Partisan Preference?

A Comprehensive Analysis of Immigration-based News Reporting through Media Framing

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I certify that I have read this thesis and that, in my opinion, it is satisfactory in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Professional Communication

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Abstract

The question of media bias through the lens of the media framing theory has long been investigated by researchers. With immigration-based news more prevalent in coverage as a result of the 2016 Presidential election and President Trump's continuing efforts to build a wall separating the United States and Mexico, the topic presents a timely focal point to analyze partisan leanings in news coverage. While past research analyzed individual journalist's partisan leanings and the impact on news reports, this research instead considered how state party preference, and audience preference, affects partisan leanings and language in regional news reports through the media framing theory.

This research reviewed several factors involved in possible media bias through the collection and analysis of 200 news articles spread throughout eight different media organizations in four separate states. In a quantitative analysis reviewing the following categories: 1) beginning news coverage, 2) overall news coverage, 3) sources, and 4) keyword use, this paper compares and contrasts immigration-based news articles through media framing, partisan bias, and other factors. The study found significant differences comparing beginning and overall news coverage categories, and a possible partisan leaning in news coverage based on state party affiliation.

Partisan Preference? A Comprehensive Analysis of Immigration-based News Reporting

through Media Framing

Proclamations of media bias, inaccurate reporting, and misinformation have grown in recent years, including, and possibly connected to, President Trump's repeated slogan of 'fake news' profligate on Twitter, events and news conferences, which is directed straight toward the media (Beaujon, 2019). In a Gallup poll just last year, more than 60 percent of Americans believed traditional news media to be biased, and 44 percent believed the media reports inaccurate information (Jones, 2018). Nonetheless, researchers have analyzed the top 15 American news outlets for media bias, and while some were discovered to report left or right-leanings, the majority were found to report primarily unbiased news reports (Budak, Goel, & Rao, 2016). However, with the media's role as gatekeeper deciding what information is released to the public, this power does create the possibility of bias.

While the study by Coe and colleagues (2008) discovered a "blurring" (p.201) of the line between political opinion and news reporting, other studies, such as one by Budak, Goel and Rao (2016) indicates that traditional national media organizations (i.e., news organizations such as CBS News, NBC News and prominent national newspapers) toe the line of unbiased reporting. However, there has been less research regarding regional news outlets, or local news. Previous research found partisan favorability in news media in Chile for ruling parties, and a shift in that partisan preference based on changes in politics (Elejalde, Ferres, & Herder, 2018). In the United States, the primary political parties are Democratic and Republican, with many states indicating a majority favor of one party over another, and based on state legislatures, some are split between both parties (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019). In majority states, based on repeated support for the majority party, it is likely that mainstream political opinion supports the represented party.

There is another crucial aspect concerning this question of news bias and partisan favorability, and that is audience preference. As Westerwick, Johnson and Knobloch-Westerwick (2017) explained in a study investigating selective exposure and bias in news and audience response, confirmation bias can be categorized in several ways, including news bias, self-reported bias, party bias, and other forms. Their research primarily delved into source cues and audience reaction toward the type of news organization reporting, and whether that news agency aligned with pre-existing values or beliefs; however, it points to a fundamental argument: the impact of audience preference on reaction to news (Westerwick, Johnson, & Knobloch-Westerwick, 2017).

This focus on audience preference links to news decisions based on the agenda setting theory, which will be discussed further in the literature review, but briefly, the theory is based on this: what the news considers important enough to cover, the audience in turns considers important (Littlejohn, Foss, & Oetzel, 2017). However, in a cyclical format, researchers have also investigated how journalist's opinions influence news reports, and in turn, audience reaction; and taking that a step further, by considering the "active audience" (p. 657), how much issues the audience consider important, in turn influence news coverage (Papadouka, Evangelopoulos, & Ignatow, 2016).

With regard to what extent news influences public opinion, and in the reverse, how much audience opinion influences news, this research proposed a critical question leading back to biased reporting resulting from partisan favorability. In other words, this research sought to question whether popular partisan leaning could influence news agencies. As previously mentioned, past research has investigated national outlets reporting news with partisan leanings, but regional news agencies present a unique situation, resulting from a closer personal relationship to local audiences. As Hess (2015) argues in an investigation of social networks and connections between audiences and community, or regional newspapers, readers observed how local news agencies focused on issues affecting their audience, and less on outside issues with no impact. In other words, the study

highlighted the unconscious ability for local news agencies to link people through news coverage; however, as a result, unbiased news coverage can be lacking (Hess, 2015).

Another aspect, which will be discussed further in this paper, involves the advance of technology in news production and consumption, especially with regard to social media. Selective news exposure has arguably been impacted by social media algorithms influencing which content reaches social media users (Aruguete & Calvo, 2018). Possibly as a result of those social media algorithms, a question is raised regarding whether news organizations frame content or social media posts to target engagement (Lee, 2016). While this research didn't analyze social media posts or audience engagement, the advances in news technology illustrate the changing nature of journalism.

The primary focus of this research was whether regional journalism, possibly influenced by advancing technology, personal connections with audiences, and more crucially, public opinion, reports biased news coverage as a result of those factors. To investigate this question, this research proposed analyzing regional news coverage through the lens of the media framing theory, which will be discussed shortly, to determine whether regional journalists or organizations frame news to influence audiences.

Literature Review and Rationale

Agenda-Setting Theory

However, before considering the media framing theory, it's necessary to first consider the media's power in the role as gatekeeper, which refers to the media's ability to act as decision maker who receives information and then decides, based on certain preferences, what information will be disseminated to the public. This gatekeeping role has arguably been influenced more by news organizations, than individual reporters (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, & Wrigley, 2001). In the agenda setting theory, the news media use gatekeeping as a selection tool (McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 2014). By placing specific news in a prominent location or giving a news story more

attention through repeated exposure, the media can direct viewers' attentions to that angle, and in turn, help direct viewers' opinions (Littlejohn, Foss, & Oetzel, 2017).

Taking the agenda-setting theory a step further, Djerf-Pierre and Shehata (2017) analyze issue signals, or different methods in which media signal the importance of a news topic. With regard to this, the study discusses two central factors to the impact on public perception: 1) issue competition and 2) issue history (Djerf-Pierre & Shehata, 2017). Issue competition refers to a competing news story given equal or similar prominence in news reports, and issue history refers to how often a news issue or topic is repeated by the media.

However, there is question in the recent age of digital audience interaction through social media, regarding whether audience can influence journalism reporting, and reverse agenda-setting from journalist sway, to audience effect. Although this will be further mentioned in the literature review. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) discussed how other individuals could impact agenda-setting; it was primarily focused on government officials or others in a position of power (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). However, recent research focused on digital impact, has raised the question about whether bloggers, individuals leading social media group discussion, or others who aren't journalists but nonetheless raise significant issues, could influence journalists in published content (Russell Neuman, Guggenheim, Mo Jang, & Bae, 2014). However, despite the number of bloggers and social media pages, journalism arguably has the utmost influence regarding what news is disseminated to the public.

There is a further question regarding the impact of social media algorithms on the agenda-setting theory. While journalists, editors and news organizations can decide what news information takes precedence in media reports, once that information is posted to social media platforms such as Facebook, that control is partly removed. In the last 5 years, Facebook's algorithm focused on promoting content posted or shared by family and friends, compared to that of organizations, and

in turn news media's, public pages. More recently, the new Facebook algorithm is also analyzing

posts that will appear in a news feed based on whether the Facebook user is likely to react

positively to the post (Swan, 2019). If Facebook is pushing content based on social media user

preferences, and solely positive ones at that, it's questionable how often content that may seem

negative, or in contrast to an individual's personal preferences, will appear on a social media news

feed. There is another report that Facebook is testing a new tab feature that would make it easier

for people to adjust that algorithm by preferring "most recent" selection of news feeds, but it's

unclear how that could impact news and audience opinion (Constine, 2020).

Media Framing Theory

A second level of the agenda-setting theory, media framing, is more specific in how a news

story is structured to place emphasis on certain issues or opinions. Littlejohn and colleagues (2017)

described media framing as "the process of putting a news story or other type of media message

together, including the ways in which a story is organized and structured" (p.165), which can be

accomplished in several ways (Littlejohn, Foss, & Oetzel, 2017). For instance, in a news story

focusing on immigration, if a reporter used a narrative immigrant success story as an introduction,

before leading to additional information regarding immigration policy, the 'framing' of the story

may encourage readers to consider the remaining information with a favorable opinion on

immigration. If instead, the story started with criminal statistics or an immigration example

involving criminal elements, the opposite may occur.

Partisan and Media Bias

One type of media gatekeeping has received considerable attention, partly for concern over

contribution to election and voter prejudice: partisan bias (Kuypers, 2018; Barber, 2008). In other

words, to what extent does the news media influence how people think about politicians and

political issues? Haselmayer and colleagues (2008) suggested two types of "partisan gatekeeping

bias" (p.2) represented in the news: 1) media influenced by their own political preferences or parties the news organization is close to, could in turn report news more often or more favorably regarding those political affiliations, and 2) news media will consider reader preferences, and in turn provide coverage that will increase sales numbers/online clicks. Their research discovered partisan bias in the media was greater when connected to a high news value story (Haselmayer, Wagner, & Meyer, 2017).

Previous research also identified a phenomenon identified as "hostile media", which discusses how people on opposing sides of an issue will both interpret an unbiased media story as hostile against their side (Choi, Yang, & Chanbg, 2009). Tsang (2018) analyzed the hostile media phenomenon with regards to emotional immigration news stories, and unbiased stories, to analyze the perception of news bias. The research discovered that empathetic news tended to increase media favorability (Tsang, 2018).

While part of this literature review has discussed partisan bias, it's also crucial to more intricately examine the nature of media bias focusing on immigration news content. As Dragojevic, Sink and Mastro (2017) described in a study investigating linguistic bias inherent in news media coverage of immigration issues, the presence of blatant media bias would likely draw outcry and protest from the public; however, subtle variation in linguistic choices, may exist undiscovered. Previous research have revealed linguistic bias in news media, including immigration news content in the U.S., through the use of abstract language, i.e. sentences with verb usage that explain psychological or emotional state, and adjectives that describe behaviors (Mastro, Tukachinsky, Behm-Morawitz, & Blecha, 2014) (Dragojevic, Sink, & Mastro, 2017). To clarify, abstract language (versus concrete language) refers to grammatical elements in the linguistic category model (LCM), which was first identified by Semin and Fielder (1988), to describe these types of language: 1) observable behavior (e.g., Sally spoke with Jack), 2) interpretive behavior (e.g., Sally upset Jack), 3) emotional behavior that can't be observed (e.g., Sally loves Jack), and 4) description (e.g., Sally is

popular). In other words, when abstract language (emotional and description) has been included in immigration-based news content, that language was discovered to influence negative attitudes about immigrants.

Immigration in the News

Another study researching biased reporting of alternative right-wing media organizations analyzed news reports in Scandinavia based on four factors: 1) accurate current news with background information, 2) offering interpretation, 3) normative opinion (i.e., whether news information is good or bad), and 4) empirical opinion (i.e., whether news information is true or false) (Nygaard, 2019). However, the research also discussed how news organizations, whether alternative or not, can use a descriptive style of writing without expressing opinion, but still imply judgement through how and where information is placed through the article (i.e., framing), or using statements from politicians, experts or others to make an opinion without the reporter providing it.

While past research from Gil de Zuniga and colleages (2012) has indicated conservative preferences for Fox News and right-wing radio talk shows, other evidence from Kaufhold (2019) specifies how even mainstream news media, considered to be purveyors of unbiased news reports, can include negative and positive information about immigration, and that even comment sections can create an atmosphere of racial discussion (Gil de Zúñiga, Correa, & Valenzuela, 2002). However, in her analysis regarding newspaper coverage compared to television news broadcasts, the research found partisan preferences with "selective exposure" (p.233), with Democrats favoring newspapers and Republicans selecting radio talk shows and broadcast news (Kaufhold, 2019). Research from Stephens and Jarvis (2016) supported this through an analysis of the selective exposure behavior of readers seeking online news and particularly, "most-read" news stories, indicating how readers "select stories offering an emotionally satisfying political perspective"

(p.279). In other words, people cherry-pick content that supports their own partisan preference (Stephens & Jarvis, 2016).

Perhaps as a result of selective exposure, there remains the question about the effect news media articles, whether in newspaper or TV news, has on viewers. According to statistics from the Research Center (2019), 67 percent of American desire a way for illegal immigrants to remain in the country, with Democrats as primary support for this; however, approximately the same amount believe it's important to escalate security along the border between the U.S. and Mexico, with 91 percent of Republicans backing this goal. The partisan gap increases with regard to deportations of illegal immigrants, with 83 percent of Republicans supporting it, but only 31 percent of Republicans (Daniller, 2019).

In essence, this research was not intended to argue entirely about the dangers of media framing; even a wide-ranging mix of reporting can be ignored due to a reader's selective exposure. Partisan identity arguably as a group identity, pertains to how group members react to outside groups, and other identities, including nationality, race, and ethnicity (Turner, 2010). As discussed earlier, when those group members select news articles that favor their political preferences, even if other unbiased reporting or news that offers information regarding a different viewpoint is available, that content can easily be discounted. As Seate and Mastro (2017) explain in an analysis regarding the importance of emotions with regard to immigration news, exposure to that news, whether it features threatening or favorable portrayals of immigration, can have harmful effects. In the study, researchers discovered strong emotions, and as a consequence, negative behaviors, resulting from exposure to media, but primarily with groups who believed they were negatively impacted by undocumented immigrants (Seate & Mastro, 2017).

Public Influence

While this literature review has indicated negativity as a result of media exposure depending on group identity, selective exposure cannot account for all media exposure. In other words, readers may cherry-pick articles that favor their preferences, but they can still be exposed to other information; this reverts back to the importance of media framing. Previous studies have analyzed coverage of major news organizations and identified polarization in certain outlets, but little to no research identified media bias in smaller, regional outlets (Budak, Goel, & Rao, 2016). However, regarding the second partisan bias that Haselmayer and colleagues (2008) identified, the news media may be motivated by their readers. This research was supported by a couple factors: 1) financial aspect, and 2) social media. In the first, the financial aspect, the decline in newspaper and TV broadcast advertising was identified years ago, and as a result, media organizations have been identifying and testing new modes of advertisement sales to compensate for a dwindling ad revenue (Picard, 2008). For the past several years, news outlets have experimented with video ads, Facebook ads, mobile ads, and now with ad sales struggling even more due to competing companies in the ad business, major newspapers are experimenting with digital subscriptions; instead of offering online news for free, you have to pay for it (Thompson, 2018). To motivate readers to pay for the news, this begs the question: could news, in an inverse relationship, be motivated by reader preference?

The second part of media motivation involves social media. Every year, new audience tracking metrics become available, and these impressive tools make it possible for news organizations to not only view who clicks on an online article, but where they go next, their web history, demographic information, length of time, and more data (The Reuters Institute, 2016).

The rise of this sophisticated technology available to organizations coincides with the news media's growing reliance on the number of online clicks to news articles. However, as the media gathers more information about audience preferences, who influences whom? With greater access to audience news preferences, are news editors, and in turn reporters, influenced by their

audience? In a study analyzing audience web clicks and tracking data reviewing where and when

news is placed on media websites, Lee and colleagues (2014) considered just that issue: whether

audiences are influencing news editors, instead of the other way around. Their research used data

analysis of online American newspaper sites, and discovered that audience web clicks does impact

where news appears on a website; in other words, audience preferences appears to impact news

placement, and therefore imply a greater priority (Lee, Lewis, & Powers, 2014).

Immigration

This research paper focused on news articles collected in four Democrat and Republican

states, both in areas heavily impacted by undocumented immigration, and areas not greatly

impacted, to analyze the difference in news coverage through the media framing theory for

different reporting techniques with suspected political preferences. However, it's important to first

briefly consider the history of immigration in the United States, and particularly, how immigration

policy has changed in the last four years and the impact.

While distrust and anger over undocumented immigration was not a new criticism during

the 2016 Presidential election, news articles and countless research indicated how President

Trump used the claim as a focal point in his promises to crowds of supports that he would build a

wall bordering between the United States and Mexico to block undocumented immigrants from

entering the country illegally, and reduce crime and other frustrations supposedly resulting from

rampant immigration (Newman, Shah, & Collingwood, 2018) (Gonzalez, 2019) (Saldaña, M. Cueva

Chacon, & Garcia-Perdomo, 2018). As Ogan, Pennington, Venger and Metz (2018) discussed,

immigration became one of the top political debates during the 2016 election, with Clinton arguing

for increasing paths for immigration citizenship, and Trump claiming immigrant-related crime, and

pushing an agenda of concern for economic instability as a result of high numbers of immigrants

providing a cheaper labor force. With an election poll coverage showing immigration as a top

priority and presidential debates and statements mirroring this trend, media coverage, likely as a result, made immigration news a high priority as well (Ogan, Pennington, Venger, & Metz, 2018).

In the United States, immigration has consistently been viewed as a threat, but in the early 1900s, the anti-immigration opinion increased considerably (Ngai, 2007). Despite the melting pot nature of the United States and the history of immigration since America was first discovered, immigration has been viewed with distrust and hostility; consider placard signs against immigrating Irish and the famous slogans of NINA (i.e., No Irish Need Apply) during the early 1900s when the potato famine in Ireland drove hundreds of thousands of Irish immigrants to the United States (Conlin, 2010). There are countless examples throughout history, but during the 2016 Presidential Election, the topic of Mexican immigration became a focal point.

However, while President Trump's promises of a border wall were met with high support from Republicans during the election, policy changes in the last few years have raised concerns. 2020 Presidential Democratic candidates have fought back against Trump's recent policies, including the separation of immigrant children from their families during border crossing (Hansen, 2019). Since July 2017, the Trump administration has separated more than 1,500 children from their parents, with approximately 200 of those cases comprising children under the age of 5 (Aguilera, 2019).

Reports of criminal actions involving immigrants, particularly undocumented immigrants, has fueled part of President Trump's rhetoric over the years; however, statistics indicate that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes or become incarcerated compared to native-born citizens (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2016). Another focal point behind anger directed at immigrants resulted from claims that undocumented immigrants were removing job opportunities from natural born Americans. However, further statistics indicate the opposite, that immigrants

actually help create new jobs through the purchase of U.S. products, likelihood of developing their own businesses, and annual contributions to taxes (ADL, 2019).

As discussed earlier, the news media's influence in reporting about immigration, and the reaction from both Democrat and Republican supporters, illustrate the important role media can play with impacting audience reaction. While there has also been evidence that people will selectively become exposed to news reports that consistently follow their own preferences regarding the topic, the amount of immigration-related news coverage and the method in which news media frame immigration through placement and reporting style, could arguably contribute to audience reaction. While support for immigration has more recently come from Democrats, with Republican distrust and vitriol creating the opposite, the question regarding media influence remains. To analyze this influence, this research paper, as mentioned previously, investigated the news reports of several media organizations, half TV broadcast and half newspapers, with an equal number from primarily Republican and Democratic supporting states, both ones with heavy immigration impact and those with lower impact.

Research Questions

Using the media framing theory as applied to this analysis of immigration news stories, the research questions were as follows:

- RQ1: How are immigration-based news reports influenced by overall audience preference for partisan feeling, based on the highest voting preferences for a political party?

- RQ2: How does the coverage tone of immigration-based news reports change in different geo-political regions through primary news outlets in the states?

- RQ3: How do different media outlets portray immigration-related news content through the media framing theory?

Method

To analyze partisan bias through media framing, this research analyzed immigration news articles from eight news outlets, including: 1) KTVK – CBS affiliate in Arizona, 2) The Arizona Republic, 3) WTHR – NBC affillitate in Indiana, 4) The Indy Star, 5) KCRA – CBS affiliate in California, 6) the Sacramento Bee, 7) Fox12 – Fox affiliate in Oregon, and 8) the Portland Tribune. The decision to choose these news outlets was based on several factors. This research focused on four newspapers and four TV stations, which were chosen for highest circulation and ratings numbers for each publication, for both immigration numbers based on state and county area, and political party data. The Arizona Republic and KTVK, which are both located in Phoenix, Arizona, are in a primarily Republican state and an area with high immigration numbers. The Indy Star, which is published in Indianapolis, Indiana, and WTHR, which is broadcast out of the same area, are both based in a primarily Republican state and an area with low immigration numbers. The Sacramento Bee, which is published in Sacramento, California, is circulated in a primarily Democratic state and an area with high immigration numbers. Finally, the Portland Tribune, and Fox 12, are based in Portland, Oregon, and boast viewers and readers in a primarily Democratic state and an area with low immigration numbers (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2019) (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Quantitative analysis of the discourse used in articles posted online for each of these eight media organizations was the primary focus to comprehend media framing techniques represented in each of these news reports. For the purpose of content analysis, this paper involved gathering news articles from each of the organizations' primary websites, and searching for the term 'immigration', 'immigrant', and 'migrant' in a search field. News articles involving immigration date back dozens of years, but for the purpose of this research, the search was narrowed down to only include news articles from January 2019 to February 2020. This specific year was chosen for research because of the administrative legislation passed by the federal government regarding

immigration, and subsequent backlash (Montoya-Galvez, 2020). Out of the 200 news articles

included in the content analysis, there are exactly 25 from each of the news organizations included

in this research.

In order to guarantee a random sampling for each of the news articles, 50 news articles

were originally collected from each of the news organizations. Each of the news articles and

subsequent web links were assigned a number in order of search finding, and then using a random

number generator, 25 of the news articles were included. However, there were some aspects that

disqualified articles from being included in the sample. If a news article only involved pictures or

video, or if the news article had fewer than 200 words, it was excluded from the data collection

analysis.

There was question about whether opinion articles should be retained in the sample, as

they are less likely to be unbiased coverage, since the nature of opinion articles are espousing one

person's opinion. However, it was decided to retain opinion-based articles for two reasons: 1) even

though they are not considered unbiased news reporting and less likely to require analysis through

the media framing theory because the entire article is based on one person's thoughts, the numbers

of opinion articles read or 'clicked on' through web links is higher than other unbiased coverage,

and 2) opinion articles may represent an overall feeling or negative or positive opinion from

readers, and possibly represent newspaper management thoughts; opinion articles are chosen by

newspaper management, and therefore could represent their own personal feelings regarding the

issue.

There was also question about whether to include news articles linked from outside

agencies. For example, newspapers and TV broadcasts continuously use partner content from

agencies such as, the Associated Press, or national networks, including CNN, CBS, NBC, FOX, and

ABC. However, even though the content is written by outside agencies and reporters not familiar

with the local agencies' average coverage, it was decided to retain these outside agency articles. However, articles from outside agencies that cover non-local issues, or national issues that wouldn't have a local tie to the media organization posting the story online, were excluded. For example, if one of the Arizona TV or newspaper media companies posted a CNN-written news article that didn't have any connection to Arizona, such as one situation where KTVK posted an arguably sensational article that involved an Oregon church, this article would be excluded from the data collection.

Coding Categories:

For the content analysis and comparison of online news articles for each of the 8 media organizations involved in this quantitative analysis, there are several categories defined to code the articles. In this research, 25 news articles were analyzed and coded from each of the news organizations, for a total of 200 articles posted online. Although half of the articles result from TV broadcast websites and the other half from newspaper websites, coding following the same guidelines for all combined. The first level of coding categories include: 1) beginning coverage tone, overall coverage tone, news sources, and keyword use. The differences between beginning coverage tone and overall coverage tone is intended to analyze how each media article is framed in the first four sentences, compared to other unbiased coverage continued throughout the article. In other words, the purpose is to comprehend whether reporters begin a news article with positive or negative tones to frame the article in a specific method, and influence readers to view the story in a specific way. As Entman (2007) describes, reporters embrace several techniques of discourse and writing style to promote explicit framing, However, his research also implied that government power is likely involved in the decision to slant news (Entman, 2007).

In this research, it was important to discuss the motivations behind analyzing news sources and keyword use. In an analysis of 131 news articles involving the media framing theory, Matthew

(2009) reviewed definitions, framing types (i.e., textual, visual, or combined features), use of theory, and different framing methods used for analysis. Several of the articles reviewed involved use of the conflict frame, issue frame, economic consequences frame, human interest frame and morality frame (Matthew, 2009). This current research considered human interest, conflict and issue as a primary part of analysis. With regard to keyword use, this is an important aspect of analyzing news articles because word choice can be modified to imply bias, and in recent years, the use diction in news articles has been re-evaluated (Hamborg, Zhukova, & Gipp, 2019). For example, some states, such as New York, have passed a new law making it illegal to use the term 'illegal alien' (WTHR-TV, 2019).

For each of the coding categories, 1 equals 'Yes' and 2 equals 'No'. Beginning coverage tone is divided into the following sub-categories: Positive, Negative, and Neutral. The classification of each news article was not just based on overall coverage tone, but also the coverage tone in the four sentences of the news article. In other words, this first category focuses on analyzing how the article begins coverage tone, not analyzing overall unbiased coverage tone. In this research, content that was classified as positive (i.e., positive towards immigration) included, within the first four sentences, any mention of human interest/victim stories or quotes, sympathetic content or quotes regarding immigration, negative discourse against anti-immigration policies, humorous news content or quotes, protests against anti-immigration policies or officials, and positive tone, writing style or headline. The classification of negative beginning coverage (i.e. negative towards immigration) included, within the first four sentences, any mention of negative discourse against immigration or immigrants, police or legal confrontations without a human interest connection, measures or policies opposing legal or illegal immigration, negative discourse against pro-immigration policies, and negative tone, writing style or headline. For the classification of Neutral, this will include any articles that don't include human interest, and anti- or pro-immigration rhetoric within the first four sentences, but instead only include updates to policies, legislation,

laws passing, or other federal regulations without negative or positive connotations. The overall

coverage tone category follows the same sub-categories: Positive, Negative and Neutral; the only

difference is the coder is analyzing for overall coverage tone instead of coverage tone in the first

four sentences.

In the Sources category, the sub categories include: Victim/Human interest, Pro-

Immigration, Anti-Immigration, Government, Expert, Anti-Immigration Human Interest, and Other.

In the following sub categories: (a) Victim/Human interest frame included any news source quoted

or interviewed with a personal human interest story that was pro-immigration; (b) Pro-

Immigration frame included any news source quoted or interviewed who offered pro-immigration

information or advocates on the behalf of immigrants; (c) Anti-Immigration frame included any

news source quoted or interviewed who provided anti-immigration information or advocates

against immigrants; (d) Government frame included any news source quoted or interviewed who

are with the federal or state government, or work for an official government- or state-managed

organizations, including immigration officials; (e) Expert frame included any news source quoted or

interviewed who offers an expert or professional information, including medical professionals, anti-

or pro-immigration attorneys or other legal counsel, or individuals who work in a professional

organization related to the immigration field; (f) Anti-Immigration Human Interest frame included

any news source quoted or interviewed who offers a personal or human interest story that was

anti-immigration based, including stories involving a criminal element of immigration, job loss, or

other suffering as a consequence of legal or illegal immigration; and (g) Other frame included any

individual that didn't fit into the primary sub categories

In the Keyword Use category, the sub categories include: Illegal, Criminal(s), Unauthorized,

Undocumented, Alien, and Deport(ation). In this category, the sub categories are coded by 1 equals

'Yes' and 2 equals 'No'. In this research, each sub category was analyzed by whether an article

includes these words or not. The reasons for these specific terms was a result of previous research

discussing the negative connotations implied in some of these words (Hiltner, 2017). During the coding of every news article, this research searched for each of these words in the online news stories under review; however, while there are several instances in which 'illegal' and 'criminal' is included in a news article, the only time either term was coded as 'Yes' was if that word specifically referenced an immigrant. For instance, news articles that mentioned someone entering the United States illegally or committing an illegal act didn't count; news mentions of 'illegal immigrant' or specifically referring to an immigrant as a criminal because they are an immigrant, were coded as 'Yes'.

Results/Findings

This research focused on investigating the relationship between news coverage and audience partisan favorability. To review a wide-range of factors in news reporting, the research encompassed 25 articles from eight different media organizations, with half from TV news stations and the remaining half from local newspapers. To consider a variety of factors, of the eight news organizations, half were from states with low immigration numbers, and the remaining half from states with high immigration numbers. However, the most crucial factor involved partisan leanings of audience members in each news organization's state, and whether there was any indication of bias in news reporting.

In the analysis of beginning news coverage, which involved news reporting in the first 3-4 paragraphs (Table 1.1) and overall news coverage (Table 1.2), it was discovered that the majority of the news articles reported positive coverage of immigration-based news (41.9%), with neutral coverage close behind (36.4%) and negative coverage coming in last at 21.7%. Compared to the beginning news coverage, overall news coverage reported fewer overall positive (37.4%) and negative (15.7%) stories, but more neutral content (47%).

Table 1.1

Beginning News Category	Percentage
Positive	83 (41.9%)
Negative	43 (21.7%)
Neutral	72 (36.4%)
Total	198 (100%)
X^2 = 21.588, df=4, p<.001	

Table 1.2

Overall News Category	Percentage
Positive	74 (37.4%)
Negative	31 (15.7%)
Neutral	93 (47%)
Total	198 (100%)
X^2 = 45.635, df=2, p<.001	

An additional part of the data analysis was reviewing the 200 news articles based on sources (Table 1.3) and keywords (Table 1.4) included in the articles. The majority of news articles included some form of government source (37%), but following that, there was a significant number of articles which included a pro-immigration source (25.9%), and less still including anti-immigration sources (12.7%) or a human interest/victim source (8.5%). With regard to keyword analysis, it was discovered a majority of news articles involved the terms: deport(ation) (32.3%) and undocumented (31.7%). Following that, there were a number of articles that included the term: illegal(s) (18%), but fewer still contained the terms: criminal(s) (9.3%), and alien (8.1%), and only one article included the term: unauthorized.

Table 1.3

Sources Category	Percentage
Human Interest/Victim	36 (8.5%)
Pro-Immigration	110 (25.9%)
Anti-Immigration	54 (12.7%)
Government	157 (37%)
Expert	33 (7.8%)
Other	25 (5.9%)
Anti-Human Interest/Victim	9 (2.1%)
Total	424 (100%)
X^2 = 404.332, df=6, p<.001	

Table 1.4

Keyword Category	Percentage
Illegal(s)	29 (18%)
Criminal(s)	15 (9.3%)
Unauthorized	1 (0.6%)
Undocumented	51 (31.7%)
Alien	13 (8.1%)
Deport(ation)	51 (32.3%)
Total	161 (100%)
X^2 = 95.951, df=5, p<.001	

While analyzing news coverage for all articles was important, it was crucial to analyze news coverage based on the wide-ranging factors available in this study, including: 1) newspaper vs TV news, 2) low immigration state news vs high immigration state news, and 3) Republican vs Democratic state news outlets. During an analysis breakdown between each of the coverage categories comparing newspaper and TV news outlets (Table 2.1), there was only a significant difference discovered in the beginning coverage category, newspapers (15%) had fewer stories with negative coverage compared to TV stations (28%). Although the positive coverage sub-category in the beginning news coverage category was higher than statistical significance (p>.05), the data showed it was only slight above this result and therefore warranted investigation, with newspapers (46%) slightly higher than TV news stations (37%) in positive news coverage. However, there was no significant difference in the overall coverage, sources or keyword categories comparing newspaper and TV news content.

Table 2.1 – Newspaper vs TV news

Beginning News Category	Newspaper	TV News
Positive	46%	37%
Negative	15%	28%
Neutral	36%	36%
(Negative News Significant Difference): X^2 =5.007, df=1, p<.05		

Table 2.2 – High Immigration vs Low Immigration news

Beginning News Category	Newspaper	TV News
Positive	46%	37%
Negative	15%	28%
Neutral	36%	36%
(Negative News Significant Difference): X^2 =5.007, df=1, p<.05		

During the analysis of news content for articles in states with low immigration numbers compared to high immigration numbers (Table 2.2), while there were no significant differences in the beginning coverage category, there was a notable difference in the overall coverage category. Specifically, news content reporting from in states with high immigration numbers (45%) indicated a higher number of overall positive news articles compared to states with lower immigration numbers (29%).

While there was no significant difference in the Sources category, there was a close enough statistical significance in the anti-immigration source and expert source sub-categories to warrant investigation. There was a greater number of articles from news organizations in states with high immigration numbers (33%) reporting an anti-immigration source compared to states with low immigration numbers (21%); and in the expert source sub-category, high immigration news states also reported increased numbers (23%) compared to low immigration news states (10%).There was also a significant different in the keyword category, with a greater number of news articles from news organizations from low immigration states (33%) containing the term: undocumented, compared to news from high immigration states (18%)

However, the data analysis regarding partisan leanings (Table 2.3), specifically comparing news organizations in primarily Republican versus Democratic states, provided the most insight regarding news coverage. In the beginning coverage category, there were significant differences in positive and negative news coverage. News reports from primarily Democratic states (53%)

showed higher number of positive news coverage in the first four sentences compared to news

content from primarily Republican states (30%). Also notable, in an expected reverse however,

news reports from primarily Republican states (34%) had higher numbers of negative news

coverage in the beginning of articles, compared to news from Democratic states (9%).

Table 2.3 – Democratic vs Republican news

Beginning News Category	Democrat	Republican
Positive X^2=12.339, df=2, p<.01	53%	30%
Negative X^2=18.516, df=1, p<.001	9%	34%
Neutral	37%	35%
Overall News Category	**Democrat**	**Republican**
Positive	40%	34%
Negative X^2=23.860, df=1, p<.001	3%	28%
Neutral X^2=8.863, df=1, p<.01	57%	36%
Sources Category	**Democrat**	**Republican**
Human Interest/Victim	21%	15%
Pro-Immigration	59%	51%
Anti-Immigration	23%	31%
Government	78%	79%
Expert	17%	16%
Other	15%	10%
Anti-Human Interest/Victim X^2=9.424, df=1, p<.01	0%	9%
Sources Category	**Democrat**	**Republican**
Illegal(s) X^2=11.656, df=1, p<.01	6%	23%
Criminal(s)	4%	11%
Unauthorized	0%	1%
Undocumented	31%	20%
Alien	5%	8%
Deport(ation) X^2=17.247, df=1, p<.01	39%	13%

In the overall coverage category, there was no significant difference in positive news

reporting; however, there were significant different in negative and neutral news sub-categories.

News content from primarily Republican states (28%) featured more overall negative news compared to news from primarily Democratic states (9%); however, news from Democratic states featured more overall neutral coverage (57%) compared to news from Republican states (36%).

In the Sources category, there was only one sub-category with a significant difference: anti-human interest/victim, or news with a human-interest source negative about immigration. News content from primarily Republican states (9%) showed a significantly higher number of stories with an anti-human interest/victim source compared to Democratic states (0%). However, there is concern regarding the validity of this data, which was discussed later in this research.

There was also a significant difference in the keyword category comparing news outlets from primarily Democratic and Republican states. For the term: deport(ation), news reports from Democratic states (39%) contained that term more often than reports from Republican states (13%); and in a reverse, news content from Republican states (23%) were more often to include the term: illegal(s) than news from Democratic states (6%).

Table 2.4 – State news coverage comparison

Beginning News Category	Arizona (Republican)	Indiana (Republican)	California (Democrat)	Oregon (Democrat)
Positive X^2=15.851, df=6, p<.05	18 (36%)	12 (24%)	26 (52%)	27 (54%)
Negative X^2=23.789, df=3, p<.05	13 (26%)	21 (42%)	7 (14%)	2(4%)
Neutral	18 (25%)	17 (34%)	16 (32%)	21 (42%)
Overall News Category	**Arizona (Republican)**	**Indiana (Republican)**	**California (Democrat)**	**Oregon (Democrat)**
Positive X^2=9.352, df=3, p<.05	24 (48%)	10 (20%)	21 (42%)	19 (38%)
Negative X^2=26.684, df=3, p<.05	11 (22%)	17 (34%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)
Neutral X^2=13.245, df=3, p<.05	13 (26%)	23 (46%)	27 (54%)	30 (60%)

Given the significant difference data regarding partisan leaning, it seemed necessary to also examine data comparing the news coverage provided by organizations by each state (Table 2.4). There was a significant difference in the beginning coverage category, for both positive and negative coverage. News organizations in Indiana (24%) had significantly fewer positive news in the first four sentences of the article, and reversely, the same news organizations had a greater majority of negative news in the beginning coverage. The overall coverage category followed the same trend of positive and negative news with Indiana news organizations (42%), although more neutral coverage in the overall category. For the neutral news, only Arizona had significantly lower number of articles than the remaining states. While Arizona (36%) showed slightly lower numbers of positive beginning news coverage than California (52%) and Oregon (54%), it was not a significant difference; there was a reverse with negative news: more negative beginning news coverage than the two Democratic states, but not a significant difference.

Discussion

One of the most crucial elements of this research was investigating media framing in immigration-based news articles. In other words, do reporters or news organizations shape or form news articles or other reports to frame the story with a specific intent for audiences? Callaghan and Schnell (2001) have explained the use of linguistic differences in journalism to indicate media framing. Another research study investigating media framing discussed how the use of personal stories can frame news in a more sympathetic way, compared to other methods of reporting (Kim, 2019). Based on previous research of media framing, it was decided to analyze the data collection by coding news articles based on positive, negative, and neutral coverage in both the first four sentences, and then overall as well, to compare the difference (Callaghan & Schnell, 2001).

When the beginning and overall coverage (Table 1.1 and Table 1.2) were compared without factoring in for additional variables, there were a significantly greater number of news articles that include more pro-immigration (41.9%) or anti-immigration (21.7%) messages in the first four

sentences of each article, compared to the overall coverage for pro-immigration (37.4%) or anti-immigration (15.7%). When considering the partisan factor for news articles, the statistical significance increased. For primarily Democratic states, news articles with pro-immigration coverage increased in the first four sentences (53%) compared to overall coverage (40%); there was also an increase in the number of articles with anti-immigration coverage in the beginning (9%) compared to overall (3%). News articles from primarily Republican states showed a similar difference between beginning (34%) compared to overall (28%) with regard to anti-immigration coverage. However, the reverse was discovered with news articles from Republican states show pro-immigration coverage; the beginning of the article (30%) had fewer pro-immigration news leaning compared to overall (34%), instead of more.

This data analysis appeared to support the theory of media framing. However, there is question regarding whether immigration is an appropriate topic to analyze this theory; this will be discussed further in limitations. When reviewing the analysis of the additional factors, including: 1) newspaper vs TV news, 2) low immigration state news vs high immigration state news, and 3) Republican vs Democratic state news organizations, there was statistical significance in each area.

In newspaper vs TV news, there was significant difference in the beginning coverage category, indicating that TV stations had more stories with anti-immigration coverage. In an international study of journalism partisanship comparing several countries, and newspapers with broadcast news, Patterson and Donsbach (1996) noted a difference between the news decisions of newspaper journalists compared to broadcast reporters (Patterson & Donsbach, 1996). However, in a more concise review of this data collection, several of the broadcast news articles featured reposted news from national sources. While some of the content may have been broadcast on those TV stations, a web-based analysis is not thorough enough to compare newspaper and broadcast news.

However, when comparing news reports from states with low immigration numbers and high immigration numbers, news from states with high immigration appeared to have a greater number of pro-immigration stories overall. This result appears to dispute the question regarding partisan favorability in media framing. News organizations from states with high immigration may have more pro-immigration content to share because of a greater number of readers impacted, and a higher number of people willing to share personal stories.

Results from the data analysis comparing news coverage based on partisan favorability discovered a statistical significance in several categories, including beginning and overall coverage. Throughout, the data appears to support the suspicion that news articles from primarily Democratic states have more pro-immigration coverage, and news from primarily Republican states have more anti-immigration news coverage. This could be a result of several factors, including the fact that news organizations, despite the intention to remain unbiased, are nonetheless businesses, and if local audiences disagree or disapprove of coverage, there are other options for news. The social media algorithm that intentionally leads Facebook users to primarily view content they 'like' or 'comment' on the most, or news content they favor more, follows this idea that: people read what they want to read. While immigration isn't necessarily a controversial topic on a partisan line, it's possible that, during this study, President Trump, who is Republican, has been outspoken regarding his frustration with illegal immigration and professed desire to build a wall separating the United States and Mexico, that primarily Republican states may also favor this. Another factor could be available sources; in other words, if there are more pro-immigration or anti-immigration sources available to interview, that could influence news content.

However, as indicated in the results comparing state news coverage, data from news organizations in Arizona indicated a higher pro-immigration favorability than news reports from Indiana, and closer to the two Democratic states: California and Oregon. In other words, although Arizona is a Republican state, the results indicated more pro-immigration news reporting. As

mentioned in the analysis of low versus high immigration number states, this could also be a result of a greater number of people supporting immigration as a result of the higher workforce, or a larger number of sources available to interview with personal immigration stories.

There is one further difference worth reporting; it was noted during data collection between news organizations from each of the four states. Oregon and Indiana, which both report lower numbers of immigrants, also have fewer locally reported stories regarding immigration for the TV news articles. As a result, both media organizations primarily posted national articles to report immigration news. However, what was unique is the national medium each used. Indiana primarily shared news articles from the Associated Press, while Oregon primarily shared news from CNN. This is unique because CNN has previously been considered to be a more left-leaning news organization. The Indiana newspaper, the Indy Star, followed the same trend as WTHR – Indiana in fewer local news articles; however, the Oregon newspaper, the Portland Tribune, defied this trend and only reported local news articles. However, when reviewing the dropdown features listed under the 'News' category on the Portland Tribune website, there is no national option or similar, although there is a 'Politics sub-category, which appears to post primarily local news. During an unrelated search for any articles involving 'President Trump', to deduce how often national news is present in the news website, it appeared that any news article involving President Trump, also included local content to some extent.

Limitations

As mentioned earlier, there is question whether immigration is the most appropriate topic for analyzing media framing. Several articles that appeared to only include anti-immigration news coverage in the first four sentences often included negative quotes or statements from government agencies regulating immigration, or President Trump, who has been vocal before taking office of reducing the number of illegal immigrants in the U.S. The topic has also elicited controversial

comments and protests as a result. Therefore, a less contentious subject could lead to a more accurate indication of media framing.

Although there were 200 articles included in the analysis, it would be more beneficial to conduct a larger study including additional states and news organizations. Also, although the media framing analysis was conducted based on comparing data between the beginning coverage and overall coverage categories, additional coders to analyze the data would be more revealing to the analysis, or a data collection including the opinions of news readers.

Conclusion

Nonetheless, the results revealed support for the suspicion that news organizations may be framing articles based on the analysis comparing those two categories: beginning and overall coverage. Furthermore, the results also indicated a possible partisan leaning in news coverage based on state party affiliation. While these result don't definitively indicate whether news reports may be biased based on political party affiliation, or whether perceived audience preference could lead to this bias, it does raise the question of what factor could influence along party lines. Another factor to be considered were the results from Arizona; while there was an increased coverage of anti-immigration news reporting, these numbers were significantly less biased compared to data from the other primarily Republican state, Indiana. However, with such a small sample, even with significant difference revealed, it would be more conducive to increase the data collection.

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