be watched. Women would then watch news programmes chosen by men, but only on some days during the week when they would not be limited by the traditional division of housework. As a result, women would watch the same news but they would do so for fewer hours per week than men. We would like to point out that the traditional division of housework is mentioned as one of the potential factors that might lie behind the different way of televi-

sion news watching in the case of men and women. Of course, it is possible to imagine many other model relations between gender, division of housework and television news watching.

However, in our set we do not observe any differences between women and men. On average, men spend almost three hours and fifteen minutes per week watching television news (3.24 hours), and the average for women is exactly twelve minutes shorter (3.04 hours). This difference is not statistically significant.<sup>22</sup>

Although we did not observe gender differences in watching television news, we can observe gender differences in discussion topics. The findings in table 3 can be summarized as follows: men concentrated on dominant political topics of the day<sup>23</sup> (June 2005) more than women, who discussed non-political (probably personal) topics more often and who were more inclined to discuss “*Social policy, healthcare, education system*”.

table 3: Discussed topics by gender. Column %. (N=825).

Diskutovaná témata	Men (n=410)	Women (n=415)
„Criminality, police, judicial proceedings“	46%*	37%*
“Politics, government, budget”	35%*	28%*
„Economy, unemployment”	14%	15%
„Social policy, healthcare, education system”	9%*	14%*
„EU“	12%	9%
„Foreign countries”	5%	3%
„Others“	10%	12%
Did not discuss political topics	28%*	35%*

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; Since respondents could list up to three topics, the totals in the column are higher than 100%.

These differences between men and women cannot be attributed to watching different content – power structure and the division of housework are not such that they would completely prevent one gender group from participation in news watching. (see table 2) In case there is only one television set in the household and, at the same time, in the case of collective news watching, men and women would even watch the same programmes. The observed differences between men and women in table 3 can be explained in line with Fiske’s and Morley’s observations regarding beliefs, different for both genders, about what is “appropriate” or more precisely “inappropriate” for individual gender categories to discuss according to the dominant culture. The tendency to discuss current and dominant political topics corresponds to these cultural beliefs.

22 Men:  $nm=410$ ,  $Mm=3,24$ ,  $SEm=0,11$ ,  $SDm=2,23$ ; women:  $nw=415$ ,  $Mw=3,04$ ,  $SEw=0,10$ ,  $SDw=2,04$ ;  $t=1,28$ ;  $p=0,20$ .

23 “Criminality, police, judicial proceedings”; “Politics, government, budget”.

These topics preferred and generated in the dominant cultural climate are then discussed more by men than by women. The tendency to discuss personal topics does not fully correspond to dominant cultural beliefs about men and that is why men discuss them less compared to women.

Men differ from women only in the extent to which they discussed the mentioned thematic categories. But if we create a sequence of these categories according to the extent to which they were discussed, and if we compare these sequences, we will find that they are almost identical.<sup>24</sup> Thus, women and men do not markedly differ in what topics they prefer, but rather in the extent to which they attend to the discussed topics.

In a similar way, we can compare the extent to which the number of contributions devoted to individual topics in television news corresponded to the extent that men and women discussed the individual topics. For this comparison, it is probably most suitable to use summary data about the number of contributions of all three main news programmes because it is highly probable that respondents do not hold discussions only with persons who watch an identical combination of news. We will not include the category "Other", due to the natural ambiguity of its content, and the category "Personal" which is, of course, absent from the news.

Topics discussed by women correspond exactly to the extent that news programmes involved individual categories.<sup>25</sup> Men differ only slightly, but in their case we can also say that the extent to which they discuss topics clearly corresponds to the attention paid to these topics in main television news programmes.<sup>26</sup> It would not be correct to interpret these results as evidence of the proposition that media agenda sets discussed topics (interpersonal agenda). We cannot identify a causal effect since the comparison between the content of news and of discussions content is performed on aggregated data and, furthermore, at a single point in time. Academic literature suggests that there is a widely held view that the public agenda is set through the media agenda, but there is no empirical evidence for this conclusion in our study. The only interpretation for the identified close link between television news content and discussed topics is that in our study it is also highly probable that the interpersonal agenda was set by the media agenda.

Now we will focus on men's and women's intrapersonal agendas and hence, on what events and what problems they consider most significant. Similarly to the fact that we do not observe gender differences in the case of discussed topics, we do not observe them regarding the sequence of importance of intrapersonal agendas' thematic categories either. (table 4) To a large extent, women and men coincide in the evaluation of the most significant events<sup>27</sup> as well as in the evaluation of the most important issues.<sup>28</sup>

But again, we can observe gender differences in what share of women and men consider the individual categories of events and issues important. Men accept public events ("Criminality, police, judicial proceedings", "Politics, government, budget" and "EU") into their intrapersonal agenda to a larger extent while women most often discuss the category "Personal". In the evaluation of issues, women differ from men in that

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24 The value of Spearman's Rho is 0.881,  $p=0.004$ .

25 The value of Spearman's Rho is 1,  $p<0.001$ .

26 The value of Spearman's Rho is 0.943,  $p=0.005$ .

27 The value of Spearman's Rho is 0.952,  $p<0.001$ .

28 The value of Spearman's Rho is 0.946,  $p<0.001$ .

they focus more on the content of the categories “Social policy, healthcare, education system” and “Personal”. Regarding the acceptance of issues into their intrapersonal agenda, there is no statistically significant difference between women and men in any other category.

table 4: Preference of events and issues by gender. Column %. (N=825)

Preferred events and issues	Events		Issues	
	Men (n=410)	Women (n=415)	Men (n=410)	Women (n=415)
„Criminality, police, judicial proceedings“	36%*	28%*	27%	22%
„Politics, government, budget“	47%**	38%**	26%	21%
„Economy, unemployment“	10%	9%	28%	29%
„Social policy, healthcare, education system“	5%	5%	4%*	9%*
„EU“	24%**	16%**	3%	4%
„Foreign countries“	14%	14%	1%	1%
„Other“	31%	30%	7%	7%
„Personal“ (non-political)	38%**	48%**	4%*	7%*

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; since respondents could list up to three topics, totals in the column “Events” are higher than 100%.

We have outlined men’s and women’s intrapersonal agendas and variables that might influence the inclusion of events and issues into their intrapersonal agenda. Now let us concentrate on how these variables fare in the process. We consider a dependent variable the data on whether a respondent considers an event from the category “Criminality, police, judicial proceedings” important. As table 1 indicates, one quarter of television news items (547 of 2,198) belong to this category in the period in question, which is two and half times more than in the case of the second most numerous category (“Politics, government, budget”, 204 items). Therefore, we choose the category “Criminality, police, judicial proceedings” because it is by far the most dominant one in television news and, hence, the influence of news watching upon the intrapersonal agenda should show particularly in the case of this category. As declaratory variables, we will use gender, number of hours spent watching news every week, and whether the respondent discussed individual topics. We will control the analysis for respondent’s age and education. Finally, the correlation of gender with education and the time spent watching news and discussing individual topics will be included into the analysis.

table 5: Comparison of models for the influence of gender, age, education, hours of television news watching and discussed topics on inclusion of the topic "Criminality, police, judicial proceedings" as the most important occurrence and the most significant issue in the intrapersonal agenda. Logits (standard error). (N=825)

Variables	M1		M2		M3		M4	
	b	(S.E.)	b	(S.E.)	b	(S.E.)	b	(S.E.)
<b>Gender</b> (1 = žena, 0 = muž)	-1,074*	(0,348)	-1,255***	(0,371)	0,374	(0,336)	0,345	(0,357)
<b>Age</b> (contrast is the category 18-20 years)								
21-30	0,911*	(0,424)	0,962*	(0,427)	0,342	(0,446)	0,367	(0,451)
31-40	0,303	(0,431)	0,314	(0,434)	0,771	(0,435)	0,819	(0,440)
41-50	0,589	(0,417)	0,598	(0,421)	0,289	(0,436)	0,376	(0,442)
51-60	0,786	(0,423)	0,822	(0,426)	0,717	(0,435)	0,805	(0,439)
61-80	0,695	(0,415)	0,709	(0,419)	0,731	(0,429)	0,863*	(0,436)
<b>Education</b> (1=sec. school leaving exam, 0=lower than sec. school)	-0,205	(0,215)	-0,215	(0,216)	0,234	(0,227)	0,208	(0,231)
<b>Gender * - Education</b>	0,662*	(0,314)	0,676*	(0,318)	-0,259	(0,331)	-0,241	(0,338)
<b>Number of hours spent watching TV news</b> (0-7 hours weekly)	0,053	(0,049)	0,064	(0,051)	0,050	(0,052)	0,059	(0,054)
<b>Gender * - Number of hours spent watching TV news</b>	0,163*	(0,074)	0,146	(0,076)	-0,112	(0,076)	-0,128	(0,079)
<b>Discussed topics</b>								
Discussed "Criminality, police, judicial proceedings" (1=yes, 0=no)	0,722***	(0,213)	0,760***	(0,217)	0,268	(0,227)	0,305	(0,234)
Discussed "Politics, government, budget" (1=yes, 0=no)			-0,313	(0,231)			-0,203	(0,248)
Discussed "Economy, unemployment" (1=yes, 0=no)			-0,183	(0,315)			-0,736	(0,381)
Discussed "Social policy, healthcare, education system" (1=yes, 0=no)			-0,035	(0,381)			-1,013*	(0,511)
Discussed "EU" (1=yes, 0=no)			-0,155	(0,337)			0,736*	(0,334)
Discussed "Foreign countries" (1=yes, 0=no)			0,149	(0,499)			-0,371	(0,570)
Discussed "Other" (1=yes, 0=no)			-0,270	(0,369)			-0,246	(0,407)
<b>Gender * - Discussed topics</b>								
Gender * Discussed "Criminality, police, judicial proceedings"	-0,119	(0,315)	-0,155	(0,322)	-0,303	(0,339)	-0,281	(0,347)
Gender * Discussed "Politics, government, budget"			0,246	(0,347)			-0,035	(0,380)
Gender * Discussed "Economy, unemployment"			-0,199	(0,467)			0,203	(0,539)
Gender * "Social policy, healthcare, education system"			0,258	(0,500)			1,157	(0,619)
Gender * Discussed "EU"			0,468	(0,520)			-0,428	(0,536)
Gender * Discussed "Foreign countries"			0,355	(0,792)			0,801	(0,855)
Gender * Discussed "Other"			0,767	(0,497)			-0,001	(0,569)
Constant	-1,640***	(0,424)	-1,537***	(0,412)	-1,945***	(0,428)	-1,888***	(0,437)
<b>Model quality statistics</b>								
L2	63,43***		71,22***		17,49		35,63	
Df	12		24		12		24	
BIC	17,2		89,9		63,1		125,5	

Note.: \* p<0,05; \*\*\* p<0,001.



Table 5 shows that different models for the inclusion of important events and significant issues in the intrapersonal agenda hold true for men and women. Models M1 and M2 describe the inclusion of events; some of the expected effects were confirmed in them, and they will be addressed in more detail in further sections. Models M3 and M4 describe the inclusion of dominant news issues in the intrapersonal agenda. It is apparent that no influence of any of the expected causes was demonstrated. Neither discussions about topics from the category “Criminality, police, judicial proceedings”, the respondent’s gender, or the time spent watching news have an impact on the inclusion of an issue in the intrapersonal agenda.

The first version of the contextualization concept assumed that discussions create a context for the identification of a topic carried by communicated information or a message. If a respondent did not discuss topics from the category “Criminality, police, judicial proceedings”, it should reduce the probability of a topic from this category being classified as such by the respondent. A negative influence of discussions not concerning the category “Criminality, police, judicial proceedings” should, therefore, show. In this respect, our assumptions were confirmed only by the negative effect of discussions on topics from the category “Social policy, healthcare, education system”. The situation is exactly the opposite in the case of the positive effect of discussions on topics which belong to the category “EU”. These conflicting results are certainly not sufficient to confirm the contextualization effect in the inclusion of issues. We are also unable to interpret them in any other meaningful way.

However, we can explain why the models for the inclusion of significant events and important issues differ in our study. The most significant event in the category “Criminality, police, judicial proceedings” is the escape of the entrepreneur Radovan Krejčíř during the police attempt to arrest him and the subsequent resignation of the head Czech police, Jiří Kolář. It can be legitimately assumed that these events will not be in general considered the most significant issues in the Czech Republic.

As mentioned above, significant and expected effects can be observed in models M1 and M2 which describe the inclusion of events from the category “Criminality, police, judicial proceedings” into the intrapersonal agenda. The positive effect of discussions is common to both men and women. Discussions on topics from the category “Criminality, police, judicial proceedings” double<sup>29</sup> the probability – for both women and men – of considering the event from the category important. The impact of discussions on all other topics are statistically insignificant. This disproves the assumed effect of discussions – contextualization. If this effect held true, discussions on other topics would have a negative effect; but we do not observe such negative effects in model M2. The same effect of discussions is shown in the correlation of gender and the discussed topics in models M1 and M2 which is not statistically significant. That means that the effect of discussions does not differ between genders.

Statistical insignificance of discussions on topics which do not belong into the category “Criminality, police, judicial proceedings” and of their correlations with gender has a practical consequence for our analysis: we will disregard model M2. Variables added into model M2 – in comparison with model M1 – are not statistically significant individually, neither do they bring enough new information as a whole (see table 6).

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29 Logit 0.722 (M1) or 0.766 (M2) is equivalent to doubling the possibility.

At the same time, model M2 has a significantly worse BIC parameter.<sup>30</sup> These arguments lead us to a dismissal of model M2 and further focus on model M1 only.

table 6: Comparison of models' suitability. Chi2, degrees of freedom, p values. (N=825)

<b>Models</b>	<b>L2</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>BIC</b>
M <sub>1</sub>	63,43	12	<0,001	17,2
M <sub>2</sub>	71,22	24	<0,001	89,9
M <sub>3</sub>	17,49	12	0,132	63,1
M <sub>4</sub>	35,63	24	0,060	125,5
<b>Contrasts</b>				
M <sub>2</sub> - M <sub>1</sub>	7,79	12	0,801	72,7
M <sub>4</sub> - M <sub>3</sub>	18,14	12	0,112	62,4

In the case of men, the described effect of discussions is the only statistically significant effect which can be observed in model M1. In the case of men, therefore, it is only significant whether they discussed a topic from the category "Criminality, police, judicial proceedings", and no other circumstances play a role. Women are three times<sup>31</sup> less likely than men to include events from the category "Criminality, police, judicial proceedings" in their intrapersonal agenda. At the same time, though, women's likelihood increases if they have passed the school leaving exam or a higher exam or in case they watched television news. Women with a school leaving exam are almost twice<sup>32</sup> as likely to include the category "Criminality, police, judicial proceedings" in their intrapersonal agenda. Education, thus, partially compensates the lower probability of women to accept the given topic as a significant event, but even women with a school leaving exam are less likely<sup>33</sup> than men with any education. Broadly speaking, the effect of watching television news can be briefly outlined as follows: if a woman watches news 7 hours weekly, she is as likely as a man to incorporate the given topic. We would like to point out that for men education and watching news do not play any role in our model.

## 6. Discussion

There are two ways of interpreting the findings of our analysis. We can try to interpret them with the help of the two-step flow theory of communication. The significant role of discussions about the given topic definitely testifies in its favour. Women obviously discuss events from the category "Criminality, police, judicial proceedings" less than men and,

30 In general, the lower the BIC parameter, the higher the model's quality. In general, it is assumed that lowering this parameter by 10 points reflects an explicit decline in the model's quality. (Raftery 1995: 139) Since model M2 has a BIC parameter 72.7 points higher, we consider it a much worse model.

31 Logit -1.074 (M1) implies that women are three times less likely than men.

32 Logit 0.662 (M1) implies approximately double likelihood.

33 The difference of logits (-0.412 [M1]) for the variable of gender and correlation of gender with education imply that educated women's likelihood is one and a half times (M1) lower than in the case of men.

therefore, the effect of gender is significant. The two-step flow theory of communication will also help us to understand the significant correlation between gender and education. A lower degree of horizontal gender segregation is typical in work positions referred to as “white collars” for acquisition of which a relatively higher education and professional qualification is needed. There are generally more opportunities to hold discussions during working hours in the “white collar” jobs than in working class professions. For women then, a relatively higher education or more precisely education with a school leaving exam means that they can participate in discussions with men to a larger extent and gain the same impression as men in terms of a topic’s significance.

Statistically significant correlations of gender and time spent watching news can then be understood as an alternative to the two-step flow. If topics from the category “Criminality, police, judicial proceedings” do not flow to women in interpersonal communication, they can derive them from television news if they watch them often enough.

This explanation has several weak points though. First, it does not explain why the effect of correlation between gender and discussions about topics from the category “Criminality, police, judicial proceedings” is insignificant. If a different gender meant only a different chance to participate in discussions on certain topics, the correlation between the discussion on these topics and the gender would have to show as significant. It would mean that one gender group is systematically excluded from debates on certain topics, but if a respondent overcomes this limitation, the topic gets to them in the two-step flow. Similarly, there is an objection to the influence of correlation between education and gender. Above all, the correlation between gender and discussions should be significant if only higher education enabled women to participate in men’s debates and include important events from these debates in their intrapersonal agenda. If the two-step flow theory really held true, the effect of correlation between education and gender should be nil and all the influence now observed should be contained in the correlation of gender and discussions.

The second weak point is the explanation of news watching as an alternative to the two-step flow. Why should it be an alternative only for women and not for men when we know that women and men watch the same combinations of news programmes and spend the same amount of time watching television news? 54% of men did not discuss topics from the category “Criminality, police, judicial proceedings” at all, which is a number high enough to allow for the effect of news watching as an alternative to the two-step flow to show.

The observed effects could be explained by the fact that men and women have different criteria for what they perceive as a significant event. These criteria are generally different for men and women – in general, it is three times less likely that women will consider events from the category “Criminality, police, judicial proceedings” significant. Women’s criteria can reach the same level as men’s by frequent watching of television news where this category is strongly dominant. Similarly, women’s criteria can shift as a result of higher education (or more precisely, a school leaving exam). These effects correspond to the second variant of the contextualization effect, i.e. the criteria for the assessment of events as significant can change. In contrast to our original theoretical assumptions, this effect does not manifest itself in discussions but rather in news watching and education. The first variant of this effect did not prove true. As mentioned above, respondents do not divide the received information into different categories under the influence of discussions.

## 7. Conclusion

We did not observe any differences in watching television news combinations, which is most probably a consequence of the way Czech households are equipped with television sets or more precisely of their distribution within households – this distribution probably leads to joint watching of television news. Similarly, men and women do not differ in the amount of time they spend watching news. But on the other hand, it turned out to be the case that women and men discuss different topics to a different extent, and their share is different in four out of seven categories. Men discuss political topics to a larger extent while women discuss personal topics and social politics more. That implies a clear conclusion that watching the same combination of television news programmes does not lead to discussions over identical topics. Furthermore, these findings confirm Fiske's and Morley's observations about womanly "gossiping" over personal topics and manly "weighty debates" on politics. Since the content of debates cannot be identified on the basis of news content, what remain at play as explanations are the gender different two-step flow of communication and the gender different culturally determined images of what is and what is not "appropriate" to discuss.

While women's intrapersonal agendas contain more personal events, men's contain more political events which are also discussed more. The most important issues are contained in the intrapersonal agenda in a balanced way. Only one divergence is present here: the topic "Social policy, healthcare, education system" is markedly more often present in the case of women.

The findings of individual data analysis confirm the validity of the two-step flow theory. Whether a respondent did or did not discuss a topic remains important also in terms of the amount of time spent watching television news. The first variant of the contextualization concept did not prove true – discussion over a topic does not have a negative influence on the inclusion of other topics in the intrapersonal agenda. We explain the observed gender differences in the inclusion of significant topics in the intrapersonal agenda by the second variant of the contextualization context. In the case of women, higher education and the amount of time spent watching news most likely generate the same criteria for the assessment of significant news as those of men. The presented results can, therefore, be explained by the parallel action of the two-step flow and the contextualization effect. This study, however, does not provide the data needed for the falsification of the effect of contextualization. To decide whether the contextualization holds or does not hold true in this case, more research is necessary and that with a different design than the one used in our study.

A suitable design for such research should contain a qualitative component conceived in line with Alan DeSantis' study *Smoke Screen* (2002). We could also focus on a few families and interview their adult members about what events and issues they consider important and why. The aim of these interviews should be to find out how information is contextualized and to identify criteria that respondents use to determine the importance of events and issues. It would be also suitable to conduct these interviews under participant observation where we would determine what routines of television news consumption predominate in the respective families. That could clarify how television watching routines differ in the case of men and women, and how the division of housework, for example, intervenes in this. We could also complement the research design with interviewing people who individual family members often hold discussions with. If it were in any way possible, we should perform a participant observation of such discussions. An analysis

of these interviews and observations could help us reveal to what extent and in what ways discussions shape criteria for determining the significance of issues and events, and how discussions help to contextualize incoming information to individual members. Such a detailed examination of context on the level of individual households could help us better understand the processes and relations which we observe on the macro level.

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