

Public Abstract

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Title: THE POLITICS OF ELECTION COVERAGE:  
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF INDIANA'S TWO LARGEST NEWSPAPERS  
DURING THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The goal of this study was to investigate the 2008 presidential election coverage of the two largest news publications in Indiana, *The Indianapolis Star* and *The Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, and determine if any statistically significant differences exist. Utilizing the theories of framing and second-level agenda setting, a content analysis focused on the topics, tone, story sources, and amount of coverage for each newspaper as applied to the Republican and Democratic presidential and vice presidential candidates. The national and local election articles, dated September 7th to November 4th, were analyzed and coded in accordance with the code guidebook.

Results indicated that despite the geographical and ideological differences of their respective audiences, both newspapers offered statistically similar coverage of the election. The principal conclusion drawn was that while coverage was similar, both newspapers lacked stories that discussed stances on issues, as well as local and opinion articles. This void of substantial news coverage undermines the vital function of newspapers to provide citizens essential information to make educated voting decisions. Additionally, less substantive stories limit newspapers in their agenda-setting role.