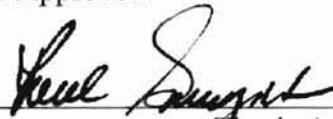A COMPARISON OF SOUTH AFRICAN COVERAGE

OF THE UNITED STATES' 2000 PRESIDENTIAL

CANDIDATES: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

By

Amanda Helen Houk

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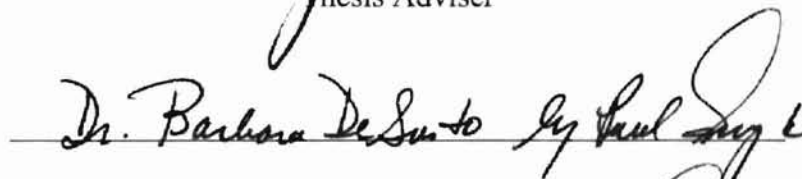
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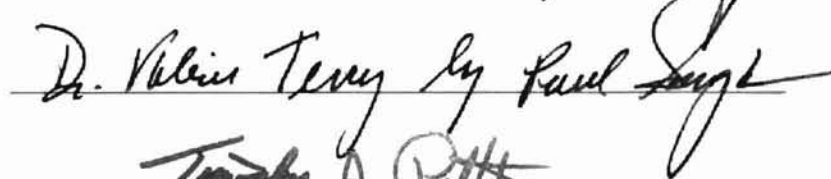
CANDIDATES: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

As media technology improves and becomes more accessible, more people will become exposed to various cultures and societies through different forms of media. The images individuals have of different countries are important in today's global village. Global media have global influences and impact. International media give the global public an opportunity to create opinions, conclusions and even form stereotypes about the rest of the world. Because media have such power over the coverage an event receives, it is important to examine how the event is covered in international news forums. If media around the globe are meant to inform the public and assist in shaping the public's opinion, then the kind of images conveyed to consumers is worthy of study.

Literature indicates that media coverage influences public opinion on a local level and an international level. Media can be used as a tool to focus on issues and events. The mass media have the capacity to communicate powerful images (Milburn, 1991). Media coverage of United States' events will likely create issues and influence the way the rest of the globe sees the United States and its culture.

The capability of any organization to communicate determines its effectiveness as well as its boundaries (Hachten, 1999). Because media are reaching people around the globe, news about United States' events is becoming common for even the most remote areas of the world.

> The increasing availability of such Western publications and electronic media fare are examples of the way all the major institutions of news communications - world news services, satellite services, broadcast systems, great newspapers, and magazines - have become increasingly globalized in recent years (Hachten, 1999, pg. 91).

There is a need to investigate the globalization of the media so that communicators can understand and prepare for media's worldwide audience. News agencies set the agenda for what international stories will be distributed around the world (Paterson, 1996). Paterson concludes that although there is a globalization of media, many news organizations are left with little knowledge about how the global audience receives information. The media's role as an intermediary is evident during an election period, when the media are the primary conduits for information on candidates. New mediums, such as the Internet, and the development of other communication technologies mean that news media can gather information more easily and have more discretion when it comes to deciding how much and what shape campaign coverage should take (Graber, 1996).

But little is known about the relationship between global media and its audience.

> . . .the relationship between text and audience, and the particularities of such global media products, are all but ignored. The culturally specific particularities of the reception of global media products must be properly analyzed on their own terms, and not unquestioningly identified with the nation and/or culture native to their ownership (Graber, 1996, p. 155).

Limited research has been conducted into global communication processes. Haru Yamada, states in his book *Different Games, Different Rules*, that differences in communications between various countries have been ignored.

> But differences in communication have been overlooked, undervalued, and little understood mainly because, unlike a political event or the movement of market shares, communication is difficult to capture. But to ignore differences is to be lulled into the false assumption that we all communicate in the same way, only to discover that what we thought were like understandings of a trade conference, a business venture, or a political election were not so at all. We all have our own stories to tell (pg. 5).

Statement of the Problem

Just because global communication is possible does not mean all messages are going global or being understood. If the rest of the globe has no knowledge of an event, then for millions the event has not happened (Hachten, 1999). There is a need to learn how messages are portrayed by the media in cultures around the planet in order for us to communicate adequately. Moreover, studies examining the relative impact of various media on political knowledge show that local newspaper use can contribute significantly to general public knowledge (Chaffee & Kanihan, 1997). What media provide for a society continues to expand one's environment. People form impressions and evaluations of actors and events in an article through the information provided by intermediaries, such as the media (Menasha, 1998). Therefore, it is important to examine how messages are communicated globally. There is currently no one factor to point to in explaining the dynamism of international news coverage.

> Even while no agreed upon theory has emerged, there is some sort of a consensus about certain patterns of international news coverage and flow. In particular, there is increasing evidence that the accusation of ethnocentrism leveled against the media of the industrial world, especially the Western democracies, is one-sided, and therefore inaccurate and unfair. The most comprehensive and certainly authoritative study . . .found the media everywhere to be monolithic and regional-centric when it comes to international news flow coverage (Koomson, 1991, p. 2).

Despite the acceptance of the media's major role in distributing political information, research remains divided on the central questions about the nature of this information. There is evidence that media content can have a direct influence on public opinion and that newspaper content can shift public images of the presidential candidates. The press performs a persuasive role as well as an information function. Some newspapers may do more then just frame events; the press can also provide political cues

that may drastically influence reader's opinions (Menasha, 1998). The press has too much of an insider's approach to campaign coverage. Reporters have created a type of coverage that has become a kind of dramatic writing style that makes it difficult to focus on enterprising, research-based stories. This theatrical coverage results in an increase in articles focusing on character issues, faux pas and scandals at the expense of issue-based stories (Fallows, 1997). In an effort to better understand how other cultures translate issues about U.S. presidential candidates in their media sources as well as investigate what patterns emerge in the international news flow of South African newspapers, this researcher plans to investigate how two major newspapers in South Africa portrayed the United States' presidential election candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush.

This study is intended to build on existing studies. This study attempts to focus on the coverage of the United States' presidential candidates in two South African newspapers, a country that has had controversial dealings with the United States. The South African newspaper *The Sunday Independent* will be examined due to its large readership. The *International Herald Tribune*'s South African publication will also be analyzed in an attempt to glean information from two sources. The *International Herald Tribune*'s South African publication is included in an effort to portray a balanced study by comparing local South African news coverage with an international South African media outlet.

Research Problem and Limitations

Examining one international perspective of the United States' presidential candidates allows one to identify what perspectives, issues, and opinions arise within another country's media coverage about an aspect of the United States' elections. During the last two decades a large body of political communication research has examined how the news media cover presidential election campaigns (Graber, 1997). In fact, many

authors question which came first: the over emphasis of manufactured news by media covering campaigns; or the campaign creating events so they are covered by the press (Gersh, 1991). Research indicates that the structure and content of news has a considerable effect on the political issues that individuals regard as important and on the complexity with which people reason politically about these issues (Milburn, 1991). The press' role is to educate people by providing them with information to carry out their own lives in society (Altschull, 1984). Therefore, it is vital to analyze what political issues are created and discussed, especially in international media.

Newspaper coverage tends to accelerate attention given to social issues. In a presidential election year, news stories about campaigns represent a substantial portion of the news content provided in media (Graber, 1997). The media coverage creates a level of attention and public concern that would not otherwise occur but "exists after there has been organizational activity surrounding the issue as news" (Donahue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1984, p. 3).

It is for these reasons and others mentioned previously, that this thesis will investigate South African press coverage of the United States presidential elections. Considering the controversial relationship South Africa has had with the United States for years and that it is one that remains tumultuous and unsettled, this researcher concludes that United States' presidential candidates would be a topic covered extensively in the South African press.

This study will examine articles from a four-week time period. Issues from the first week in September, the first week in October and the first two weeks in November will be examined.

Articles from these issues will be studied through a quantitative content analysis to analyze critically and assess the portrayal of the United States' presidential candidates within the news coverage.

The newspapers selected to represent a segment of South African press constitute a purposive sample and were selected because they were the largest in the area and therefore reach a large readership.

This research will be accomplished by using content analysis to examine and determine if the South African newspapers chosen emphasize particular biases surrounding the United States' presidential candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush. The researcher concludes that the findings in this study will emphasize that newspaper articles in the selected newspapers will contain negative and positive biases concerning the United States presidential candidates.

Research Questions:

1. How do articles taken from the *International Herald Tribune*'s South African publication and *The Sunday Independent* portray the United States' presidential candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush during the first week of the three months leading up to the November 7 Election day and the week following the elections?

2. Do articles taken from the South African newspapers concerning events about the U.S. presidential candidates indicate mostly negative or positive biases within news, feature and opinion/editorial articles ?

3. Are there major differences between the two South African newspapers in their coverage of the U.S. presidential candidates?

This thesis seeks to compare how two different South African newspapers covered the United States' presidential candidates and attempts to provide answers to these questions. By answering these research questions this researcher hopes to determine how other media outlets in South Africa are interpreting news from the United States. The roles attached to the media can be likened to "the movements of a global symphony, with their many themes, melodies, and variations" (Altschull, 1984, p.279). Many may

claim that the press in an individual country is separate from other media outlets around the world but it can also be said that media around the globe can be seen as a unit.

> One perhaps surprising truth that emerges from an examination of the news media in all societies and all countries is that their similarities are often as great as their differences. In a quite real sense, we can speak of the news media of the world as a single unit, as a symphony is a single unit but one composed of a variety of themes and melodies. A symphony does not have to be harmonious. In fact, it can be anything but - filled with dissonance and discordant notes. We might be tempted to speak not of a symphony of the press but of a cacophony of the press. Still with all the dissonance and discord there is a fundamental unity. . . . The unifying element is agreement on the role of media as educator (Altschull, 1984, p. 279).

If one role of the media around the world is to be an educator, this research attempts to analyze how two South African newspapers are educating readers about United States' presidential candidates. By answering these research questions, this study hopes to add a few more notes to the press' symphony.

Organization of Study

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter provides a rationale for the study and an overview of the research project. The second chapter is a review of literature related to the research that is designed to provide background information on South Africa's relationship with the United States as well as other aspects of this topic. Chapter three discusses the methodology of this research, provides a definition of terms and discusses research limitations. The fourth chapter outlines the research findings. The fifth chapter summarizes research conclusions and provides possible future research recommendations.

Historical Analysis

Considered the dark and mysterious continent since explorers first sought the drama and glory of its conquest, Africa has always been influenced by outside forces (Rotberg, 1970). Driven by curiosity, the need for adventure, the need to open trade routes and concern for fostering the political economic expansion of Europe, African explorers sometimes died trying to unravel Africa's unknown lands (Rotberg, 1970).

Africa's relationship with the rest of the world began only as a continent to be plundered and used by others for personal gain. In the nineteenth century, whites systematically began to acquire African territories and colonies. Ego-centric and materialistic explorers' deeds and discoveries were also driven by a public needing to be stirred or uplifted by Africa's drama and mystery. The heart of Africa had been brutally slashed by slave raids and, given the lack of any interest in Africans for their sake, it is not surprising that the explorers manifested such disdain for all things African. In fact, David Livingston's exploration of Africa was one of the few meant to serve Africans as well as European needs (Rotberg, 1970). Livingston's impact on the course of history in Africa was immense, perhaps greater than that of any other individual during the nineteenth century (Bennett, 1970).

Africa's first explorers were more concerned with finishing a job then wasting valuable time examining the lives and behavior of people whom they considered heathen. The discovery of Africa played a striking role for the expansion of Europe and immediately altered the evolution of the internal history of most parts of Africa. By the end of sixteenth century Dutch and English seaman had begun trading with Asia through the Cape route. The prime geographic position of South Africa led to permanent refreshment stations at the Cape. Many settlers stayed. The seminomadic Boers made up half of the total white population during the 1700s and settled much of the area. Some say it is possible colonial rule was advantageous for Africa because explorers encouraged

Africa's self-awareness and the coupling of Africa's destiny with the West (Rotberg, 1970).

The relationship between Africa and the United States has always revolved around Africa's financial burden despite its natural resources (Katz, 2000). Dependent upon outside resources for decades, South Africa has borrowed billions of dollars from the United States. "The book value of direct American investment in South Africa in 1978 was $1.9 billion, about 17 percent of all foreign investment there" (Rotberg, p.128, 1980). South Africans acknowledge the importance of foreign investment and foreign lending to the continued strength of their economy. In the 1960s and 1970s, foreign capital and loans to South Africa played a major role in transforming its economy. The availability of foreign funding allowed South Africa to grow economically, to modernize its infrastructure and to enhance its military capabilities. Currently, South Africa is one of the richest countries in Africa yet it is constantly in the throes of reinventing itself out of a society that was based on "division, greed and bigotry." (Goodman, 1999, p.7).

Various cultural differences have also kept South Africa from prospering. According to Lawrence Harrison's study *Culture Matters*, in the journal *The National Interest*, years of war on poverty and authoritarianism in Africa have created more disappointment and frustration. Africa's loss of natural resources and hopelessness that prevailed in the mid-twentieth century persist today, even after capitalism's ideological victory over socialism (Harrison, 2000). Western countries can become involved in a country's domestic politics with disastrous consequences (Herbst, 1998). Years of apartheid have left the builders of this "society-to-be bereft of navigational aids." (Goodman, 1999, p.7).

United States' politics is of great concern to South Africa. Without support from the United States, South Africa would crumble. The relationship between Africa and the United States recently became tense during the second week of September 2000 at the

United Nation's millennium summit, hence its significant relevance to this study.

According to John Donnelly's article in the September 9, 2000 issue of *The Boston Globe*, the millennium summit's overriding theme emerged from "African heads of state who charged that the forces of globalization are enriching the West anew while sentencing them to even more misery" (Donnelly, 2000, p.1). Many African leaders are asking for more support from Western leaders. "Amid a year that has seen intensive international attention toward Africa and its daunting list of troubles, dozens of angry African leaders fired back this week at Western powers, saying concern alone is not enough" (Donnelly, 2000, p. 1).

The article emphasizes that Africans are concerned with American political leaders because United States' political administrations have the ability to take issues concerning African policies to a higher plane when focusing on issues such as debt forgiveness and HIV/AIDS research. During the millennium summit, several African leaders verbally attacked the West about the lack of aid in helping increase the funding and technology needed to globalize Africa and claiming that Western leaders stand by as corporations plunder wealth from Africa (Donnelly, 2000).

In the September 8, 2000 issue of *The Houston Chronicle*, Patty Reinhart notes in the article *U.N. vows greater effort to rein in unruly nations*, that during the millennium summit Clinton encouraged United States' investment in Africa, Internet access in Africa and debt forgiveness. The article points out that Clinton "urged the U.S. congress to approve $435 million this year to fully fund the debt-relief program, and asked other world leaders to join the effort. America is moving inexorably to be a much better partner over the long run for Africa."(Reinhart, 2000, p.1).

Media have been labeled the cause and effect of these foreign policy challenges. In fact, a study focusing on the role of the press in Africa conducted by Peter Kareithi indicates that American intervention in the press of African countries demonstrates the

efforts by Western development agencies to capitalize on the democratic movement in Africa. American intervention also exemplifies an effort to incorporate Africa into the global capitalist economy creating more need to focus on how African newspapers cover international news flow (Kareithi, 1996). The media can create an increasing sense of global community resulting from images and reporting that transcend national borders. Print media can stimulate debate because newspapers are well-suited to convey meaning and context and to explore ranges of options (Rotberg, 1996).

South Africa

Within the last decade, South Africa has transformed itself from an isolated country with a crippled economy into the leader of Southern Africa. With the collapse of apartheid, the 1994 election of Nelson Mandela and a new government, South Africa ended its isolation and dramatically increased its participation in the world economy (Katz, 2000).

South Africa is Southern Africa's economic hub, military superpower and accounts for 80 percent of the total Southern African gross domestic product. Its economic and political reintegration transformed the country into a nonracial democracy that was accompanied by its emergence as the leading member of the Southern African Development Community, SADC. The SADC plans to mimic the European Union by promoting the economic integration and political coordination among South Africa's states (Ramsay, 1997).

South Africa represents 20 percent of the land area, 40 percent of the population and 80 percent of the wealth of the whole subcontinental region. "The challenge ahead for Southern Africa is enormous and fundamental questions have to be tackled before any significant progress can be made." (Griffiths, 1994, p. 201).

Although it has encountered remarkable political progress, South Africa remains a divided country warped by financial and educational crises as well as the devastating rampage of the HIV/AIDS virus. In South Africa, AIDS invaded as apartheid was ending, and while the country was consumed with a major government transition, the virus was not contained. South Africa has the largest number of people living with the disease. Currently the South African government is debating whether or not to declare its AIDS crises a national emergency in order to import cheap, generic AIDS drugs from Western governments (Swarns, 2001).

Now the question is whether or not South Africa can take the next step beyond its current stage of development. "Unfortunately, this seems unlikely in the short term. The state is already overburdened with the problems of uniting South Africa and dealing with escalating crime and AIDS." (Schnieder, 2000, p. 424).

South Africa's politically charged atmosphere makes it a leader among the Southern African region but its economic status and HIV/AIDS epidemic also makes it a country dependent on the United States and Western Europe for pharmaceutical aid, medical research and financial aid. It is for these reasons the South African newspapers focus on the United States' presidential candidates. Political and economic aspects of changing United States' governments have had and will have much influence over the future of South Africa.

> AIDS in Africa has never commanded the full-bore response the
> West has brought to other, sometimes lesser, travails.. . . The
> essential missing ingredient is leadership. Neither the countries of
> the region nor those of the wealthy world have been able or willing
> to provide it. AIDS' grip here is so pervasive and so complex that
> all societies — theirs and ours — must rally round to break it.
> These countries are too poor to doctor themselves. The health-care
> systems required to prescribe and monitor complicated
> triple-cocktail regimens won't exist unless rich countries help foot
> the bill. If there is ever to be a vaccine, the West will have to
> finance its discovery and provide it to the poor. The cure for this

epidemic is not national but international. . .The deep silence that makes African leaders and societies want to deny the problem, the corruption and incompetence that render them helpless is something the West cannot fix. But the fact that they are poor is not. The wealthy world must help with its zeal and its cash if Southern Africa is ever to be freed of the AIDS plague (McGeary, 2000, p. 37).

Clinton issued an Executive Order promising that the United States would not challenge laws in African countries that are seeking to improve access to AIDS drugs. But "now, all eyes are on the Bush Administration. Will it stick with Clinton's order to stop blocking Africa's efforts to get cheaper drugs? Or will it give way if Republicans and drug companies apply pressure to rescind the order?" (Branegan, Dowell, Park, McGeary, 2000, p. 54).

The relationship between the United States and South Africa is constantly evolving. The United States aids the Mandela government when dealing with such issues as promoting democracy, human rights, debt-forgiveness, the non-violent resolution of conflicts, and the scaling down of military weapons. Clinton's pledge to the Mandela government of $600 million over three years makes the United States the largest bilateral donor to the reconstruction and development program of South Africa. American companies operating in South Africa are among leading investors. The United States' role directly advances South Africa's vital interests (Ramsay, 1997). The issues arising within this relationship clearly illustrate that South African press would cover election news from the United States. It is because of this dependence that South African newspapers focus on the United States presidential candidates.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

One of the most authoritative studies conducted by the International Association for Mass Communication Research determined specific aspects of international reporting which includes the assumption that politics is predominant in international news reporting across all media systems of the world. The study also concluded that North America and Western Europe are the major news centers of the world and that because of this dominance "much of the developing world is invisible in global news focus." (Sreberny-Mohammadi, Nordenstreng, Stevenson & Ugboajah, 1985, p. 43).

Developing nations view the press as a tool to maintain the social order as well as a tool to change social order when necessary. The press in developing countries is open about its role as an instrument of education and is dedicated to change (Altschull, 1984). The press' main aim is to serve the public by informing readers and providing them with the tools needed to enable them to make judgments on the issues at hand (Rivers and Mathews, 1988).

In an effort to examine how the rest of world views news from the United States. this study examines whether or not the South African coverage of the United States' presidential candidates contains bias within its reporting.

For the purpose of this study the term bias will be defined by the categories in John C. Merrill's 1965 study *How Time Stereotyped Four Presidents*, published in *Journalism Quarterly*. These categories of bias include: attribution bias, adverbial bias, adjective bias, contextual bias and outright opinion bias.

Whether or not the media's coverage of presidential elections is biased or not has consumed the attention of mass communication scholars for decades.

> Good faith with the reader is the foundation of good journalism. Every effort must be made to assure that the news content is accurate, free from bias and in context, and that all sides are presented fairly.

> Editorials, analytical articles and commentary should be held to the same standards of accuracy with respect to facts as news reports (Rivers and Mathews, 1988, p. 235-6).

Covering a presidential election can present one of the greatest challenges the news media can endure. Presidential campaign coverage is typically under a microscope because it has such a broad range (Mohl, 2000). A newspaper covers many aspects of an election process. This study will narrow down the campaign coverage by focusing solely on how two South African newspapers portrayed the United States' presidential candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush.

Members of the public note bias within presidential election reporting. A study in *Editor & Publisher* reported a poll showing that many Americans believe media coverage of this year's presidential election is biased. In the survey of about 2000 adults, the magazine found that 44 percent of newspaper readers perceived bias in campaign coverage (Campbell, 2000). The press is a political institution and no journalist is unbiased (Altschull, 1984). In a presidential election year, news stories focusing on campaigns represent a substantial portion of the news content provided in media (Graber, 1997). But the media have strayed from an informative role into a one filled mostly with rumor and opinion and that is leading to a sense of mistrust from the public (Padgett, 1998).

Every four years as the United States elects a president, criticism of newspaper conduct increases greatly. Complaints of bias have been increasing steadily since Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1932 campaign and reached a high during Harry Truman's unexpected victory over Dewy (Blumberg, 1954). "Political information is a valuable commodity in a democracy, and the news media are central agents in providing information about the candidates and issues of the campaign." (The local contours, 1999, p. 701).

During the last twenty years, a large body of political communication research has examined how the news media cover presidential election campaigns as well as how local

newspapers influence a reader's political viewpoint. The press tends to reflect the local climate. In fact, the coverage of world events usually is portrayed consistently with the images and interpretations of the host country's national interests and political and cultural perspectives (Rachlin, 1988).

National coverage of United States' presidential campaigns is considered by some to be theatrical and full of controversial moments making it almost "too fun to be real." (Riley, 2000, p. 41). Local coverage of campaigns focuses more on issues that effect individual communities and report less rumor and gossip. Local newspapers are able to include significant analysis rather than entertaining coverage of scandals and hearsay (Riley, 2000). Still others claim national newspapers have the ability to provide better opinion (Local newspaper week, 2000).

Several similarities have been discovered when studying political coverage across elections and across media sources including the aspect that the amount of attention paid to individual candidates varies significantly depending on a candidate's status (Graber, 1997). The press does not present clear and singular messages about presidential elections but, rather, multiple messages about the candidates and the campaign. Individual newspapers often present conflicting messages regarding the candidates (Menasha, 1998). "There is no way in which the press can be above politics"(Altschull, 1984, p. 283).

Jack Nelson, chief of the *Los Angeles Times* Washington Bureau has been quoted stating, "When you see unbalanced reporting, it's not the ideology of the reporter, it's the reporter trying to spice up the story. Reporters should be objective and they should realize that regardless of whether they support the candidate or not" (Wood, 1997).

A December 1998 study by the American Society of Newspaper Editors claims bias is eating away at the credibility of newspapers. The survey, which included telephone interviews of 3,000 adults as well as 16 follow-up focus groups, found that the public believes that the bias of journalists influence what stories are covered and how they are

reported (Noack, 1998). According to an October 2000 study, conducted by Project for Excellence in Journalism, newspaper stories in September and October that concentrated on Democrat Al Gore were negative 56 percent of the time, as were 51 percent of newspaper stories about Republican George W. Bush (Shields, 2000). During a November 2000 study of newspaper editors and publishers, a survey conducted by *Editor and Publisher* and its polling partner, TechnoMetrica Market Intelligence, found that the newspapers endorsed Bush over Gore by a better than 2-1 margin and when asked who they would vote for, newspapers publishers named Bush by a 3-1 ratio. The survey also stated that 25 percent of those polled felt that they provided biased coverage of the presidential race (Newspaper editors and publishers, 2000).

When seeking objectivity, sociologist Gaye Tuchman claimed there were four strategies. A journalist must provide conflicting possibilities, supporting evidence, direct quotes to support evidence and organize information in a fitting order, with facts isolated from opinions (Tuchman, 1972). If a journalist is to be truly objective he or she should treat everyone the same, but evidence suggests that journalists' objectivity varies from one topic to another (Fedler, Doughty, Davis and Rowley, 1994).

> To take sides for a certain political point of view is to be clearly
> political. To take no side is also to be political, for if one does not
> oppose the status quo, one is giving it his tacit support. There can be
> no impartiality about what exists. Either you are for it and are a
> political supporter, or you are against it and a political antagonist. And
> to take no position is also to support that which exits (Altschull, 1984,
> p. 284).

Because of the public's reliance on the media as an information source, it is important to examine the content of the press's coverage of election campaigns. When analyzing this content, one can conclude what initial characteristics exist (Menasha, 1998). Using a local South African newspaper and comparing it with an international newspaper's South African publication, this study will examine coverage of the United

States' presidential candidates during three weeks of the three months leading up to the presidential election and the week following the election. To determine what percentage of coverage contained positive or negative bias toward the United States' presidential candidates, the South African newspaper *The Sunday Independent*, as well as coverage in the *International Herald Tribune's* South African publication will be examined.

For the purposes of this study the term bias is defined by John Merrill's 1965 study of bias found in *Time* magazine. Merrill found that *Time* editorialized in its regular news columns "to a great extent, and that it used a whole series of tricks to bias the stories and to lead the reader's thinking" (Merrill, 1965, p.569). When investigating the techniques *Time* used to create stereotypes of three United States presidents Merrill created six categories of bias. These include: attribution bias, adverbial bias, adjective bias, outright opinion bias, contextual bias and photographic bias. Within these biases, the use of each was determined as favorable or unfavorable bias. Merrill regularly refers to author S.I. Hayakawa's definitions when discussing judgments or bias found in an article.

Hayakawa's book *Language in Thought and Action* delves into how presenting judgments and bias in language can effect a reader. Hayakawa claims that when writing an article, despite efforts to be free of judgments, some will sneak into the text. Hayakawa defines judgments as "expressions of the speaker's approval or disapproval of the occurrences, persons or objects he is describing" (Hayakawa, 1990, p. 25).

Replicating Merrill's 1965 study, Fred Fedler, Mike Meeske and Joe Hall conducted a 1979 study, *Time Magazine Revisited: Presidential Stereotypes Persist* published in *Journalism Quarterly*. Their study found that *Time* continued to "weave facts into semi-fictional language patterns designed to lead the reader's thinking" (Fedler, Meeske and Hall, 1979, 359). Using Merrill's established six categories of bias, Fedler,

Meeske and Hall agreed that "any expression of opinion or variance from neutrality" defined bias (Fedler, Meeske and Hall, 1979, p. 354).

When judgments or sides are taken on an issue within an article, the process of communication is at a standstill, but Hayakawa warns that it is impossible to accomplish complete impartiality when using everyday language. But by analyzing biases found within reporting, the press may achieve an awareness of the use of slanted wording or judgmental phrases and be better able to reach a balance of implied favorable or unfavorable judgments (Hayakawa, 1990). "One-sided or biased slanting, not uncommon in private gossip and backbiting and all too common in the interpretive reporting of newspapers and magazines, can be described as a technique of lying without actually telling any lies" (Hayakawa, 1990, p. 30).

Determining whether or not an article is biased can also be difficult because an individual may interpret bias when an article does not report a story in a way he or she prefers the topic to be discussed.

> When a news account tells a story in a way we dislike, leaving out facts we think important and playing up others in a way we think unfair, we are tempted to say, "Look how unfairly they've slanted the story!" Such a statement of course, is an inference about the story's reporters and editors. We are assuming that what seems important or unimportant to us is equally weighty or trivial to them, and on the basis of that assumption we infer that the writers and editors "deliberately" gave the story a misleading emphasis (Hayakawa, 1990, p. 30).

Hayakawa further commented:

> Can the reader, as an outsider, determine whether a story assumes a given form because the editors "deliberately slanted it that way" or because that was the way the events appeared to them? The point is that, by the process of selection and abstraction imposed on us by our own interests and background, experience comes to all of us - including editors - already "slanted." . . . The individual with genuine skill in writing - and in thinking - can with imagination and insight

look at the same subject from many points of view (Hayakawa, 1990, p. 31).

Research has been conducted to examine how the United States' media cover African issues but little has been done to examine how African media cover United States' events. A 1992 report by the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center stated that coverage of Africa is sparse with a tendency toward negative coverage which leads to the conclusion that there is much left to be desired when trying to understand Africa (Gersh, 1992). By exploring African newspaper coverage of United States news events, what some literature has labeled the "dismal image" of Africa in the United Sates will be analyzed to help fill what some have deemed incomplete. Koryoe Anim-Wright's dissertation, *The Image of Africa in the United States: The Media, Culture and the Concept of Development*, focuses on the need to explore messages found within international media and Africa's relationship with the United States.

> The image of Africa in the United States is incomplete and inaccurate. Africa has long been cloaked in a robe of misconceptions; misconceptions which were introduced during the colonial eras and which have stayed as the parameters and framework for the definition of the African and things African in the minds of many Americans (Anim-Wright, 1996, p.2).

Theoretical Framework

The following is an examination of three major mass communication theories that are used to aid in interpreting information and findings from this research. An outline of the social responsibility theory will be applied in an effort to determine is the newspapers used in this research are acting in a socially responsible manner. An outline of the agenda-setting theory and the knowledge gap theory will be also used to aid this research.

Social Responsibility Theory

The question arises: should newspapers be held accountable for their political coverage? Several journalism codes of ethics address such issues as the social responsibility functions of the press. Within this research the question is asked: Did the South African newspapers selected for this study act in a socially responsible manner when informing readers about the United States' presidential election candidates?

The social responsibility theory of the press is a basis for a system of ethics in journalism. The concepts published in 1947 in the Hutchins Commission report, were part of the first significant effort made to consider shaping the ideas into the social responsibility theory (Merrill, 1997).

The social responsibility theory contains five basic requirements for the press if it is to be responsible to society:

1. The media should provide a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning.
2. The media should serve as a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism.
3. The media should protect a representative picture of the constituent groups in the society
4. The media should present and clarify the goals and values of the society.
5. The media should provide full access to the day's intelligence (Merrill, 1997, p. 17).

The social responsibility theory's main premise is that with the privilege of freedom comes obligations and therefore the press has an obligation to be responsible to the public for executing various functions within mass communications in society. Therefore the press should incorporate its responsibilities into its policies (Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, 1984).

The Hutchins Commission went beyond libertarian thought and emphasized what the press was obligated to do (Merrill, 1997). The social responsibility theory is positive and has an undeniable attraction for many journalists (Knowlton, 1995). The social responsibility theory journalist must realize that his or her duty is to perform a public service.

Criticism of the social responsibility theory is often directed toward the force needed to execute its five principles. In order to carry out the social responsibility theory's main tenants, a group, such as government, must be able to define what is socially responsible. The theory's need for governmental supervision could be seen as having a negative effect on the press by limiting expression to one voice being carried out by a single powerful organization (Merrill, 1997).But no matter how it is carried out, the social responsibility theory "recognizes that when there is only one game left in town, it must be an honest one" (Hulteng, 1985, p. 11).

The Agenda Setting Theory

International perspectives of a United States' presidential election relate to the agenda-setting theory because of the theory's relationship with the public's political opinion.

> A political campaign is a key place to study mass communication influence because media behavior is intimately connected with how our political environment is perceived, how our agenda of public issues is shaped, and how we cast our votes. In other words, the political agenda of the mass media is highly related to the shape of political power. Every society must have processes by which the myriad problems, concerns, and questions of its many citizens are translated into succinct issues, are operationalized in government action of some sort, and perhaps finally are perpetuated as cultural values (McCombs & Shaw, 1977, p. 150).

In the Web site *Agenda Setting Application*, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw's theory of agenda-setting centers on the media's telling the public not specifically what to think, but what to think about. The media are the gate keepers of hot topics (Snyder, 2000). McCombs and Shaw's theory focuses on how leaders in the media industry distribute information to the public and can influence a society's mentality and organize its opinions, ideas, etc.

Because agenda setting can have such an influence on the public, it is important to use this theory when identifying what perspectives of an American news event international newspapers are portraying. The nature of global media can bring societies together, but can also be manipulated to capture the world's attention (Hachten, 1999). A newspaper's editorial board decides what issues the newspapers will cover, therefore its readers are provided with what issues the board finds newsworthy.

> Agenda-setting occurs because the press must be selective in reporting the news. The news outlets, as gatekeepers of information, make choices about what to report and how to report it. Therefore, what the public knows about the state of affairs at any given time is largely a product of media gate-keeping (Littlejohn, 1983, p. 283).

The decision to publish an article or not may also be influenced by the owners of the publication. Media gate keepers can determine which items of information hold significance for society. Gate keepers not only determine what information is presented but how it is presented as well. Audiences not only learn about public issues and other matters from the media, they also learn the degree of importance to attach to an issue from the emphasis media places on it.

> In all ideologies of the press, the decisions about what constitutes news are made by the journalists themselves. We have seen, however, that journalists are subject to manipulation by the wielders of power about what constitutes news. In the symbiotic relationship between

journalists and the sources of their news, the odd one out is the reading and viewing public (Altschull, 1984, p 293-294).

What finally reaches the public is the result of decisions made by political leaders, reporters, and editors (McCombs & Shaw, 1979). The theory is particularly related to the political arena. Studies dealing with the agenda-setting theory have also discovered that readers respond more directly to the newspaper's news agenda than television agendas (McCombs & Shaw, 1979). Therefore it seems logical to examine coverage of a political event in an international newspaper.

South African newspapers' editorial boards provide their readership with what they deemed newsworthy when choosing what United States' event to cover. "Images and themes in the mass media activate political schemas and influence individuals' thinking and opinions" (Milburn, 1991, p. 131). Therefore any stereotypes, opinions. ideas, or perspectives an article provides will be passed on to its readers.

There are several criticisms of the agenda-setting theory. One argument suggests that if the media are just reporting what happens in the world, then it is logical that the public finds the same issues important. It is real-world events that are setting the public agenda. The media may be covering what the public feels is important (Milburn, 1991). The emphasis given to issues in the media is a reflection, not a cause of audience agendas (Littlejohn, 1983).

The agenda-setting model assumes that the media's agenda influences everyone. It may be that different members of a newspaper's audience are affected differently than television audiences (Milburn, 1991). Another weakness found in agenda-setting literature is that research using more sophisticated methodologies is needed to establish clearly the agenda-setting model for newspapers and television audiences. Studies are also lacking in how the media products themselves are put together (McCombs & Shaw, 1979). When conducting research on the agenda-setting theory it can be difficult

to conduct short-term studies. Media agenda-setting is a long-range process, involving several weeks or even months (McCombs & Shaw, 1977).

Research using the agenda-setting theory has been constant since its start 25 years ago. The theory's model is continuously being expanded and embraces numerous methodologies (Trumbo, 1995).

Agenda-setting research typically combines methodological approaches such as content analysis and field survey (McCombs & Shaw, 1977). The theory continues to evolve and grow in complexity and develop into new agenda-setting functions such as inter-media agenda-setting (Trumbo, 1995). The theory's focus on "cognitive effects contributes a badly needed dimension of research effects" (Littlejohn, 1983, p. 284). The theory is also very applicable to a variety of media topics. Dividing an issue into phases exemplifies how the agenda-setting process can be applied to the life-cycle of an issue (Trumbo. 1995).

Agenda-setting could possibly aide the public in educating it about important issues and bringing needed attention to significant worldwide events. The study of agenda-setting may be vital to any attempts made to achieve a better interchange of ideas (McCombs & Shaw, 1977).

The Knowledge Gap Theory

The knowledge gap theory identifies the way in which information reaches different segments of the population. One aspect of the theory claims that those with higher levels of education and/or income are exposed to more information than those with little education and/or income. In the United States, news sources are available in numerous schools, companies and libraries. Those who have access to news sources may be the only ones receiving information about global news. Therefore, the average South African may not receive information about the United States' presidential

elections. Those South Africans with higher education and higher incomes may be the only group of people being exposed to international news.

The mass media today are complex and specialized and can provide information about numerous topics so that knowledge about events or issues can be acquired (McCombs, 1991). Because international news is rarely a main focus within a newspaper, a gap is being created between those who seek out international news and those who are content with what news is provided for them. The knowledge gap illustrates the fact that some people are more informed than others. Some people gain information at a faster rate than others and some expose themselves to media more then others.

The public is actually made up of "distinct groups with different knowledge levels and different degrees of political participation" (McCombs, 1991, p. 67). Large amounts of the knowledge generation and distribution, in the United States and in other parts of the globe, are oriented toward people with higher education. Even the newspaper requires basic literacy, although, the ability to read does not provide the ability to interpret the information provided (Donahue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1980).

Education, combined with media use, also plays a part in the capacity to have opinions (McCombs, 1991). Interest in world events is generally a concern of the more highly educated. (Donahue, Tichenor, & Olien,1980).

> Differential patterns of distribution and acquisition of knowledge edge have major consequences for social control and social satisfaction. They tend to maintain existing elites of specialized groups within the social structure. Even if members of lower status positions see the information as relevant, they are less able to interpret it or apply it in furtherance of their own interests (Donahue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1980, p. 178).

The knowledge gap also widens when an organization lacks the ability to communicate on a global level. If an organization does not have the ability, access, or

funds to communicate its message on a global level, then the knowledge gap widens. Therefore many groups may create large demonstrations and events that the news media may ultimately cover and translate as an issue (McCombs & Shaw, 1977).

A variety of variables influence this theory. The media is not the only influence widening or reducing the gap. Income, education and environment also influence the gap. The theory also depends on how much publicity an event receives and the length of time the event is covered.

The knowledge gap theory is criticized for being focused on the traditional "source-sending-messages-to-receiver paradigm" of communication (Severin & Tankard, 1997, p. 290). This aspect of the theory hides certain assumptions and emphasizes attaining source goals and trying to manipulate receivers leading to a blame-the-victim syndrome (Severin & Tankard, 1997).

It is not necessarily the media's influence that causes the widening of the knowledge gap. It is an audience member's motivation to seek out information that is the key variable that would lead to narrowing the information gap (Severin & Tankard, 1997). The knowledge gap divides the public into levels that split people into categories such as attentive and inattentive audience categories making it clear that some actively seek out information while others do not.

CHAPTER III

Methodology and Research Design

This research is a content analysis of the biases found in the South African newspaper *The Sunday Independent's* coverage of the United States' presidential election candidates in comparison with biases found in the *International Herald Tribune's* coverage. This thesis hopes to answer the following questions:

1. How do articles taken from the *International Herald Tribune*'s South African publication and *The Sunday Independent* portray the United States' presidential candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush during the first week of the three months leading up to the November 7 Election day and the week following the elections?

2. Do articles taken from the South African newspapers concerning events about the U.S. presidential candidates indicate mostly negative or positive biases within news, feature and opinion/editorial articles ?

3. Are there major differences between the two South African newspapers in their coverage of the U.S. presidential candidates?

There are, however, some important differences between the two publications which need to be pointed out since they will affect the overall numbers and comparisons in this research. Because *The Sunday Independent* is a weekly publication printed on Sunday, only four editions were published during the four-week time period.

The Sunday Independent was listed on the American Journalism Review Web site, http://ajr.newslink.org/news.html, as one of the largest in South Africa. It is a widely-known newspaper and is considered by journalists to be a newspaper of quality. It received CNN's African Journalism Award in 1998 and was winner of the South African Courageous Journalism Award in 1998. It is also recommended by the Independent Online Web site, the largest media information site in South Africa that constantly

evaluates newspapers to ensure that they are strategically positioned to serve the needs of their readers (http://www.iol.co.za/html/frame_tribune.php, 2001).

The *International Herald Tribune* is a daily publication and represents a homogenized Western Europe version of the United States presidential candidates. The *International Herald Tribune*, which is owned by The Washington Post Co. and The New York Times Co., was chosen because the Global Media Awards named it the best international daily newspaper for providing readers with information from around the world (Global media awards, 1989).

Eighteen editions of the *International Herald Tribune* were published during the four-week time frame. Although these numbers are not equal, it is important to note that *The Sunday Independent* is a much larger publication then the *International Herald Tribune* in length and actual size. *The International Herald Tribune* averages 25 pages an issue. *The Sunday Independent* averages 30 pages an issue. The newspapers also have different formats. *The Sunday Independent* uses seven columns and the *International Herald Tribune* uses six columns. Headlines, pictures and boxes were not included when measuring coverage because they varied dramatically.

This study will be conducting quantitative research with content analysis. Quantitative analysis allows the use of mathematical analysis and requires that variables be measured. Quantitative research is concerned with how often a variable is present uses numbers to interpret this data. Generally it allows better precision when translating results (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000). Content analysis was chosen as the most appropriate research tool for determining the differences in the United States' presidential coverage within the two newspapers.

> "Content analysis aims at a classification of content in more precise, numerical terms than is provided by the impressionistic. It provides a precise means of describing the contents of any sort of communications -- newspapers, radio programs, films, everyday conversations, verbalized free associations, etc. The operations of

content analysis consist of classifying the signs occurring in a communication into a set of appropriate categories. The results state the frequency of occurrence of signs for each category in the classification scheme. (Lasswell, 1949, p. 55)

Words and sentences are important human tools. What people say and write can be a source of evidence about individual and social processes. Content analysis is like a microscope that allows communication messages to come into focus (McMillan, 2000). Content analysis looks at the characteristics of communication messages. It is a research methodology that utilizes a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text (Rubin, Rubin and Piele, 1996). Content analysis is an "efficient way to investigate the content of media" (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000, p.134).

Content analysis was also chosen for this research because it is an unobtrusive technique that is context sensitive and can cope with large volumes of text. Text can be an excellent vehicle for examining long term changes in attitudes, concerns, and styles.

The four-week time period for this study was September 1 through November 13, 2000. This time frame was chosen because it correlates with the last weeks of the United States' presidential election campaigns and includes one week following the elections. This week was included because of the controversial circumstances surrounding the election results. The unit of analysis was each individual newspaper article concerning the United States' presidential candidates including editorials and columns, and excluding photographs, cartoons, graphics, etc.. Editorials and columns were included because a paper's opinion page can act as a complimentary source of information to the news sections. As part of a larger project, the coding procedure also identified and recorded the placement of each article. The data collection plan incorporated a code sheet that was used for making various tabulations of the content found during coding procedures. (see Appendix A)

To measure the article's biases, coders underlined phrases in the article that contained one or more of the five biases. Using the marked phrases, as well as an

assessment of the overall tone of the article when determining contextual bias, coders made a judgment as to whether or not to categorize the article as: positive, neutral or negative toward either Al Gore or George W. Bush.

The coding scheme and categories used for this research were derived from journalism Professor Merrill's 1965 study that found that *Time* incorporated several types of bias in its reporting to stereotype Presidents Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy. Also, length of an article was not noted when coding the articles. Merrill points out that there is no need to compare space treatment given to each article since "space in itself has no necessary bearing on subjectivity or bias" (Merrill, 1965, p. 364)

It is important to note the differences between Merrill's study and this thesis. Notable differences include the fact that Merrill analyzed articles found in *Time* magazine, whereas this study is examining bias found within newspaper coverage. Also Merrill examined only *Time* magazine's coverage and this study focuses on comparing two international publications. Merrill categorized six types of bias found within *Time*'s coverage with a panel of coders. This thesis used only two coders. Merrill chose ten consecutive issues of *Time* from each of the three presidential administrations.

When evaluating these categories, instances of bias were noted as either positive or negative. Only five of Merrill's categories are used for this study. Photograph bias was not included in this thesis in an effort to focus mainly on language used in an article.

The five biases used are:

Attribution Bias

This category evaluates and determines if bias is used when attributing a quote. This bias comes from the newspaper's means of attributing information to a source. This category focuses on the word "said." Merrill states that the word "said" is neutral because it evokes no emotion and is not opinionated. However, an attribution such as "yelled"

contains a judgmental stimulus and provides a negative affect. An attribution verb such as "smiled" provides a positive affect and is counted as a favorable term (Merrill, 1965, p. 554).

Adjective Bias

This category attempts to create an impression of the person described in the article by using adjectives, deemed favorable or unfavorable, in association with the person. "An example of favorable bias in adjective use: 'serene state of mind.' An example of unfavorable bias in adjective use: 'flat, monotonous voice.'" (Merrill, 1965, p. 554). These kinds of subjective adjectives tend to provide readers with a positive or negative slant.

Adverbial Bias

This kind of bias is based on qualifiers or magnifiers -- adverbs, which provide the reader with a favorable or unfavorable impression. This bias reinforces another bias by telling how or why a person said or did something. An example of adverbial bias would be: "He bellowed nastily."

Contextual Bias

This bias focuses on sentences, paragraphs or larger units of meaning. The purpose of using this bias is to provide the reader with an overall favorable or unfavorable light with the overall meaning of the article. Merrill states that this bias cannot be noted in organized lists and must be determined by a panel. Contextual bias will only be determined when there is agreement among the coders.

Outright Opinion

This bias is the visible type. Generally, readers do not expect a journalist's opinions within a publication except in columns or editorials. Merrill warned that the "expression of opinion is sometimes disguised." (Merrill, 1965, p. 565). Merrill claimed that *Time* does this by using other sources such as the public to say something about the president. Example: "Few at home in the United State's seemed to begrudge the president his trip, however inauspicious the timing." (Merrill, 1965, p. 565). This bias is what Merrill called "the most blatant and obvious type of bias or subjectivity in newswriting" and he states that it might be labeled "presenting a judgment." (Merrill, 1965, p. 565).

Merrill's six bias techniques were replicated in a 1979 study by Fedler, Meeske and Hall in 1979. The authors used Merrill's six categories and defined bias as "any expression of opinion or variance from neutrality" (Fedler, Meeske and Hall. 1979, p. 354). This study is a modification of Merrill's study and applies Merrill's 1965 biases to 2000 election candidate coverage.

It is important to note that this research applies western concepts of neutral reporting to these two South African publications. Western reporting standards can be defined through previous court decisions. Neutral reporting has been adopted as a defense standard by some federal courts. The U.S. Circuit Court "accepted neutral reportage as a conditional defense" in 1977 meaning it is "defensible to report charges made by one responsible person or organization about another when both parties are involved in a public controversy" (Itule and Anderson, 1997, pg. 420).

During a 1989 California state court decision, "the concept of neutral reporting privilege was given a significant boost" (Mencher. 1997, p. 591). The appellate court ruled that the combination of state law and the First Amendment gives a newspaper the privilege to provide fair reporting without being forced to resolve conflicts within the event. But it should also be noted that fairness requires a balanced account. A journalist

sees can see the world through glasses tinted by others and should be aware of previous influences (Mencher, 1997). In fact *The Washington Post* outlines several guidelines for determining fairness within an articles. One guidelines states, "No story is fair if reporters hide their biases or emotions behind such subtly pejorative words as 'refused,' 'despite,' 'admit,' and 'massive.' So fairness requires straightforwardness ahead of flashiness" (Mencher, 1997, pg. 45).

Western reporting standards may not be similar to South African standards. However, Hayakawa claims there is a basic category in all language labeled "report writing" and he compares it to "judgment writing." (Hayakawa, 1990, p. 220). He applies report writing to all language and states that it is instrumental in getting a message across. Since judgments affect feelings and can create false concepts, all report language should be free from biases (Hayakawa, 1990).

> Words are powerful weapons. They define cultures. create second-class citizens and reveal stereotypical thinking. They also change the way people think about and treat others. Writers have the freedom to choose precisely the right word. That freedom can be both exhilarating and dangerous (Brooks, Kennedy, Moen & Ranly, 1999, pg. 154).

Intercoder Reliability

Two people coded the same 93 articles to achieve intercoder reliability. Coders were trained to use the coding device so that they would become familiar with the process prior to the study. Part of this brief training included an opportunity for coders to discuss content indicators of each variable and identify numerous examples. For the purpose of determining coder's reliability in counting and categorizing bias, an intercoder reliability test was conducted between the two coders. 1209 judgments were made and there were 25 disagreements that were resolved. The Holsti reliability formula is used for

determining the intercoder reliability in percentage of agreement (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000). The formula is as follows:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

Using this formula, a 0.979 percentage of intercoder reliability was calculated.

Newspaper Profiles

The Sunday Independent

The Sunday Independent, edited by John Battersby, calls itself a creation of the new South Africa and, according to its Web site, claims to be "proud, serving the leaders and opinion-makers who are forging an inclusive democratic society" (http://www.iol.co.za/html/frame_news.php, 2000). This weekly paper includes news, opinion, business, marketing and sports. Founded in 1995, its circulation has risen from 30,000 to over 42,000 in the first half of 1999. The publication's Web site claims it has become identified as the leader of cutting-edge debates, analysis and in-depth international coverage. The paper's mission is to present, explain and analyze the undercurrents in South Africa's dynamic society as it moves through a transition from apartheid to democracy, a move that is being closely watched by the world (www.iol.co.za/html/frame_news.php, 2000).

International Herald Tribune

The *International Herald Tribune* was chosen for this study because of its wide spectrum of political opinion and organizational orientation with *The New York Times.* It is published with *The New York Times.* The *International Herald Tribune* provides

different publications for different countries around the world by working with established newspaper publishers, the *International Herald Tribune* has set up production companies to publish local sections that include domestic content. This local production of pan-regional editions is the *International Herald Tribune*'s publishing partnership that allows the paper to provide concise, comprehensive coverage of that country's news and events as well as the opportunity to address local issues.

The issues that are specifically published for South Africa were used for this study. When incorporating a large local South African newspaper and an international but locally focused newspaper it can be seen that the combination provides the similarities and differences needed for this study. Only issues published for the South African region will be used. The *International Herald Tribune*'s slogan claims it is the world's daily newspaper (www.iht.com/about.html, 2001). It is printed in twenty locations worldwide and is the chief international publication for opinion leaders and decision makers. Its Web site claims it is the most complete, credible and concise daily newspaper in the world (www.iht.com/about.html, 2001).

The Web site goes to say that leaders in business and government rely on the *International Herald Tribune* to tell them "how important events around the world are and how it affects their work, their political choices, their investments and their families" (www.iht.com/about.html, 2001).

> The *International Herald Tribune* draws on the most powerful and discerning international news gathering network of any newspaper in the world. It combines the extensive resources of its own correspondents with those of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Its experienced editors decipher critical early warning signals from sources around the world to give readers a balanced, practical assessment of emerging trends. The *International Herald Tribune* understands that its readers are subject to massive information overload. It provides carefully

selected news coverage, and combines it with the context and
perspective that give meaning to raw news. The opinion pages
provide an international forum for provocative debate on the issues
that are engaging business and government leaders. The IHT is
trusted by its readers because it is independent of any political or
commercial interest (www.iht.com/about.html, 2001).

Limitations

It should not be assumed that coverage by these two newspapers is typical of all
newspapers, or that coverage by these newspapers of the United States' presidential
candidates is typical of their coverage of other events. There are some important
differences between these two newspapers which need to be pointed out that will affect
the overall numbers and comparisons in this research. Although these newspapers are
being used for this particular study, they are not a representation of all newspaper
coverage within South Africa. When making conclusions from this research one should
also note that *The Sunday Independent* was a weekly publication and therefore had fewer
articles when comparing it to the *International Herald Tribune 's* coverage. It should also
be noted that content analysis of media content can never be a basis for making general
statements about the effects of content on the public.

CHAPTER IV

Content Analysis Findings

This research consists of a content analysis of articles concerning the United States' presidential candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush from *The Sunday Independent* and the *International Herald Tribune*. The purpose of this thesis was to measure and examine the five types of biases, defined by Merrill's study of *Time*, within *The Sunday Independent* and the *International Herald Tribune*'s coverage. Measuring bias is another way to check the accuracy and objectivity of newspaper content. The research approach consisted of a content analysis of each article that focused on the candidates from the four-week time period from September 1 through November 13, 2000. Issues from the publications were taken from the first week in September, the first week in October and the first two weeks in November. This time frame was chosen because it correlates with the last weeks of the United States' presidential election campaign.

Extent of coverage

A total of 93 articles were reviewed. Eleven articles were found in *The Sunday Independent* and 82 were found in the *International Herald Tribune*. Table 1 shows that 41 articles were categorized as news. 11 were feature. 34 were opinion/editorial and seven were categorized as other which generally meant it was a brief. An article was determined a brief if it was only one paragraph of type. More coverage of the candidates was found within news articles.

TABLE I

TYPE OF ARTICLES

Type of Article	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
News	41	44.1	44.1	44.1
Feature	11	11.8	11.8	55.9
Op./Ed.	34	36.6	36.6	92.5
Brief	7	7.5	7.5	100.0

During the first week of September, 14 articles were included in the newspapers. Twenty-one articles were included in the first week of October and 32 were found in the first week of November. There were 26 articles found during the second week of November. As might be expected, the number of articles increased as the election grew closer. Although there were controversial circumstances surrounding the election, there was a drop in coverage during the second week of November.

TABLE II

NUMBER OF ARTICLES FOUND EACH WEEK

Date of Publication	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
September	14	15.1	15.1	15.1
October	21	22.6	22.6	37.6
November 1	32	34.4	34.4	72.0
November 2	26	28.0	28.0	100.0

Analysis of Bias

Attribution Bias

The first two research questions dealt with how the two newspapers portray the United States' presidential candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush during the specified time frame. To answer this question, this research coded articles from the newspapers in

search for Merrill's five categories of bias. The results from attribution bias concerning Al Gore, illustrates that the newspapers were generally neutral with an equal amount of positive and negative bias. Attribution bias designates bias that comes from the publication's means of attributing information to a source. This category focuses on the word "said." Examples of positive attribution included the phrase, "Mr. Gore spoke passionately." Examples of negative attribution bias included phrases such as, "Gore responded with equally artificial earnestness," "Mr. Gore spat back," "Mr. Gore fired back," and "Mr. Gore would offer a snort of derision." Examples of neutral attribution bias included, "Mr. Gore said," "Mr. Gore responded," and "Mr. Gore suggested."

TABLE III

ATTRIBUTION BIAS FOR AL GORE

Bias	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Positive	3	3.2	3.2	3.2
Negative	3	3.2	3.2	6.5
Nuetral	87	93.5	93.5	100.0

The majority of articles were also neutral toward George W. Bush when coding for attribution bias. A positive example of attribution bias was, "Mr. Bush spoke plainly." A negative attribution bias example was, "Mr. Bush went after." Neutral attribution bias included examples such as, "Mr. Bush said," and "Mr. Bush told."

TABLE IV

ATTRIBUTION BIAS FOR GEORGE W. BUSH

Bias	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Positive	4	4.3	4.3	4.3
Negative	5	5.4	5.4	9.7
Neutral	84	90.3	90.3	100.0

Adjective Bias

When coding for adjective bias it was again found that the majority of articles were neutral. This category attempts to create an impression of the person described in the article by using adjectives, deemed favorable or unfavorable, in association with the person. Tables V and VI show that although ten articles contained negative adjective biases toward Al Gore and three articles with positive adjective bias, 80 of the articles were neutral. Examples of positive adjective bias included, " a confident and knowledgeable Gore," and "Gore seemed relaxed and at peace." Negative adjective bias examples included, "the ludicrous sight of Mr. Gore, and his opinion-aggressive obnoxiousness," "his legendary stiffness," "cross," "rude," "insufferable," "Tip-Al" and "overbearing." Neutral adjective examples included, "the Gore camp."

TABLE V

ADJECTIVE BIAS FOR AL GORE

Bias	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Positive	3	3.2	3.2	3.2
Negative	10	10.8	10.8	14.0
Neutral	80	86.0	86.0	100.0

When coding for adjective bias it was Table VI shows that the majority of articles were neutral toward George W. Bush. Examples of positive adjective bias included, "his folksy optimism," "easy confidence," and "epitome of calmness." Examples of negative adjective bias included, "Bush's tangled talk," "betrayed by a nervous smile," "so-called Bushisms," "garbled grammar," "self-declared winner," "Dubya," and "body language that suggested cockiness rather than confidence." An example of neutral adjective bias included, "tempered language."

TABLE VI

ADJECTIVE BIAS FOR GEORGE W. BUSH

Bias	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Positive	5	5.4	5.4	5.4
Negative	6	6.5	6.5	11.8
Neutral	82	88.2	88.2	100.0

Adverbial Bias

When coding for adverbial bias, articles were once again generally neutral toward Al Gore. This kind of bias is based on qualifiers or magnifiers -- adverbs, which provide the reader with a favorable or unfavorable impression. This bias reinforces another bias by telling how or why a person said or did something. Table VII shows that Gore had little adjective bias. Examples of positive adverbial bias for Al Gore include, "repeating himself relentlessly." Examples of negative adverbial bias include, "largely noncommittal," "Mr. Gore answered coolly," and "he desperately wanted to send."

TABLE VII

ADVERBIAL BIAS FOR AL GORE

Bias	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Positive	3	3.2	3.2	3.2
Negative	5	5.4	5.4	8.6
Neutral	85	91.4	91.4	100.0

Adverbial bias toward George W. Bush had different results. Twenty articles contained positive adverbial bias toward George W. Bush and 17 contained negative bias toward him. Positive adverbial examples included, "he quickly used," "Bush has cleverly

planted the idea," and "said sunnily." Negative adverbial biases examples included, "Mr. Bush asked brusquely," and "Mr. Bush said frostily."

TABLE VIII

ADVERBIAL BIAS FOR GEORGE W. BUSH

Bias	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Positive	20	21.5	21.5	21.5
Negative	17	18.3	18.3	39.8
Neutral	56	60.2	60.2	100.0

Contextual Bias

When coding for contextual bias it is important to note that this bias focuses on sentences, paragraphs or larger units of meaning. This bias is to provide the reader with an overall favorable or unfavorable light with an article's overall meaning. Merrill states that this bias cannot be noted in organized lists and must be determined by more then on person. Contextual bias was only determined when there was agreement among the two coders. Table IX indicates that almost half of the articles were considered contextually biased toward Al Gore. Only 49 articles were considered neutral.

TABLE IX

CONTEXTUAL BIAS FOR AL GORE

Bias	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Positive	10	10.8	10.8	10.8
Negative	34	36.6	36.6	47.3
Nuetral	49	52.7	52.7	100.0

Contextual bias toward George W. Bush was not found as frequently. Table X shows that only 35 articles contained some kind of contextual bias toward George W. Bush.

TABLE X

CONTEXTUAL BIAS FOR GEORGE W. BUSH

Bias	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Positive	17	18.3	18.3	18.3
Negative	18	19.4	19.4	37.6
Neutral	58	62.4	62.4	100.0

Outright Opinion

When coding for outright opinion bias it is important to consider that this bias is the most visible type to the newspaper reader. Although Merrill warned that the "expression of opinion is sometimes disguised" he also claimed that it is "the most blatant and obvious type of bias or subjectivity in newswriting" (Merrill, 1965, p. 565). Since this bias is what Merrill called the most blatant, more examples were found and recorded when coding articles. Table XI shows that more negative outright opinion biases toward Al Gore were found then positive outright opinion, although the majority of the articles was considered neutral outright opinion bias.

Examples of positive outright opinion included. "Mr. Gore has the better claim," "Gore is a far more accomplished debater than Mr. Bush," "Mr. Gore continues to have positions with broader public support," "a new high point in Mr. Gore's evolution as a debater," "Mr. Gore's killer instinct," "Mr. Gore came across as a candidate with. . . solutions," "Mr. Gore seemed most at home," "Mr. Gore displayed his command of the issues," "It was...a more impressive might for Mr. Gore," "Gore is better versed than Bush in public policy questions. . . not just the detail but often the broader outlines," "Mr. Gore hammered his rival," and "Mr. Gore's formula was on target." "Mr. Gore has

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offered a clearer map of the policy he would pursue," and "the more committed internationalist."

Negative examples of outright opinion bias included, "Mr. Gore was clearly less comfortable," "Mr. Gore is hopelessly tied to Mr. Clinton," "He never knows quite how to behave so he looks extraneous," "looks like a robot," "Gore lies about his connections to big pharmaceutical companies," "Gore's election tally looks like a terrifying example of legal bribery in action," "changes persona from week to week," "Gore's campaign has taken the most aggressive posture," and "Gore has escalated the atmosphere of combat."

TABLE XI

OUTRIGHT OPINION FOR AL GORE

Bias	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Positive	9	9.7	9.7	9.7
Negative	32	34.4	34.4	44.1
Neutral	52	55.9	55.9	100.0

Table XII shows that Bush had more negative outright opinion bias than positive. Positive examples of outright opinion bias toward George W. Bush included, "a Bush rally is reminiscent of an 'up with people' concert," "Mr. Bush has had some success in portraying Mr. Gore as a big spender," "Mr. Bush has cast himself as a reformer," "The choices Mr. Bush has made...have all been very astute," "his policy proposals...have been bold and innovative," and "what you see is what you get."

Negative examples of outright opinion toward George W. Bush included, "the things that fall out of his mouth are a marvel and a worry, he reminds one of an amiable but slightly dim young man," "Mr. Bush adopted the strange position of making every region a priority except Africa," "vote-rigging in one of the southern villages that is run

by Dubya's brother," "a strange, inarticulate, creature, has led the island in its executions of people," "Bush would no doubt be only too happy to offload these problems on to Rick Perry," "cocky, lazy, hubris at the end of his campaign," "the callousness of his resume," "tendency to pander to the hard-right when in trouble," "a recovering drunk," "Mr. Bush... needs to address lingering concerns that he lacks the capacity to be president," "the Texas governor is less versed in the issues," "If he makes it though...without...a gaffe or tangled syntax," "Mr. Bush's gaffes provide a stark contrast with...Gore," "When it comes to the art of debate he is hardly a natural," "Mr. Bush lacks ...consistency," "he can be repetitive in his answers or embarrassingly abbreviated," "Mr. Bush has comparatively little experience," "he fell short of making a compelling case," and "Bush again seemed less comfortable."

TABLE XII

OUTRIGHT OPINION BIAS FOR GEORGE W. BUSH

Bias	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Positive	10	10.8	10.8	10.8
Negative	30	32.3	32.3	43.0
Neutral	53	57.0	57.0	100.0

Analysis of Comparisons

The third research question wanted to know the differences between the two newspapers in their coverage of the United States' presidential candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush. No significant statistical differences were found between the newspapers with regard to attribution bias or adjective bias. Findings did indicate a substantial difference between the two newspapers and their coverage of George W. Bush in one category. Adverbial biases toward George W. Bush approached significance. The simple chi-square analysis of the occurrences of bias among the two newspapers found a

significance level of .00842 within the adverbial bias category. It was found that although 64 percent of *The Sunday Independent* articles were neutral, 27 percent of the articles contained negative adverbial bias and 9 percent contained positive adverbial bias. The *International Herald Tribune* had 5 percent positive adverbial biases, 4 percent negative adverbial biases and 91 percent of the articles were neutral.

Analysis of Type of Article

To further investigate how these two newspapers portray the United States' candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush, a comparison of the amount of biases found within individual types of articles was conducted. The types of stories included news, feature, and opinion/editorial. The simple chi-square analysis of the occurrences of bias within the three types of articles indicated that there was a significant statistical difference found among the articles with regard to contextual bias. The chi-square showed there was a significant difference at the .03398 percent level of confidence, indicating a genuine difference among total instances of contextual bias toward Al Gore.

TABLE XIII

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS OF CONTEXTUAL BIAS FOR AL GORE

Type of Article	Positive	Negative	Neutral
News	7.3	24.4	68.3
Feature	9.1	27.3	63.6
Op./Ed.	11.8	55.9	32.4

*Pearson Significance: .03398

Table XIII indicates that 25 percent of the news articles contained negative contextual bias toward Al Gore. Seven percent of the news articles were coded as positive and 68 percent were coded as neutral. Nine percent of the feature articles contained positive bias toward Al Gore. 27 percent contained negative bias and 64 were coded as

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neutral. Twelve percent of the opinion/editorials were coded as positive, 60 percent were negative and only 32 percent were coded neutral.

The simple chi-square analysis of the occurrences of bias within the three types of articles indicated a significant statistical difference found among the articles with regard to contextual bias toward George W. Bush. The chi-square showed there was a significant difference at the .02566 percent level of confidence, indicating a genuine difference among total instances of contextual bias toward George W. Bush.

TABLE XIV

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS OF CONTEXTUAL BIAS FOR GEORGE W. BUSH

Type of Article	Positive	Negative	Neutral
News	12.2	19.5	68.3
Feature	18.2	81.8	12.8
Op./Ed.	35.3	23.5	41.2

*Pearson Significance: .02566

Table XIV indicates that 12 percent of the news articles were positive toward George W. Bush, whereas 20 percent were negative and 68 percent were neutral. There were no feature articles coded positive toward George W. Bush. Eighteen percent of the features were coded as negative and 82 were neutral. Thirty-five percent of opinion/editorials contained positive contextual bias toward George W. Bush, 24 percent were negative and 41 percent were neutral.

The simple chi-square analysis of the occurrences of bias within the three types of articles also indicated that there was a significant statistical difference found among the articles with regard to outright opinion bias toward Al Gore only.

TABLE XV

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS OF OUTRIGHT OPINION FOR AL GORE

Type of Article	Positive	Negative	Neutral
News	12.2	22.0	65.9
Feature	9.1	18.2	72.7
Op./Ed.	8.8	58.8	32.4

*Pearson Significance: .01068

Table XV shows there was a significant difference at the .01068 percent level of confidence, indicating a genuine difference among total instances of outright opinion bias toward Al Gore. Findings indicate that 12 percent of news articles contained positive outright opinion bias toward Al Gore, 22 percent contained negative bias and 66 percent contained neutral. Nine percent of feature articles were coded as positive. 18 percent were negative and 73 were neutral. Findings also indicate that 9 percent of opinion/editorials contained positive outright opinion bias toward Al Gore. 59 percent contained negative and 32 percent were coded as neutral.

There was no significance difference found in outright opinion bias of George W. Bush in the three types of articles as shown in Table XVI.

TABLE XVI

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS OF OUTRIGHT OPINION FOR GEORGE W. BUSH

Type of Article	Positive	Negative	Neutral
News	12.2	34.1	53.7
Feature	9.1	9.1	81.8
Op./Ed.	11.8	32.4	55.9

*Pearson Significance: .52662

CHAPTER V

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is a need for researchers to investigate the globalization of the media so communicators can understand and prepare for a worldwide audience. By examining articles from a four-week time period, this research investigated how *The Sunday Independent* and the *International Herald Tribune* portrayed the United States' presidential election candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush.

Issues from the first week in September, the first week in October and the first two weeks in November were examined. Articles from these issues were studied through a quantitative content analysis to analyze critically and assess the portrayal of the United States' presidential candidates within the news coverage.

The results of this research indicate that no significant differences were found in the coverage of the United States' presidential candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush in both *The Sunday Independent* and the *International Herald Tribune*. Findings also state that there were no significant differences in their coverage except for the significant differences found in the use of adverbial bias toward George W. Bush. This kind of bias is based on qualifiers or magnifiers. These adverbs provide the reader with a favorable or unfavorable impression that reinforces another bias by telling how or why a person said or did something. This finding indicates that *The Sunday Independent* used more negative adverbial biases toward Bush then the *International Herald Tribune*. The *International Herald Tribune* used more positive adverbial biases. But because there was no other level of significance when comparing the two newspapers it can be concluded that these publications are similar in their coverage. Although one publication was a local newspaper and one an international newspaper. during this study's time period the two had little difference within their coverage. It was also found that when recording story

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placement, the closer to the front page of the newspaper the less bias was found in an article.

However, when analyzing biases found within individual articles there was a significant difference within contextual bias. Although the two newspapers' coverage may have no significant differences when comparing each publication, they did have significant findings in their overall use of bias in their coverage. During this study's time period, the two newspapers may not have used specific words or phrases to present biases within an article, but they were presenting an overall bias within the entire article. Because contextual bias is determined by the bias found in sentences, paragraphs or larger units of meaning, it provides the reader with a favorable or unfavorable light with the overall meaning of the article. Therefore, these newspapers are portraying negative and positive biases toward Al Gore and George W. Bush within the overall meaning of an article. The majority of opinion/editorials were found to have a negative contextual bias toward Al Gore. Almost half of the opinion/editorials contained a positive contextual bias toward George W. Bush. It was also found that there was a significant difference within the outright opinion bias toward Al Gore. The majority of opinion/editorials once again contained negative outright opinion biases, with 59 percent being coded as negative.

Conclusions

These newspapers often present multiple, conflicting messages regarding the candidates. Although many of the biases were found in editorials, the interaction between news and editorials may influence the clarity of the overall message the press conveys. These findings indicate that although the two newspapers are generally similar in their coverage of the candidates, they both contained bias within their reporting. More unfavorable attitudes toward Al Gore existed. Although there were some negative biases toward George W. Bush concerning his stance toward Africa such as "Bush adopted the

strange position of making every region a priority except Africa," there were other examples that appeared as if the South African public was ready for a change in the United States' administration such as, "his policy proposals...have been bold and innovative."

The negative biases toward Al Gore may be because he has been vice-president for eight years and the South African public may feel he has done little to aid the country during his time in the Clinton administration. Examples such as "Mr. Gore is hopelessly tied to Mr. Clinton," emphasize that many South Africans may prefer new leadership in the United States. In fact, examples such as, "Gore lies about his connections to big pharmaceutical companies," when concerning AIDS were not found in relation to George W. Bush.

It may also be concluded that since Republicans are traditionally business orientated these biases toward Gore may be found in these newspapers because of the newspapers ownership. If big business interests own newspapers then they might have influence on the newspaper content. Also, text from articles give the impression that Bush appeared to offer more stability by remaining the same throughout most of the election. Gore, instead of appearing flexible, appeared unstable and changeable. Examples of this include, "Watch for Gore's exaggerations," and "he is largely noncommittal." When discussing Bush, examples such as "Bush stayed with the same message and repeated his statements," and "Bush's demeanor was more relaxed, approachable and likable," emphasize that Bush came across as being casual and having more stability.

The impression that Gore may have had a better grasp of the issues can be seen in examples such as "he is prepared," and that he was "confident and knowledgeable." He was also described as "a far more accomplished debater than Mr. Bush." Phrases such as "Mr. Bush... needs to address lingering concerns that he lacks the capacity to be president." and "the Texas governor is less versed in the issues," also point out Bush's

lack of experience. Continuing to focus on Gore's experiences with phrases such as "a new high point in Mr. Gore's evolution as a debater," and "Mr. Gore displayed his command of the issues," also emphasize Gore's preparedness. But focusing on Gore's preparedness seemed to backfire when contrasting the candidate's personalities. Negative biases toward Gore were emphasized when articles discussed his personality or his stability. Phrases such as "Gore was clearly less comfortable," "changes persona from week to week," "He never knows quite how to behave so he looks extraneous," and he "looks like a robot" were in sharp contrast to positive biases used to describe Bush's personality. Phrases such as "his personality might shine through," "a Bush rally is reminiscent of an 'up with people' concert," "Mr. Bush exuded confidence," "the consistency of his message, strength of his charisma and potency of his down home appeal," "confidence and genial personality are assets...but...no substitute for experience and knowledge," "folksy optimism, easy confidence," and "epitome of calmness" demonstrate the positive biases focusing on Bush's personality.

If Gore came across as too formal and arrogant, then perhaps Bush came across as an approachable individual with his amiable manner therefore leading to these biased comments in the articles. *The Sunday Independent* which has run past issues with above-the-fold, front-page photos of women mooning a politician might relate better to the informal Bush then the formal Gore. The few negative biases found toward Bush may have been because traditionally Democrats are oriented toward a more liberal position on social issues such as apartheid. Therefore many may assume that dealing with South African human rights violations connected with apartheid may not be as high on a Bush administration's agenda.

Theoretical Conclusions

Social Responsibility

This research utilized the social responsibility theory in an effort to determine if the newspapers used in this research acted in a socially responsible manner. Did the South African newspapers selected for this study act in a socially responsible manner when informing readers about the United States' presidential election candidates?

The social responsibility theory of the press is a basis for a system of ethics in journalism. Portraying biases within political coverage is not providing a reader with an honest and unslanted representation of information. Bias found within reporting violates the third tenet of the social responsibility theory stating that media should provide a representative picture of constituent groups in society. The theory claims that the media should present a representative picture of the constituent groups in society. The social responsibility theory journalist must realize that his or her duty is to perform a public service. These South African publications are presenting biased coverage, therefore they are not performing the public service of providing the public with clear, unbiased reporting.

Agenda-Setting Theory

By not consistently carrying biased-free news stories, it can be concluded that these publications may be trying to affect agenda-setting in their political coverage. These newspapers are setting an agenda by presenting biases within their articles.

> The men and women of the press - the merchants of news - are crucial figures in this transformed social order, for it is they who paint the pictures of the world on which decisive human actions are based. To fail to understand this basic but grim truth is to fail to understand the role of the press in the affairs of human kind. The last notes of the symphony of the press are yet to be played (Altschull, 1984, p. 298).

The agenda-setting theory centers on the media telling the public not specifically what to think, but what to think about. Media are gate-keepers of information. McCombs and Shaw's theory focuses on how leaders in the media industry distribute information to the public and can influence a society's mentality and organize its opinions, ideas, etc. Therefore any stereotypes, opinions, ideas, or perspectives an article provides will be passed on to its readers. If these publications are presenting biased coverage then they are providing its readers with a supply of political opinions and ideas. These South African newspapers' editorial boards are deciding not only what issues they will cover, but are also allowing reporter biases to seep into an article.

> Studies of the sociology of journalistic processes and institutions demonstrate the ways in which selective collection, perception, and transmission of facts shape stories to parallel the worldview of dominant institutions (Nerone, 1995, p. 174).

Granted, the press must be selective in reporting the news because of time and space constraints. As gatekeepers of information these publications make choices about what to report and how to report it. During this time period these newspapers chose to report with bias language.

Knowledge Gap Theory

One must incorporate aspects of the agenda-setting theory in order to analyze the knowledge gap theory. Agenda-setting can be influenced by the owners of the newspapers. It can be assumed that owners of these publications reap profits from their businesses and are therefore in a higher economic-class then the newspaper's average reader. South Africa is a country ravaged by poverty and disease. Because it is a country divided socially and economically, it is important to see how the knowledge gap theory can be emphasized within this research. The theory states that information reaches

different segments of the population. Those with higher levels of education and/or income are exposed to more information than those with little education and/or income. Those who have access to these newspapers may be the only ones receiving information about the United States' presidential candidates. The average South African may not receive any media information about the United States' presidential elections. Those South Africans with higher education and higher incomes may be the only group of people being exposed to this international news.

International news is rarely a main focus within a newspaper, therefore a gap is created between those who seek out articles concerning international news and those who are content with what news is provided for them. Large quantities of the information distributed are oriented toward people with higher education. In fact, newspapers require basic literacy. It can be seen that the knowledge gap identifies that information only reaches people who seek it out, have acquired enough education to either read the information or interpret information and have the ability to purchase information. Interest in world events is generally a concern of the more highly educated and those in a higher economic status.

When analyzing South Africa's economic turmoil and political history one can conclude that the average South African does not have these abilities. Therefore a knowledge gap is created. This gap may be one of the causes of the social chaos found within South Africa's society. The knowledge gap tends to maintain existing elites of specialized groups within a society. Even if members of lower status positions see the information as relevant, they are less able to interpret it or apply it to further their own interests (Donahue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1980).

By applying these theories and realizing that bias exists within these two newspapers' political coverage, an exchange of ideas can now be created about correcting this problem.

Recommendations

This study is limited to the months of September, October and November 2000. A more comprehensive media analysis would be worth while. The examination of the media content could be extended to more newspapers published in South Africa and eventually begin the task of researching more of Africa by including other countries such as Kenya and Zimbabwe. This research could also be broadened by examining content from other media outlets such as television and magazine coverage. Also a survey of South African readers, reporters and columnists could be done to further this research. One could also examine the political affiliation of these newspapers. Future studies should differentiate between local editorials and news articles. Studies should also include an examination of the sources of each article and make an effort to differentiatiate between wire service news and locally produced news.

A primary recommendation for expanding this research would be to include additional coders to ensure an even more objective analysis is conducted. It is also recommended that this research be continued. This study is a modification of Merrill's 1965 study and Fedler. Meeske, and Hall's 1979 study. It is hoped that the examination for bias within news coverage is continued.

Journalists must reach an awareness for the need for objectivity in reporting because the balance of global communication requires an objective presentation of reality in order to reach an international understanding. News reporting must avoid the use of misinformation and distortion. Without international news and without a balanced discussion of foreign events, the picture Altschull says journalists are painting for the world will not be complete. The news media have an obligation to educate and to avoid the presentation of misconceptions and stereotypes

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Appendix A: Coding Instrument

1) NEWSPAPER: _____The Sunday Independent(1)   _____International Herald Tribune(2)

(2) DATE: ___Sept. /00(1)   ___Oct. /00(2)   ___1st wk Nov. /00(3)   ___2nd wk Nov. /00(4)

HEADLINE:_____

(3) Article ID #:_____   **(4)** Coder: __1/2____

(5) Type of article: ___news(1)   ___feature(2)   ___opinion column/editorial(3)   __other(4)_____

(6) Length of article: _____# of inches (excluding headline) Placement:_____

Merrill's 5 Bias Categories:
(see handout: *"How Time Stereotyped Three U.S. Presidents"*)

If found, please provide the example of bias found in an article.

Attribution Bias for U.S. Presidential Candidate:
(7) Al Gore: ___positive(1)   ___negative(2)   ___nuetral(3)

_____
_____
_____

(8) George W. Bush: ___positive(1) ___negative(2)   ___neutral(3)

_____
_____
_____

Adjective Bias for U.S. Presidential Candidate:
(9) Al Gore: ___positive(1)   ___negative(2)   ___nuetral(3)

_____
_____

(10) George W. Bush: ___positive(1)   ___negative(2)   ___nuetral(3)

_____
_____
_____

Adverbial Bias for U.S. Presidential Candidate.
(11) Al Gore: ___positive(1)   ___negative(2)   ___nuetral(3)

_____
_____
_____

(12) George W. Bush: ___positive(1) ___negative(2) ___nuetral(3)

_____
_____
_____
_____

Contextual Bias for U.S. Presidential Candidate:
(13) Al Gore: ___positive(1) ___negative(2) ___nuetral(3)

_____
_____
_____

(14) George W. Bush: ___positive(1) ___negative(2) ___nuetral(3)

_____
_____
_____
_____

Outright Opinion Bias for U.S. Presidential Candidate:
(15) Al Gore: ___positive(1) ___negative(2) ___nuetral(3)

_____
_____
_____

(16) George W. Bush: ___positive(1) ___negative(2) ___nuetral(3)

_____
_____
_____
_____

NOTES:

2

VITA

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