

The Portrayal of Immigration On Texas Newspaper Websites

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April 20, 2008

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Introduction

Recent political actions by the United States government and escalating media coverage of the 2008 elections have brought the issue of immigration into the limelight. In his speech on a new temporary worker program in 2004, President Bush mentioned, “As a nation that values immigration, and depends on immigration, we should have immigration laws that work and make us proud. Yet today we do not,” (Bush, 2004). After he restructured the immigration system to fit his political convictions, President Bush’s decrees still are still in action today but may soon change again as current presidential candidates are vying for “immigration reform” plans of their own. While each of the 2008 presidential candidates supported President Bush’s legislation to increase border security technology and allow citizenship for some illegal immigrants, most politicians tend to advocate limited border control and amnesty programs aimed to support the United States’ economy (Pan, 2006). These candidates agree with a majority of Americans who favor more conservative ideas of blockading and securing borders and partly attribute economic problems and their changing culture to illegal immigration (Solis, 2008).

According to Dianne Solís, a Mexican-American immigration reporter for the “Dallas Morning News,” after deporting more than a quarter-million people last year, America hasn’t seen a crackdown on immigration this severe since the 1950s (Solis, 2008). As the news media provide this information to the general public, civil discussion has recently turned to bad-tempered and sometimes rude debates on talk radio and television (Solis, 2008). Media effects research show that the news media may have a profound impact on how Americans view this issue and how they use this information to make their election decisions (Lowry & DeFleur, 1995). While citizens do not consider immigration the single most important issues in this year’s presidential election (ABC, Washington Post, 2008), recent polls show that 31% of Americans do consider the issue “extremely important” in the election (CNN, Opinion Research, 2008). Therefore, as the U.S. prepares for a new president with new ideas on how to balance the needs and desires of American citizens with governmental and economic concerns, the media’s portrayal of immigration proves to be a significant subject of analysis.

Purpose of Research:

While researchers continue to study the effects of the media on their audience, only few have studied the portrayal of immigration in U.S. newspapers – particularly Texas newspapers. The purpose of this research is to analyze the portrayal of immigration and issues surrounding immigration in online Texas newspaper articles to determine any common frames. This topic is increasingly important because as the United States continues to have record-setting numbers of immigrants entering the country, the American media must find ways to reflect and represent the new culture and communities to provide unbiased and equal coverage of stories. As these immigrants (both legal and illegal) assimilate into the American culture, they also attain jobs in the nation’s media and may provide a voice for their minority groups, possibly framing stories in different ways as well. These developments prompt new avenues in studying United States news coverage such as analyzing which mediums portray the populations and communities more accurately or more fully in relation to their population in America. Understanding how newspaper websites portray these issues will give insight into media trends and possibly catalyze change if it is needed.

Historical Immigration and the Media

Throughout its creation and development, the United States has both welcomed and denounced immigrants upon their arrival into the country. America’s founding fathers hailed from Europe, while most of the Western half of the nation had been occupied by several other countries and Native Americans, creating a melting pot of races and cultures. Until the late nineteenth century, this immigration worked hand-in-hand with industrialization to create a bigger and better nation (Streitmatter, 1999). However, when the economy slowed dramatically in the late 1880s, the same immigrants and their children who came to the “Land of Opportunity” to experience freedom and democracy began to restrict foreign entry from overseas. Blaming its economic downturn on foreigners, Americans adopted anti-immigration sentiments toward Russians, Ukrainians, and Polacks and a tenacious form of nativism began to emerge (Streitmatter, 1999).

Out of this mindset emerged a nativist press, focusing content solely on the faults and dangers of these “intruders” and harshly explained why their existence was ruining the United States of America (Streitmatter, 1999). Stories with titles like “the Immigration Problem” focused on the dangers of cheap immigrant labor and the spreading of Roman Catholicism and portrayed the foreigners as uncivilized and dangerous. While the nativist press died out in the late 1900s, blatant racism, prejudice and the neglect of minority groups continued to plague the nation and the media throughout the next century (Bobo, 1997).

During the civil rights movement of the mid 1900s, obvious criticisms of the Hispanic populations in the U.S. were also prominent with offensive rhetoric and blatant disdain for Hispanics who came to America in search of work (Hadley, 1956). Researchers had numerous reasons for the “wetback problem,” including the initiation of the Mexican contract labor program beginning 1942 which critics blamed for a huge influx of cheap labor (Hadley, 1956). Illegal immigration continued to be widely discussed in the U.S. as both a political and social issue as the nation recovered from World War II. Harsh Third World criticisms were still prevalent in the 1970s, but evidence suggests that U.S. elite dailies had begun to devote more attention to coverage of developing countries at this time (Haque, 1983). Due in part to Jimmy Carter’s human rights initiatives during his presidency from 1977-1981, press coverage of human rights issues increased, and his efforts played a significant role in how newspapers covered Latin American concerns (Cassara, 1998). The New World Information Order of the late 1970s also called for more coverage of developing nations, fewer negative stories, news flow that did not clash with the countries’ values, and equal news flow between and among developed and developing countries to ensure unbiased coverage (Johnson, 1997). According to Benson (2005), “During the 1970s and even into the 1980s, one finds in immigration news stories favorable and relatively frequent references to assimilation as the accepted process of incorporating immigrants into the society.”

Since the late 1980s, Benson holds that media coverage on immigration has only increased in volume and has become less biased due to mandating media and multiculturalism classes throughout universities, the prevalence of Spanish-speaking media throughout the U.S., a gradual shift in vocabulary used by journalists, and the creation and unification of minority groups in the media like the National

Association of Hispanic Journalists (Benson, 2005). After federal enactments like the Immigration Reform Act of 1986 and the Immigration Act of 1990, the origin, size, and composition of the legal immigration coming across the border have changed dramatically (Johnson et al., 1997). According to Johnson et al. (1997), these decrees have caused a “browning of America” over the past 30 years and have created a more diversified nation. Recently, rather than studying equal opportunity or affirmative action type policies, researchers are focusing on racial bias on immigration policy views and are discovering a distinction between blatant and subtle prejudice on this topic (Bobo, 1997).

Literature Review

Despite increasing research on societal views on immigration and media coverage of the Hispanic population, limited research has analyzed the media’s framing of this topic in newspapers or online newspapers. Most research related to ethnic groups’ portrayals in the media has focused on African American underrepresentation and misrepresentation and the advancement of stereotypes of people of color (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Taylor and Band, 1997). According to Poindexter et al. (2003), one of the first systematic studies of the media’s portrayal of racial and ethnic groups found that stories came from a “White-only perspective.” This study, conducted by the Kerner Commission in 1967, illustrated the news media’s lack of employees of color and stories from minority viewpoints (Poindexter et al, 2003). Most studies have generally suggested that the American media lacks frequent, positive and accurate portrayals of minorities (Taylor and Bang, 1997). Much of the framing research on immigration, particularly Hispanic immigration, has analyzed the existence and advancement of Latino stereotypes on television and advertisements and has concluded that Latinos are vastly underrepresented in the media compared with their actual population (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005). When Hispanics are portrayed, they are often cast in stereotypical, lower prestige roles in the media (Li-Vollmer, 2002; Rivadeneyra et al., 2001). In addition, Rivadeneyra et al. (2001) found that when subjected to news more often, Latino youth with strong ties to their culture had lower self-esteem. However, Santana and Smith

(2001) found no correlation between newspaper coverage of Hispanics and crime and found equal treatment in hard and soft news coverage.

Recent findings have shown that with the dramatic rise in immigration from Mexico and debates concerning immigration policies, white supremacists and the formation of anti-Mexican groups have begun to emerge as well (Corrigan, 2008). Some research indicates a “new nativism” plaguing the United States based on its current economic state, unemployment, and crime rates (Johnson et al, 1997). Other research by McKay and Wong (1988) attribute America’s defeat in the Vietnam War and a general understanding of the nation’s steady decline as the world’s leader as catalyzing factors to this kind of movement today. One study of Compton, CA has shown that the economic downturn locally and nationally had caused “all the worst fears and stereotypes of immigrants” to be manifested (Johnson et al, 1997, p1086). Some large and small businesses in these areas continue to treat immigrants harshly and exploit their work. These studies indicate a possible swinging of the historical nativist pendulum back into America as citizens become fearful of a demographic change and economic downturn with no one else to blame. While the press has not been proven to be an independent agent in the foreign policy formation, its explication of American attitudes toward immigration, extensive research has shown that press coverage strongly influences it (Cassara, 1998). Therefore, it becomes important to re-examine the media’s portrayal of immigration and its effects on American attitudes. For this, researchers have used agenda setting theories based on research by McCombs and Shaw in the 1970s (Lowry & DeFleur, 1995).

Media Framing

According to Lowry & DeFleur (1995), agenda setting theories began by exploring the media’s ability to screen, interpret, emphasize, and possibly distort the flow of information upon its audience. While previous research and theories had explored the media’s supposed powerful and immediate effects upon its audience, new theories including McCombs and Shaw’s studies on agenda setting during and after the late 1960s studied how the media influences what an audience should deem important, illustrating the media’s more long-term and subtler effects (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). By not exploring

the effects of media content directly on subjects like the Payne studies of the late 1920s, researchers could do more than a short-term experiments or surveys (Lowry & DeFleur 1995). From these initial studies, research on agenda setting mushroomed, and in the 1980s and early 1990s, researchers developed approaches like framing and priming which explore the media's attitudinal effects on audiences (McQuail, 2005). While some researchers fail to differentiate framing from agenda setting and priming, Scheufele (1999) defines framing as a completely separate theory of media effects. He states that unlike agenda setting, "framing is based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences" (Scheufele & Tweksbury, 2007). Thus, instead of focusing on the how audiences form attitudes based on how easily they can make associations at the point of decision-making, it focuses on the audience's existing social construction of reality (Scheufele & Tweksbury, 2007). These frames can make relatively complex issues understood more easily by allowing people to refer to their existing constructs (de Vreese, 2004). For example, while many people may not know details about foreign policy or immigration, a news outlet can refer to more common constructs with phrases like "border patrol" or "cheap labor."

According to Scheufele (1999), the process of framing is broken into four stages: frame building, frame setting, individual-level effects of framing, and a link between individual frames and media frames. This study focuses on the final stage, seeking to analyze the media's framing of immigration. In frame-effects research, the independent variable is usually the news frame (de Vreese, 2004). De Vreese states that news frames utilize qualities of news such as conflict, emotions, or prominence and may differ from person to person, based on their location or demographics. For example, a study by Johnson (1997) found that cultural proximity (impact) was a stronger predictor than geographic proximity (proximity) in U.S. newspaper circulation among Mexicans. When discussed as news, the media may utilize many different qualities to portray immigration and promote a specific story for readers. Current economic situations, foreign policies or political action may attribute to these portrayals and decisions on the placement of stories on a newspaper page.

Methodology

This study seeks to determine whether or not Texas newspapers commonly frame immigration and if so, what kinds of frames they use to portray this issue. By analyzing five Sunday editions of online Texas newspapers throughout the state, this study compiled all official news stories regarding immigration by using each newspaper's online search function in conjunction with articles on the Lexus-Nexus and NewsBank databases to check validity. This study took place over a four-week period to obtain reliable results, examining all links and articles written by employees of the newspaper. Thus, neither blog comments nor letters to the editor were analyzed. One coder determined which stories were useful to this study by examining only those stories which incorporated the words "immigration," "immigrant," "alien," or "foreign policy."

The primary research questions utilized in this study are:

- 1) How often do Texas newspaper websites publish articles on immigration?
- 2) Which news qualities are most prevalent within stories involving immigration in Texas newspaper websites?
- 3) Do Texas newspaper websites frame immigration and if so, how do they do so?

To find the answers to these questions, this research examined Texas dailies in prominent cities dispersed throughout the state. The five newspapers analyzed in this study were the El Paso Times, the San Antonio Express-News, the Dallas Morning News, the Amarillo Globe-News, and the Brownsville Herald. By studying newspaper organizations that cover most of Texas, this study was able to discern any subtle differences and commonalities dealing with immigration. Since two of these newspapers are located near the Mexico border, for example, they were thought to connect with Latino populations than the other newspapers. Also, since some of the newspapers are much larger than others, they were thought to have the resources and greater circulation with Hispanics in the area to cover the issue of immigration more fully and accurately.

In total, 20 Sunday editions of Texas newspaper websites were collected and analyzed between the hours of noon and 2:00 p.m. since online articles are constantly updated on the internet. The articles

were gathered on the Sundays of March 23, March 30, April 6 and April 13, 2008. The dates were chosen as an indicator of Texas political activity after the Texas primaries held on March 4, 2008 prior to the 2008 presidential election in November. The total of all the unique articles collected numbered 45, as several stories included more than one key phrase.

Operational Definitions

Since this study deals with vernacular that is polysemous may be misconstrued, it is important to define each key phrase as well as the meaning of “positive” stories and “negative” stories as explained in the following text. First of all, the words and phrases “immigration,” “illegal immigration,” “immigrant,” “illegal immigrant,” “alien,” “undocumented alien,” “illegal alien” and “foreign policy” that will be used throughout the course of this research will be defined according to the United States Citizen and Immigration Services’s glossary of terms (United States Citizen and Immigration Services, 2008). According to the USCIS (2008), an immigrant is also considered a permanent resident alien, defined as “An alien admitted to the United States as a lawful permanent resident.” In addition, when a story is considered generally “positive,” this means that it discusses the benefits of immigration and favors immigrants in the story by showing the immigrant point of view more than it discusses drawbacks or criticisms to immigration or immigrants in the United States. Similarly, when a story is considered generally “negative,” this means that it discusses the drawbacks and criticisms of immigration and immigrants more so than the benefits or fails to portray their point of view. Finally, when this study discusses the use of “news qualities” or “newsworthiness,” it is referring to the seven main news writing values outlined in *Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism* of impact, immediacy, proximity, prominence, novelty, conflict and emotions (Harrower, 2007).

Results

Each of the five newspapers in this study yielded different and varied results. To begin with the newspaper with the largest circulation of over 523,000 on Sundays (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2007),

	Total	Immigration	Immigrant	Alien	Foreign Policy	Illegal
Dallas Morning News	14	10	7	4	2	12
San Ant. Express-News	18	11	12	1	1	2
El Paso Times	11	8	3	0	1	1
Amarillo Globe-News	1	1	0	0	0	0
Brownsville Herald	2	2	1	0	0	1

	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Dallas Morning News	3	4	7
San Ant. Express-News	5	4	9
El Paso Times	5	2	4
Amarillo Globe-News	0	0	1
Brownsville Herald	1	0	1

the Dallas Morning News published the second-most articles relating to immigration over the four-week period. This publication cited 14 unique articles total that were written by members of the Dallas Morning News staff while three of those stories were taken from the Associated Press and, therefore, not written by Dallas Morning News staffers. This means that the Dallas Morning News published roughly just over three articles per week dealing with immigration issues. 10 of these 14 articles referred at least once to the word “immigration,” while four of those 10 referred to “illegal immigration” specifically. 7 of the 14 articles used the word “immigrant” and each time were used in conjunction with the word “illegal.” In addition, of the 14 articles published, four of them referenced the word “alien” in relation to immigration, using them in the phrases “Criminal Alien Program,” “illegal alien,” and “undocumented alien.” Finally, two articles of the 14 mentioned the phrase “foreign policy,” but two of the three stories referred to the war in Iraq as opposed to Mexican immigration issues.

Of the stories that were published each Sunday, the Dallas Morning News provided three relatively positive stories highlighting the immigrant point of view as well as three stories that negatively describe immigration and its detrimental effects on the United States. For example, in an April 6 article, the publication featured Monica Rhor, an immigration reporter in Houston who was named The Associated Press Writer of the Year. It also published a story the previous week discussing a Mexican-American judge who conducted a ceremony welcoming a “new generation of immigrants” into the nation.

These positive stories included descriptors such as “victims,” “protections,” and “welcome.” However, this newspaper also published four “negative” stories related to immigration. For example, one March 30 story focused on a recent raid on Latino night clubs, restaurants, pool halls and other business which resulted in the arrest of 49 undocumented immigrant employees. Another story articulated the pursuit of further crackdowns on illegal immigration. Negative stories like these included descriptors like “arrest,” “ban,” and “unwelcome” within the text.

Most prominently, however, the Dallas Morning News published articles that remained neutral, providing information about local policies and general immigration facts. For instance, one article discussed criticisms among local political candidates and their hypocrisies regarding the issue. Another article featured a program aimed to train local police officers how to make their own decisions regarding suspects' immigration status. In addition, the articles stated neutral quotes like “Immigration is a big issue in the City Council races” and facts like “The Hispanic community tends to be younger and includes many immigrants who are not able to vote because they aren't U.S. citizens.”

The second-highest circulating newspaper studied, the San Antonio Express-News yielded similar results. According to the Audit Bureau of Circulations (2007), this publication has an average circulation of almost 323,000 on Sundays. The San Antonio Express-News covered the highest number of articles relating to immigration issues, numbering 18 unique articles total without publishing any Associated Press stories. However, one story was published from the Washington Post. This also means that the San Antonio Express-News published roughly just over four articles per week dealing with immigration issues. Out of these 18 articles, 11 articles referenced the word “immigration” at least once, while only one of those 11 referred specifically to “illegal immigration.” 12 of the 18 articles found in the San Antonio Express-News used the word “immigrant,” and it used the phrase “illegal immigrant” only once. In addition, one article referred to the word “alien” in reference to immigration by using the word “alienation.” Finally, only one article referred to the phrase “foreign policy.”

The San Antonio News Express published five articles that generally sympathized with both illegal and legal immigrants in the United States. For example, one story featured the biography of a

woman who left Chile to escape its dictatorship and considered this kind of immigration to be tragic. Another success story told of a San Antonio cardiologist who came to America with only \$50 in his pocket but rose to prominence. These stories used descriptors such as “plight,” “tragedy,” and “rose to prominence” to elicit understanding and empathy toward immigrants. Meanwhile, four of the articles in the San Antonio Express-News contained overtones that criticized Mexican migration into the country. These stories included quotes from people worried that undocumented immigrants may negatively affect the upcoming census, the immigration “problem” and how it continues to grow. One story cited problems with current immigration policies, while another story described an art exhibit that particularly tried not to show Mexican illegal immigrants as victims. However, neutral stories remained most prominent, showing both sides equally, again by mentioning facts and general descriptions of immigration policies. For example, one article both mentioned the exploitation and “cheap labor” of Mexican immigrants while also discussing their “skilled” characteristics.

The newspaper with the third highest circulation, the El Paso Times, produced varied results. With a circulation of over 83,700 on Sundays (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2007), this publication contained 11 articles that related to immigration issues. This translates to roughly just less than three articles per week that dealt with this topic. Out of these 11 articles, eight of them made at least one reference to the word “immigration,” while only one of those eight used “illegal” in conjunction with immigration. However, this was in reference to Chinese illegal immigration. 3 of the 11 articles made at least one reference to the word “immigrant,” and none of them referred to immigrants being “illegal.” The El Paso Times also did not use the word “alien” to describe immigrants, and only one article mentioned the phrase “foreign policy.” This publication also did not use any Associated Press materials in their immigration stories.

The El Paso Times included five positive stories that sympathized and resonated with Mexican Americans as well as supported immigration in general. By using descriptors like “protests against anti-immigration proposals,” “misconceptions,” “struggle,” “harmony,” “helping hand” and “cooperation” within stories that personalize illegal immigrants and describe positive economic results of immigration,

these articles portray a pro-immigration point of view. 2 stories of the 11 contained anti-immigration implications by using descriptors like “mess,” “caught,” “smuggling,” and “capture” within stories that discuss political campaigns to secure borders. 4 generally neutral stories also discussed both sides of the immigration story, recognizing the problem but not focusing on problems alone.

With an average circulation of almost 58,000 on Sundays (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2007), the Amarillo Globe-News contained the least amount of immigration coverage of all the newspaper covered in this study. This publication only included one article over the four-week period that with any of the key phrases. This means that the Amarillo Globe-News provides less than one original story per week dealing with immigration issues. This singular article referred to the word “immigrant” two times and described a general immigrant without information of background or ethnic characteristics. It was considered to be a neutral story due to its lack of any distinct descriptors.

Finally, the Brownsville Herald, with the lowest average circulation of over 16,000 on Sundays contained only two articles that referred to immigration issues. These articles referred to both the words “immigration” and “immigrant” and one of these articles was from the Associated Press. This means that the Brownsville Herald also provides less than one original story per week dealing with immigration issues. One of these articles, written by a Brownsville Herald reporter, was considered to be very sympathetic toward immigrants who work for an employer. With quotes that Mexican immigrants are simply taking the jobs not wanted by Americans and by using descriptors in the article such as “badly understaffed” this article shows partiality toward helping Mexicans into the United States. The second article used the word “illegal immigrants” and investigated the story of a police officer who had possibly violated the civil rights of immigrants during his recent “crackdowns.” This story is considered neutral because it shows both sides of the story.

In general, out of the 45 unique articles analyzed, these five Texas newspaper websites contained a total of 32 articles that mentioned the word “immigration” at least once and six articles that used the phrase “illegal immigration” at least once. In addition, 23 articles contained the word “immigrant” while

nine contained the phrase “illegal immigrant.” Only five articles of the 45 gathered mentioned the word “alien” in relation to immigration issues, and only four articles used the phrase “foreign policy.”

Discussion

The results of this study illustrate the vast differences between coverage of immigration issues among Texas newspaper websites. Obviously, cities with larger newspaper circulation like Dallas and San Antonio provided more articles in general and, therefore, contributed to a wider variety of results while the two relatively smaller newspapers added little content to this research. This sheer difference in volume of coverage of immigration issues may be for several reasons. One reason is that larger newspapers may have the means and resources to employ reporters specifically to cover specific topics and, thus, author new articles more prolifically. However, the main reason for such a dramatic range of coverage is a result of demographics. For example, the Brownsville Herald covered immigration issues twice as much as the Amarillo Globe-News whose circulation reaches over three times as many people. This is most likely due to the fact that over 91% of the Brownsville population is Hispanic or Latino while only about 20% of the population in Amarillo is Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Similarly, even though San Antonio reaches a Sunday circulation almost 200,000 less than Dallas, the San Antonio Express-News covered four more news stories related to immigration issues during this four-week period due to its larger Hispanic population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). And, even though El Paso’s population is nearly half the population of Dallas, the El Paso Times provided only three less stories than the Dallas Morning News. These demographic differences are largely a result of each city’s location in relation to the Mexico border; Brownsville and El Paso are Border States while Amarillo, San Antonio, and Dallas are not.

While the volume of stories at each newspaper outlet differs, so does the content of each newspaper’s coverage. Due to previously discussed demographic and location differences, each outlet focused on different overall qualities of news to reach their audience. The Dallas Morning News focused many of their stories around three main qualities of news: prominence, proximity and conflict. Stories that

focused more on prominence included the immigration reporter from Houston named Associated Press Writer of the Year and the fact that four Latino candidates were running for seats of a City Council. Stories like these remained somewhat common. Most of the stories published in the Dallas Morning News relating to immigration were proximate, citing cities in Texas and localizing national stories. For example, one headline read, “Border fence may cause demise of two Texas nature preserves” while another story mentioned the Catholic Charities of Dallas immigrants and others mentioned surrounding cities frequently. However, these two qualities of newsworthiness may have been solely to reach their desired audience.

One of the most prominent qualities of news that surfaced almost in almost every story was conflict. While immigration debates lend themselves to conflict and discord, several stories cited criticisms among political parties, mentions of bypassing environmental laws, opposition to punitive laws for immigrants, and the enforcement of illegal immigration without also citing stories involving immigrant agreements, compliance or peace. By including this news quality in almost every story, this increases what Scheufele (1999) refers to as “salience”: the ease of an audience to obtain positive or negative overtones regarding a topic. According to Scheufele (1999), the most accessible frames (conflict in this case) are those that are most easily available and relate to the stage in framing referred to as “frame setting.” In addition, the Dallas Morning News used the word “illegal” in 12 of their 14 articles, while all other news organizations only mentioned the word in two articles at most. Scheufele (2006) discusses the fact that repetition of words like “illegal” have a greater impact on less knowledgeable people who pay more attention to secondary cues.

The San Antonio Express-News also focused most of their stories on the news qualities of conflict and proximity, but emotion also remained prominent throughout several of their stories. By using in-depth coverage of immigrants and personalizing some stories, this news source often used descriptive, narrative phrases like “It’s such a tragic situation because people leave their children,” “came to this country with \$50 in his pocket but rose to prominence,” “families they leave behind,” and “Mexican immigrants who go through all kinds of hardships when they travel north to the United States,” these

journalists evoked sentiments of sympathy that may prompt readers to empathize with Mexican immigrants more than they would in articles written by other newspaper organizations. According to Scheufele (2006), journalists themselves may have their own interest they may inadvertently or purposefully project when constructing a message. This could be the case at the San Antonio News-Express, as many journalists employed there may also be Hispanic. In addition, due to demographics, these stories may relate to what Scheufele (2006) refers to as “existing cognitive schemas” of current Mexican immigrants living in San Antonio and could trigger emotions of personal experiences.

While the El Paso Times often portrayed news qualities of proximity and timeliness, their articles chiefly focused on emotion, impact and prominence. When stories relating to conflict were mentioned, only two of them were negatively portraying immigration. Almost every article analyzed in the El Paso Times discussed issues in ways that would impact its readers. By using phrases like “strength of their community” and discussing upcoming lotteries to “lucky recipients of H-1B visas” in the area, competitions for youngsters to enter videos in a local Latino television contest, and upcoming events to discuss matters like immigration’s impact on small business, the El Paso Times caters to its demographic. This publication also incorporated immigration issues like a story on border cameras and political stories focused on the 2008 presidential election. As the most prominent quality of news, impact could be used as a frame to show that immigration is a concern for readers. According to Scheufele (1999), news frames repackage reality into discernable events, and by using this news quality of impact, the El Paso Times repackages immigration into these personalized, intimate events in which citizens can partake. This publication also referred to several prominent figures in their articles, including John McCain, Hillary Clinton and local public officials running for office or involved with positive events in the community, often citing them as immigrants or children of immigrants. This also gives the city of El Paso an general understanding that immigration is a positive and everyday occurrence.

The Amarillo Globe-News article focused entirely on emotion and novelty. Little can be taken from this article in terms of framing of immigration as it may not be completely representative of the newspaper’s portrayal of immigration. Instead, the paper’s lack of coverage tells more about their

underrepresentation of a major demographic in the area, the Latino and Hispanic community which makes up almost 20% of the population. While this research can not speak to the Amarillo Globe-News's representation of Hispanics, immigration is one issue of the population that is dramatically mitigated. The Amarillo population may, in effect, come to understand that immigration may not even be an issue of concern. Therefore, this may be more of a matter of agenda setting than framing.

Finally, the Brownsville Herald yielded results to the El Paso Times in its portrayal of immigration to its community. Because Brownsville is so close to the Mexico border, one story focused also on proximity and impact in which a carnival in the area suffered from a lack of jobs as a result of recent legislation. However, both stories involving immigration focused on conflict. When conflict was discussed in each story, it favored immigration and legal immigrants in the United States, using phrases like “discriminatory harassment” upon immigrants and “improper stops, searches and arrests.” When newspapers publish scenarios in which conflict is solved by people making decisions in favor of immigrants coming to the United States, this may portray immigration and immigrants through a frame of being victims of society.

Obviously, Texas newspaper websites frame coverage of immigration in several ways. Publications that are closer to the Mexico border tend to portray immigration as a regular occurrence that may help readers build ideas of acceptance and welcoming of immigrants into the United States, whereas publications farther from the border (if they even cover immigration) tend to focus on frames related to negative conflict and legalism. The sometimes drastic differences in volume and content illustrate that newspaper organizations still have a long way to go to portray immigration in a way that is representative to the population while still remaining democratic.

Limitations

Several limitations of this study may have hindered results and could have interfered with the retrieval of information. For example, this content analysis relied heavily on Internet search engines and incomplete information databases. Due to the fact that newspaper organizations constantly update and

modify their content, newspaper articles may have been overlooked without the key phrases used in the study. This could have limited the number of articles retrieved. In addition, the newspaper website search functions may not have been equally effective. By receiving so few results from Amarillo.com and Brownsvilleherald.com, for example, articles that may have been on the website may have been missing from this study. Also, some of this research was interpreted subjectively. While definitions could be verified using official methods, this research failed to use more than one coder to identify descriptors and decipher qualities of news.

Areas of Future Study

Future areas of study could analyze newspaper website coverage of the 2008 presidential elections throughout Border States to determine any increase in coverage or change in content. The current study could be extended to continue aggregating articles until the November elections to see any changes as well.

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