

Baumgartner, Poli 718, Agenda-Setting, Spring 2014

Questions for Week 12.

Readings: *Making the News*

1. Review the scope of empirical work she did.
2. She models a process of cascades as one that must involve a positive-feedback process, and in Chapter 7 proposes a computer simulation of various processes to test this idea. Discuss that.
3. Discuss the range of tests and the mix of qualitative illustrative material versus quantitative tests used in the book.
4. What is the Alarm/Patrol hybrid model and what is a period of sustained explosiveness?
5. Discuss Figure 4.5 and 4.6. Why does it make sense that this particular agenda should differ from the others listed?
6. This is a study of a single newspaper. Would the project be substantially improved with more newspapers? Does she address this issue sufficiently?
7. Surely, you might argue, the wealth of sources available on the internet would make blogs and other new-media sources immune from the cascades and mimicking behavior that she argues cause the Times front page to have the excessive skew and explosiveness that she documents. Or... maybe it would be even worse. Discuss.
8. One idea she develops is that the longer a given story-line stays “in the limelight” the greater the diversity of attention to the multiple possible distinct story lines within the story will be. That suggests that issue-entrepreneurs need to be careful in putting an issue onto the front pages, unless they are attempting to unsettle the status quo. Using the campus violence or the NCAA academic scandals as an example, discuss the dynamics of “spin-control” when an issue stays in the limelight, from the perspective of the theory laid out in this book.