FRAMING IN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS'
COVERAGE OF LOCAL ELECTIONS

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COVERAGE OF LOCAL ELECTIONS

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and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Lisa, and to my sons, Jacob and Quentin, who have endured countless sacrifices as I've slaved away on this master's degree for the past seven years, while also juggling the demands of the newsroom and the classroom. They've been models of inspiration, tolerance, patience and understanding. I love them for that.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I came to work at the Missouri School of Journalism more than eight years ago with a bit of a chip on my shoulder. Having worked at small-town Missouri newspapers for nearly 20 years, I felt I'd have a thing or two to teach not only the students but also the faculty – even at the best journalism school in the world – about how the job is done in the trenches. People paid to immerse themselves in academia and to spend more time thinking about journalism than doing it probably wouldn't have much to offer me in terms of guidance or insight, I figured.

Boy, was I wrong. The journalism school faculty is inspiring and brilliant, dedicated and tireless, demanding yet encouraging. It would be impossible to quantify how much I have learned about journalism since the day I arrived here, but it's safe to say I've learned even more than I did in those first 19 years working at those small newspapers. Every faculty member I've had the opportunity to work with or to learn from in the classroom has contributed greatly to my understanding of the practice of journalism and of the theories that help us decipher the successes and failures of journalism. And, perhaps most important, its role in the democracy. For that, I thank them.

I want to thank the hundreds of students I've had the pleasure of teaching these past eight years. Their skill levels have varied as wildly as their personalities. I can honestly say, however, that I've learned as much or more from these students as they have learned from me.

Much of the thinking behind a good thesis evolves during casual conversation with close friends who also happen to be very smart people. John Schneller, my colleague at

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FRAMING IN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS'
COVERAGE OF LOCAL ELECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This research examines framing in local election coverage, testing whether the same

horse-race and strategy frames that dominate national political news are present in small

community newspapers' coverage of local elections for city councils and town boards.

The study involves a content analysis of 292 newspaper stories and 220 photographs

across 23 small community newspaper websites in Missouri. The findings show that

literacy frames, those that convey basic information about elections, and substantive issue

frames, which report candidates' positions on issues, are prevalent. Issue stories,

however, most often are shallow in their reporting. News briefs, one-shot candidate

profiles and question-and-answer stories represent more than 50 percent of the sample.

Although the framing analysis is encouraging, this research found that community

newspapers have a different set of problems that might contribute to low voter

participation. The study represents a first step in a potential thread of rich research on

local election coverage and its influence on voter behavior and attitudes.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Among journalism's various functions, its most important is promoting democracy.
Perhaps its best opportunity to do that comes with elections. News that helps voters
decide which candidates are most suited for public office is among the most valuable the
news media can provide.

Research, however, shows that election coverage in American news media is flawed.
Horse-race frames that focus on who's leading, who's got the money and the strategies
candidates employ to win votes dominate election news, making the public cynical and
apathetic about participating (Patterson, 2000; Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Entman,
1995). Most of this research, though, is focused at the national level; little literature
examines coverage of local elections for positions on city councils, boards of aldermen or
school boards, for example.

That's too bad, because local politics arguably is the arena in which community
journalism is in position to have the most impact. Newspapers in many communities are
citizens' only source of truly local news, and the classic debates that emerge in small
communities are among the most important in determining quality of life in our
immediate surroundings.

Gans (2003) writes of "small-town pastoralism," an ideal of rural community life –

historically celebrated by the national news media – that fosters "cohesiveness,

friendliness and slow pace" (p. 48). Even this utopian type of American settlement,

though, comes with built-in baggage. When a community adopts "small" as part of its

identity, "bigness," in turn, becomes the enemy. The dichotomy often manifests in public

debates – and political campaigns – that pit the interests of a community's social and

natural environments against the necessity and benefits of growth and development

(Gans, p. 49). Although the state or national news media can parachute in to capture the

essence of the conflict, only local journalists are really in position to provide more

constructive frames – particularly during election cycles – that elucidate the issues and

foster conversation about them rather than focusing on the divisive strategies and

motivations of those seeking office.

 Small-town newspaper journalists have the unique ability, if they use it, to generate

interest and encourage participation in local politics, to nurture democracy at the

community level and to help people shape the environments in which they live. It's

important to understand whether they try and, if they do, whether they succeed. Media

scholars, however, have only touched on the question.

This thesis will try to address the deficiency. The research question proposed is:

**How do reporters and editors at small community newspapers frame
coverage of local elections?**

This research is important because it offers a perspective on political reporting largely

absent from scholarly literature. It will be interesting to learn whether coverage of local

elections follows or differs from patterns of horse-race coverage of national and state

politics. If it does, how and why? If it doesn't, why not?

Scholars should want to know whether reporters and editors at small newspapers

default to strategy frames when reporting on local candidates and government policy. Do

they have the time or the inclination to think about such concepts, or are they captives of

the daily routine? Practicing journalists, too, should find the study useful because it

would allow them to analyze their approaches and compare them with those of similar

newspapers.

Entman (2008) argues that:

"If journalists employed a more self-conscious understanding of the cognitive
psychology of message construction and information processing, and in
particular saw themselves as striving to *construct balanced frames* more than
merely writing a given days 'stories,' they might be able to offer audiences
more consistent frame contexts and fewer instances of unwarranted one-sided
framing" (p. 7).

Gans (2003, pp. 55-57) offers, and then picks apart, a four-stage notion of journalism's

"unwritten" theory of democracy. In summary, it suggests that journalists are equipped to

collect and relay information from official sources that will help their audiences influence

government. He notes, however, that journalists must guard against the fallacy that the

information they provide automatically promotes democracy, and that their news reports,

in turn, are sufficient to "empower" audiences. Too often, he argues, it is those who

already have power who are in position to obtain the knowledge most relevant to making

sound political decisions, and to choose whether to share that information. Community

journalists must learn to tap that knowledge and to share it with those not yet in the loop.

Gans would say that's a difficult task:

"Journalists are skilled reporters of the ever-increasing economic and political influence of well-organized interest groups, but the coverage has not yet sufficiently penetrated journalistic thinking about the democratic ideal. In fact, busy and often overworked journalists barely think about democracy, since it is rarely relevant to story selection and other editorial decision making" (p. 61).

Gans goes further by noting that journalists cannot make people act. Knowledge, in and of itself, is not power. Journalists are simply messengers. It is the public that must decide, one citizen at a time, what it will do with the messages it receives. "Sometimes," Gans writes," the right message, carried by the right messenger at the right time can instigate action" (p. 89). But the reverse might also be true. The wrong message – one that emphasizes the selfish motivations of politicians, even at a local level – might promote apathy and inaction, a sense of futility about whether one can really effect change or work with the system to advance his or her interests or those of the community.

Normative theory offers guidance about the roles that journalism should fill in different models of democracy. Baker (2002) and Christians, et al (2009), offer three primary models: liberal pluralist, or interest group, democracy; republican, or civic, democracy; and complex democracy. While the prescribed roles differ significantly, it's worth noting that none of these models calls for passive news media that cede to politicians and the elite the privilege of setting a public agenda or to dictate the tone and substance (or lack of substance) in election campaigns.

As described by these authors, the liberal pluralist model acknowledges that people and groups have interests that frequently compete. It suggests that we arrive at public good through a system of individual, internal discourses that lead to fair bargaining and compromise. The role of the news media in this model is to provide individual citizens

and interest groups with information that alerts them when their interests are at stake. The goal should be to motivate people and promote their divergent interests. Journalists should make policymakers aware of the public's demands by reporting public opinion to the government in order to prompt response. Public opinion polls are viewed as a good way to do this. This model calls for separate news media entities that serve, and perhaps are owned by, segmented audiences. Media monopolies – the very monopolies we see emerging at both the national and local levels – are to be avoided.

Baker and Christians, et al, describe republican, or civic, democracy as a system that recognizes the ability of people to work together through deliberative discourse to arrive at "common goods." It calls on the news media to be "thoughtfully discursive," supporting inclusive public discourse at a societal level. Like the liberal pluralist model, a republican democracy seeks a brand of journalism that mobilizes the public, but its end is to ensure open and constructive debate on the best solutions to societal problems and challenges. The republican model, too, encourages journalists to report public opinion to the government, but it shuns polls in favor of public opinion that emerges as the result of widespread reflection and deliberation. Under this model, dominant, unsegmented news media – even those controlled by monopolies – are fine so long as they are sufficiently responsible.

Complex democracy mixes liberal pluralist and republican ideals and arguably is the model that most closely resembles how democracy is practiced at all levels in the United States. Complex democracy calls for a political process that promotes fair partisan bargaining and societal discourse aimed at agreement. It also emphasizes helping

minority groups gain identity and standing, a goal the U.S. news media could work harder to achieve. The ideal system would be a mix of unsegmented news media that support a search for general societal agreement, as well as segmented, partisan news media that mobilize individual groups or factions and seek to advance their interests (Baker, p. 149).

Each of these models calls on journalists to make elected leaders and other elites hear the voices of the masses and to motivate the public to engage in the political process. Baker, however, notes that the news media in a national political context fail to meet their responsibilities by blindly reporting the day's political events and debates in stories that lack any useful context or substantive information that can foster healthy deliberation. He emphasizes the shortcomings of television news, but it's clear that newspapers could do a better job as well:

> "Media can, of course, mislead as well as inform, can present venal as well as wise argument, can encourage bad as well as good values, and can dampen as well as incite political participation. Holding other factors constant, one study found that heavy viewers of *television* news are less well informed about news than other people. Escapist literature or 'action' news can divert attention away from crucial structural issues and direct it toward trivial events. This orientation can undermine the quality of politics. Maybe this is why considerable evidence suggests that, despite poll surveys of self-perceptions, newspapers, not television, are the main source of the public's actual knowledge of current events. More obviously, everything from negative political ads, to false information, to demagogic partisanship, can pollute political discussion"
> (p. 45).

A bunch of smart people are dancing around an important topic. Journalism scholars document and lament the trend toward strategy frames in election coverage. Sociologists and normative theorists decry the news media's inability to fulfill their roles as the

purveyors of information that will sustain a healthy democracy and the forces that will mobilize their audiences. The vast majority of the literature, however, is on the national level, a plane irrelevant to the majority of journalists serving small communities. It's time the practical research retrains its focus.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical to any successful piece of research is developing careful and specific definitions of the concepts to be explored and the goals to be achieved.

It would seem at first glance that the concepts involved in this study are straightforward: Do reporters and editors at small community newspapers emphasize strategy frames or issues when they cover local elections?

But any scholarly endeavor requires far more precision. As Chaffee (1992) noted: "Without conceptual definition, the words we use to describe and discuss communication are mere words – no improvement over mere numbers" (p. 1). He describes how scholars use the building blocks of primitive terms, derived terms and variables to arrive at operational definitions that help ensure research is not only valid but also useful (pp. 7-14).

Defining frames

Every news item a journalist publishes is built around a frame. Nearly every decision he or she makes – about whom to interview, what questions to ask and how to develop the tone of a story – contributes to its final structure. Cappella and Jamieson (1997) employ an elegant metaphor.

> "Like the framing of a house, a news frame creates a structure on which other elements are built. There is much in a house that is not the frame, but without the frame there is no house. And the frame determines the shape of the house" (p. 38).

That journalists understand framing is paramount. It would be a mistake to ignore the reality that how they report is as important as what they report when considering how their news stories create meanings in the minds of their readers.

Reese (2001), Borah (2011) and others credit sociologist Erving Goffman with developing the concept of framing in communication nearly four decades ago and applying it to the study of how the news media create meanings by constructing issues and structuring discourse in their reporting. Borah, however, in a review of framing literature spanning the past 40 years, notes that framing research has drawn on so many different disciplines and approached framing from so many different directions that it's difficult to develop clear conceptualizations and operationalizations (p. 248).

Goffman (1974) approached framing from a broad philosophical perspective and put much of the onus for framing on the receivers of messages. Frames, he argued, provide a "schemata of interpretation," an organized method of attaching meaning to what might otherwise be meaningless messages or events (p. 21).

Gitlin (1980) was among the first to discuss framing as a basic method and product of journalistic reporting, particularly in the political realm. There is nothing wrong with framing, he asserted. Indeed, frames, though "largely unspoken and unacknowledged," serve as a useful means of organizing large amounts of information not only for the journalist, but also for his or her audience:

> "Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual. Frames enable journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely: to recognize it as information, to assign it to cognitive categories, and to package

it for effective relay to their audiences. Thus, for organizational reasons alone, frames are unavoidable, and journalism is organized to regulate their production. Any analytic approach to journalism – indeed, any mass-mediated content – must ask: What is the frame here? Why this frame and not another? What patterns are shared by the frames clamped over this event and the frames clamped over that one, by frames in different media in different places at different moments? And how does the news-reporting institution regulate these regularities? And then: What difference do the frames make for the larger world?" (p. 7).

Dozens of media scholars have helped refine framing theory over the past four decades. Cappella and Jamieson describe how the context of a frame stimulates readers to draw conclusions by synthesizing a news report with information they already have (p. 42). Entman focuses on the salience and selection aspects of framing. "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (p. 52).

Cappella and Jamieson note that "salience and selection emphasize that framing includes not only what is made prominent but also what is left out, treated as secondary, tertiary or less. … Framing is a way of drawing attention to certain features of an issue while minimizing attention to others" (p. 45).

Tankard (in Reese, Gandy and Grant, 2001) argued for a more empirical view of framing. Metaphorical descriptions of the concept that use an architectural frame or draw similarities to the work photographers do when they frame an image, he argues, are less than useful when it comes to measuring or quantifying frames. Something more testable, he asserts, is necessary for building theory.

Toward that end, Tankard and participants in a 1990 seminar defined a frame as "a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration" (pp. 100-101). Earlier, he noted that the effects of frames on audiences are significant largely because they often go undetected.

> "Much of the power of framing comes from its ability to define the terms of a debate without the audience realizing it's taking place. Media framing can be likened to the magician's sleight of hand – attention is directed to one point so that people do not notice the manipulation that is going on at another point" (p. 97).

Zhongdang and Kosicki (also in Reese, Gandy and Grant, 2001) view framing as a deliberate act, not only in the news media but also in other realms of political discourse. They remind us that audiences are in power to construct meaning from the messages they receive by synthesizing them with existing values and beliefs rather than acting as passive drones who accept the content of a news story – or a conversation, political advertisement or televised political debate – as a patient accepts a doctor's injection from a hypodermic needle:

> "A frame is an idea through which political debate unfolds, and political alignment and collective actions take place. In public deliberations, the rise and fall in the prevalence of a frame, and consequently, a particular policy option, clearly involve debates among people who sponsor or align with different frames. Which frame to sponsor, how to sponsor it, and how to expand its appeal are strategic issues to participants…. In sum, framing an issue is to participate in public deliberation strategically, both for one's own sensemaking and for contesting the frames of others" (p. 39).

This definition of framing focuses more on the issues or topics the news media include in their political reporting – and on the ways those issues are framed by stakeholders or

participants in the debate – than it does on the ways that journalists construct meaning by

choosing how to present their stories. But clearly, as Borah notes, "Frames are much

more than just story topics. Reducing frames to story topics or issues could be

problematic" (p249). As defined by Zhongdang and Kosicki, framing comes perilously

close to another level of agenda setting. The real power of frames stems from their power

to organize and structure broad political discourse, not to emphasize or de-emphasize

specific political issues.

Twenty-seven years after Goffman introduced the concept of framing, Reese, (in

Reese, Gandy and Grant, 2001) offered a working definition of framing that ties together

the most consistent themes in the literature. It features six primary components and works

well for the intent of this study: "Frames, he concludes, are *organizing principles* that are

socially *shared* and *persistent* over time, that work *symbolically* to meaningfully

structure the social world."

Reese's definition raises an important question: Do the organizing frames and symbols

persistent across the news media's political journalism lend themselves to the

construction of meanings healthy for a participatory democracy? This research will

provide only a partial answer.

Framing in U.S. political reporting

That political reporting in the United States undermines civic engagement, particularly

at the national level, is well documented. Patterson (2000) shows that newspapers'

obsession with horse-race and game frames contributes to apathy and frustration among

readers. They're tuning out of politics and tuning out of newspapers. The audience that

remains is left to believe that candidates will say and do anything to win. Stories about

political contests focus more on strategies, fund-raising and opinion polls than on

candidate stances on issues. The news media paint politicians as uninterested in solving

problems and instead consumed by the goal of being elected. Journalists, Patterson

asserts, are at fault because they emphasize conflict and negativity even when substantive

information about candidates' positions is readily available.

Patterson has spent the better part of four decades trying to make his point. In 1976, he

analyzed television news coverage of the presidential campaign featuring Democrat

Jimmy Carter and incumbent Republican President Gerald Ford. He found that 60 percent

of television news reporting about that election between Jan. 1 and Nov. 1, 1976, was

dedicated to horse-race and strategy frames, and that only 28 percent was dedicated to

substantive debate on issues:

> "The 1976 presidential campaign, as presented on the network evening news,
> was primarily a competition to be won or lost. Only secondarily did it seem to
> involve national policy and quality of leadership" (Patterson, 2007, p. 73).

Twenty years later, Patterson (1996) was still at it. He noted in a retrospective review

that a healthy form of "critical journalism" began to emerge in the 1960s, when print and

television journalists showed more of a willingness to challenge national candidates'

stances and to contribute to the debate about whether their proposed solutions to issues

facing the country were good ones. That brand of journalism persisted through the

Watergate years of the early 1970s, but it soon gave way to a less constructive form of political news.

> "By the 1970s, … critical journalism degenerated into a form of reporting that exalted controversy rather than accuracy. Intent on exposing the failures of political leaders but without the time or knowledge to do the job properly on a daily basis, journalists slipped into a quick and easy form of criticism. When a politician made a statement, they turned to adversaries to attack it. The critical element was supplied, not by a careful investigation of the claim or action, but by the insertion of a counterclaim." (p. 18).

Patterson argued that this sort of approach – which persists and is perhaps even worse in an age when talking heads spend hours shouting at each other on the cable news networks – contributed to public mistrust of candidates and to cynicism about their campaigns. In a news media landscape that makes tearing down one's opponent a better strategy than building up oneself, the public understandably tires of the argument and becomes disengaged.

Cappella and Jamieson describe the phenomenon as a spiral of cynicism: the more the news media focus on candidates' selfish motivations for winning election, the more apathetic and less interested their target audiences become. It's disturbing to think that in the face of all this evidence of ill effects, the news media might purposefully continue to emphasize frames that erode their usefulness, particularly in the context of election reporting, where they are in position to help people make decisions that will advance the collective goals of Baker and Christians' complex democracy. The idea that journalists deliberately allow horse-race and strategy frames to dominate American political reporting is disturbing. It's also questionable.

Gans (2003) argues that elections serve as "proxies" for democracy "because they are virtually the only occasion in which citizens play a major [role] in government." But, he surmises, journalists might fail the citizenry's information needs because they are trapped by the routine of the daily deadline, which demands that they produce new news:

> "Election campaigns have their own proxy: the horse race that determines who is ahead in the polls from day to day. In recent elections, the horse race has been joined by the money race: stories about who has collected the most hard and soft campaign funds, and from whom. The news media have long been accused of putting the horse race before the issues, but it changes all the time and can thus produce many stories while the issues may remain unchanged from the time they were first introduced into the campaign" (p. 54).

Patterson (1977) postulated that television news reports, more often than those of newspapers, often default to horse-race frames because the very nature of their medium demands it. Nevertheless, he notes, the potential impact on the electorate is lamentable:

> "While a newspaper report is often simply a matter-of-fact description of a day's campaign events, a television report usually tries to explain a day's events and present them as a 'story.' A television report tends to answer why as much as what, which requires a context or perspective that will explain what happened. If the candidate is the focus of the report, as he usually is, his actions must be explained. The one thing that can be safely assumed about a major presidential candidate is that he is in the race to win, so his relative position in the race is the most obvious explanation for his actions and, in fact, the one most frequently used by the network correspondents.... [However,] emphasis on the horse race also heightens the feeling of some voters that campaigns really are not very important and that candidates really are not very noble fellows" (pp. 76-77).

Gans also notes that journalists no longer have the corner on the distribution of political information. Increasingly, advertising and televised debates – tightly controlled by the candidates and not the news media – are becoming the primary means for delivering messages to prospective voters. And that says nothing of the rise of social

media, weblogs and online video sites as sources of political information. Increasingly, those running for political office need no longer rely on news reports to get their messages across. In fact, one could argue that it behooves them to avoid doing so. Social media and campaign websites empower candidates to deliver messages unfiltered by the frames and interpretations of journalists.

Although the research on Internet use for political information is only beginning to paint the full picture, scholars are beginning to take note. Groshek and Dimitrova (2010) found that then-Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama's campaign website, www.barackobama.com, had 8.6 million visitors in October 2008 alone, while Republican nominee John McCain's website received 4.1 million visits during the same month. They also reported that voters in 2004 accessed the websites of presidential candidates John Kerry and George W. Bush, but they did so primarily to reinforce previously acquired information about their stances on political issues or their personal characteristics, and to find ways of becoming involved in those campaigns. Surprisingly, however, Groshek and Dimitrova found no support for their hypothesis that the use of candidate websites would be associated with higher levels of political knowledge, interest in the campaign and the likelihood of voting.

Smith (2009) found in a survey that 55 percent of the United States' adult population used the Internet to get involved in or to learn about the 2008 presidential election and that 45 percent of those adults watched online videos related to the campaign. Similarly, Kohut (2008) found that 37 percent of surveyed adults age 18 to 24 had received information about political campaigns through social networking sites. Most, however,

reported that they simply "came across" those sites more often than they went looking for them.

Still, the Internet, Smith asserted, has become as important as print newspapers – and twice as important as radio – in the dissemination and reception of information about elections. Perhaps most relevant to this study, he found that 38 percent of survey respondents went to the Internet to find information about municipal or other local races.

Although the Internet's more recent manifestations – social media, candidate websites, weblogs and video sites – clearly have become a force, traditional news media still are holding their own against alternative channels of information. Smith (p. 61) found that among online political information seekers, 64 percent visited network television websites such as cnn.com or abcnews.com, and 43 percent visited the websites of local news organizations.

Entman (1995) concludes that traditional journalists across all platforms are in a unique position to grab and maintain the public's attention. And as much as he decries horse-race and strategy frames, he does find a use for them. The public, he argues, is drawn to televised political news precisely because of the frames it employs. It's less about civic engagement and more about the game. It is, in essence, a reality TV show:

> "What sustains popular interest in televised politics is no longer the clash of principles but the mystery of the outcome. It is not political concern or anxiety that prompts the public to pay attention to poll results and pundits' prognostications; it is suspense. As the horse-race aspect of campaigning has come to predominate, the focus in televised presidential debates has been on 'who won?' rather than on what was elucidated" (p. 187).

In an earlier study, Entman (1989) found that news slant – even in reports that purport to be objective and neutral – has significant effects on the attitudes of liberals, moderates and conservatives alike. "The media," he concluded, "do not control what people prefer; they influence public opinion by providing much of the information people think about and by shaping how they think about it." Audiences attracted to the suspense of politics, then, might indeed become cynical about the motivations of people seeking public office, but at least they're paying attention.

Entman (2008) offers this as an opportunity for journalists to convey more constructive information, news treatments that "would engage people by highlighting the concrete stakes for *them*, their values and interests and identities, in the outcomes" (p. 9). He goes farther by suggesting that political reporters might consider adopting the techniques of sports journalists covering athletic contests. One might view it as a bait-and-switch. Lure the audience with the appearance of a game frame, then sneak some helpful and substantive news into the mix. "Arguably," Entman writes, "this approach would generate continuing interest in hard news even as it civically informs" (p. 9).

Zhongdang and Kosicki might agree. Framing, they write:

"… involves political drama and theater. It also involves personalities, scripts, conflicts, dramas, emotions, symbols, and expressive activities consisting of both 'real' and 'pseudo-events'" (p. 39).

As distasteful as it might seem at first to media scholars, practitioners and audiences who decry sensationalism in news reports, the deliberate insertion of some drama and conflict into political discourse might at least carry the advantage of getting audiences to

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pay attention. Yankelovich (1991) described a three-stage process for arriving at an ideal

he calls quality public judgment: consciousness raising, working through and resolution.

"Nothing advances consciousness raising as forcefully as events that dramatize the

issue," he wrote. "Nothing retards it more than the lack of such events" (p. 75).

It goes without saying that the news media certainly are in power to raise public

consciousness about issues. Yankelovich, however, notes that at the same time they often

stand in the way of the public reaching stage 2 of the judgment process, i.e. working

through the matter at hand to arrive at a resolution. Too often, he argues, "awareness and

urgency are sought by the media virtually as an end in and of themselves, without

preparing the groundwork for stage 2" (p. 84). He continues:

> "[B]ecause consciousness raising is their main goal, [the media] can be
> indifferent to the obstacles they raise, brushing them aside because they do not
> want to be bothered with them. If there is an important news story to cover that
> should arouse public concern and alarm, the media are superb at beating the
> drums and getting everyone agitated. But once people are whipped into a state
> of high anxiety, the news media then move on to the next task of consciousness
> raising, as if arousing people's concerns were an end in itself. Just as people are
> starting to wonder, 'What in the world should we do about this problem?' the
> news media move on to the next story. By shifting restlessly from one story to
> another, the news media leave the public either in a state of moral frenzy or in a
> passive posture of being entertained and diverted" (p. 85).

Perhaps the prescription for a proper style of election journalism, then, combines the

suspense of the campaign and the excitement of the contest with news that truly informs

the electorate about the stances of the contenders; analyzes whether those positions

represent valid or promising solutions to political issues; and, in turn, helps the public

make collective decisions about which candidates would best represent the interests of

the democracy. Clearly that can't happen in every news story about elections, particularly in local politics, but as Carey (1986) and Kovach and Rosenstiel (2011) note, the truth of a matter evolves over time and through the corpus of journalism. The task at hand is to study whether the frames community newspapers incorporate in their political reporting are helping or hindering the process.

Community newspapers

An examination of small community newspapers' election coverage begins with the question: What, exactly, is a small community newspaper?

The answer lies in the eyes of individual researchers. Greer and Yan (2010), in an examination of community newspapers' use of social media, defined their targets as newspapers with circulations less than 50,000. In an earlier study of newspaper websites, Geer and Mensing (2004) defined "smaller" newspapers as those with circulations less than 100,000. Boyle (2008) examined interactivity among newspaper websites, placing those with print circulations less than 30,000 in the "small" category. McCleneghan (2010) studied marketing at 10 "community papers," six weeklies and four dailies in New Mexico with circulations ranging from 2,633 to 21,583.

More clues come from industry groups. The National Newspaper Association reported in 2010 that 50 percent of its members have circulations less than 5,000. The average among non-dailies was 8,125, and the average among community dailies 34,515. In Missouri, where this research was conducted, the Missouri Press Association listed 266 members in 2011. Average circulation was 7,445 and median circulation 2,350.

The intent of this research is to examine election coverage at a local level, but coverage must exist before it can be studied. Some of Missouri's smallest papers might lack the resources and, in print, the news holes to pay real attention to elections. Also, the ability to search online archives is important to the feasibility of the research. A quick scan of the websites of Missouri newspapers with print circulations between 2,000 and 10,000 shows (a) that the volume of election coverage in previous years – for most – is quite small and (b) that their websites often are ill-suited to efficient and effective searching.

The researcher, therefore, proposes studying newspapers with circulations between 2,000 and 50,000. This is a broad enough range to ensure an adequate sample of Missouri newspapers' election coverage without compromising the original goal of studying that coverage at a local level in smaller communities. Because the number of stories coming from the smallest of papers will be limited, however, further research exploring the challenges those newspapers' staffs face in producing substantive and useful election news is warranted elsewhere.

Local election coverage

It's also important to develop an operational definition of local election coverage. The preponderance of research on news media treatment of elections has focused on national politics, and even the studies that purport to examine local election news often miss the mark at which this thesis aims.

For example, Iyengar, Woo and McGrady (2005) compared "horse-race" to "substantive" coverage of the 2004 presidential election with that of "local" campaigns

for U.S. House and Senate seats at 37 newspapers across the country. They found more substantive, but far less, coverage of so-called local races. It's difficult to see, though, how races for political offices that represent entire states or multiple counties could be considered truly local.

A few scholars have come closer. Stevens (2006) examined television news about local elections in Minneapolis. Although he found the usual focus on strategy and horse-race coverage of national campaigns, he discovered little or no reporting on local elections. Focus groups revealed voters frustrated with thin reporting by television stations that promoted themselves as providers of in-depth coverage.

Hankins (1998) studied two newspaper reporters' work on mayoral elections in Denver. She found that one reporter cast the candidates as "winners" or "losers" in 46 percent of his stories, the other in 31 percent. Shaker (2009), in an attempt to learn whether access to news correlated with local political knowledge, surveyed Philadelphians' on their knowledge of that city's 2007 mayoral election. He found that news media access does have a bearing on levels of local political knowledge but that those familiar with local politics are no more likely than others to have higher levels of knowledge about national politics. Becker and Dunwoody (1982) studied the impact of media use and public affairs knowledge on voting in the 1979 mayoral and city council elections in Cleveland, finding a significant link between media use and knowledge of candidates and, in turn, voter behavior (p. 217).

These latter studies – conceptually – are in line with the intent of this research, which is to study coverage of municipal elections. But Minneapolis, Denver, Philadelphia and

Cleveland are among America's largest cities, with populations in the millions and circulations unimaginable to the newspapers and journalists this study will focus upon. This research will add valuable insight to the literature by examining election coverage in much smaller cities. By focusing on newspapers with circulations between 2,000 and 50,000, the study should be limited to cities with populations of no more than 150,000. In many cases, the communities' populations will be well under 10,000.

Shaker's findings present an opportunity to argue that local news is more important than national news in promoting individual participation in democracy. It's also important to note that most research shows newspapers are the most important and influential sources of information about elections, particularly at the local level.

Becker and Dunwoody, in their study of the Cleveland elections, found that newspapers were the most commonly listed sources of information about local political races; 59.4 percent of participants indicated newspapers were their primary source of information about the mayoral election, and 53.1 said the same of information about other city council races. On a broader scale, Chaffee and Frank (1996) found that print media were consulted more often than television by people actively seeking political information about national elections. Television news, they found, tends to reach those who otherwise lack even basic information about a campaign, while newspapers serve to close knowledge gaps:

> "Most conceptions of media effects assume a rather passive audience. This model is not especially appropriate for understanding political learning, since many people actively seek information. Where do people go to find political information? The answer is newspapers, according to most research.

Newspaper use is consistently associated with informational purposes and with direct evidence of political information seeking" (p. 54).

As already noted, however, the vast majority of research on the public's use of media for political information deals with federal elections, primarily for president but occasionally for positions in the U.S. Senate or House of Representatives. Becker and Dunwoody lamented the fact and cited it as a reason for focusing on Cleveland's municipal election:

"Research on the political effects of the media, as well as research in politics in general, has been overly concerned with national, general elections…. Yet the likelihood that the information transmitted by the media would have significant consequences in terms of election outcomes should be markedly greater on the local level than on the national level. Many voters know little about local candidates before the campaigns get underway. And while interpersonal communication sources may well provide more information at the local level than is true in national races, for many voters the media remain the only sources of information on those candidates and the issues. It also may well be true that behavior can be more easily modified or swayed in local elections than in national races" (p. 213).

Altogether, the existing literature provides a solid foundation for the intended research. It lends a firm grasp to the concept of framing in the news media and the methods best suited for discovering, describing and measuring it. It establishes that while framing in American political journalism leaves much to be desired – defaulting too often to horse-race and strategy frames that create a cynical and therefore apathetic electorate – it might, if used more constructively, help raise public consciousness about the benefits to democracy that come with an engaged citizenry. Finally, it confirms that newspapers, even in the evolving digital information age, remain a vital source of information about elections and politics, especially in smaller communities. By studying how reporters and

editors at the smallest of newspapers frame political stories about municipal elections,

this research should fill a critical gap in the scholarship.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

A rigorous and reliable study of how small-town newspapers cover local elections is a complex exercise. There are several concepts to be operationalized, and any number of qualitative or quantitative methods could be employed.

This research seeks to identify and describe the news frames journalists at small community newspapers employ when reporting on local elections and campaigns. If the findings are in line with those of studies on national and state-level political reporting, horse-race and strategy frames will dominate local political news coverage. If, on the other hand, the coverage emphasizes constructive debate about salient issues and substantive information about candidates' stances on matters of public concern, normative theorists might have cause to celebrate, and national news media might have something to learn.

Defining the sample

This study involves primarily a qualitative, textual content analysis of articles related to municipal elections in newspapers of varying sizes across the state of Missouri. Berger (1998) defined content analysis as:

> "… a means of trying to learn something about people by examining what they write, produce on television, or make movies about. Content analysts assume that behavioral patterns, values, and attitudes found in this material reflect and affect the behaviors, attitudes and values of the people who create the material" (p. 23).

McQuail (2010) cites textual analysis of news frames as a promising research method:

"The analysis of texts according to framing theory often produces clear and
interesting results, in a transparent and communicative way, even if we are left
at the end without a clear measure of strength and the extent of the 'frames'
uncovered. There are many cues to draw on, presumably the same ones that are
available to the audience, that give rise to supposed effects. These include
visuals, language usage, labels, similes and metaphors, familiar narrative
structures, and so on" (p. 381).

Wimmer and Dominick (2006, pp. 155-165) offer a step-by-step approach to preparing

for and conducting content analyses. It begins with defining the universe, or specifying

the boundaries, of the content to be considered by the study.

With that in mind, this research took a fairly narrow scope, analyzing coverage of

elections for local mayoral and city council seats – primarily between Jan. 1 and April 4,

2011 – on websites representing more than two dozen Missouri community newspapers

with print circulations between 2,000 and 50,000.

Selection of the newspapers for the study was in most respects straightforward. First,

every newspaper with a circulation between 5,000 and 50,000 that listed a website in the

Missouri Press Association's 2011 Newspaper Directory was initially part of the potential

sample. Those found to serve audiences in the major metropolitan areas of Kansas City,

Mo., and St. Louis, Mo., were first discarded, given that the intent of the research is to

gain understanding of framing in election news targeted toward much smaller audiences.

Niche newspapers dominated by advertising or by news about entertainment or sports –

which also invariably catered to metropolitan audiences – were set aside. Finally,

newspapers that lacked any reasonably efficient or accurate means of searching archives online were excluded. Newspapers that made archived and searchable content available only through paid subscriptions were included.

There were two exceptions to the time-frame: In St. Joseph, Mo., and Joplin, Mo., where council elections are held only once every four years, the St. Joseph News-Press and The Joplin Globe offered significant numbers of municipal election stories between Jan. 1, 2010, and April 3, 2010. Those stories were included in the analysis.

This initial survey produced a field of 18 websites featuring the content of 22 community newspapers. That didn't seem quite enough. In an effort to increase the sample size of election stories, to ensure geographic diversity and to incorporate the work of the smallest newspapers, the study included another five websites produced by newspapers with print circulations between 2,000 and 5,000 in areas of the state not well represented by the initial sample.

To find the news items included in this study, the researcher began by simply accessing the newspapers' online archives and searching for the term "election." When possible, this search was limited to the date range of Jan. 1, 2011, through April 4, 2011. (In the case of the St. Joseph News Press and The Joplin Globe, the date range of Jan. 1, 2010, through April 3, 2010, also was searched.) The researcher then followed up by searching the newspaper archives for the names of candidates for city council or town board seats to ensure those election stories that lacked any specific use of the term "election" also would be included.

In the end, this study examined municipal election coverage on 23 newspaper websites representing 28 community newspapers and dozens of cities, towns and villages scattered across Missouri. A total of 292 newspaper articles and 220 photographs were examined.

The focus on city council and aldermanic seats was intended to keep the volume of material manageable and to simplify comparison among various newspapers. Some news articles, of course, included content related not only to city council and aldermanic elections, but also to school board elections or ballot issues. These articles were included in the study, but only those parts of the story that were directly related to the city council or aldermanic elections were coded.

Limiting this research to the 12-week window between Jan. 1 and the day before the municipal elections was a purposeful attempt to capture not only the most relevant local political coverage but also the bulk of it. Many candidates for local offices don't petition for places on the ballot until November of the previous year, or even late January in the year of the vote. Newspaper coverage normally does not begin in earnest until mid-January or even early March, except in those communities that hold February or March primaries for city council seats.

April stories about Election Day results were excluded from this study because they understandably default to a horse-race, winner-and-loser frame. Although stories about the outcomes of earlier primary elections carry the same baggage, they were included because they offered an opportunity to look forward to the candidates' subsequent campaigns for election on the April ballots.

Wimmer and Dominick also make clear the importance of identifying the unit(s) of analysis to be researched. In this research, the entirety of the article is the unit of analysis. Tankard (p. 101), however, lists 11 "framing mechanisms" within a news article that should be considered when studying frames in newspaper stories. They include:

1. Headlines and kickers
2. Subheads
3. Photographs
4. Photo captions
5. Leads
6. Selection of sources or affiliations
7. Selection of quotes
8. Pull quotes
9. Logos
10. Statistics, charts and graphs
11. Concluding statements or paragraphs

Tankard offers good guidelines. But the volume of articles to be coded in this study, as well as the limitations of the subject newspaper websites, caused this research to scale back and adapt a bit. Sampled stories, for example, featured few or zero instances of kickers, pull quotes, logos, charts or graphs. On the few occasions when those did occur, keywords that appeared within them were tallied, but those items were not coded separately.

Similarly, sampled stories seldom cited any source other than a candidate for office, so there was little to learn (beyond that) from an in-depth analysis of source selection. And, because the researchers lacked the benefit of knowing which candidate quotations reporters and editors decided to use or discard, it was impossible to examine whether

there were conscious decisions about framing that had any influence over quote selection. That would the subject of a different study.

It's curious that Tankard omitted from his list of framing mechanisms the main body of a newspaper story. While it's true that leads and concluding statements have considerable power to establish frames in narrative texts, the middle ground of news reports ought not to be ignored. Leads and concluding statements were analyzed in this research, but they were not coded separately from the rest of the articles. That, too, might be fodder for further inquiry.

This study defined election "stories" as any news items, no matter how brief, that contained any information whatsoever about city council, aldermanic or town trustee elections. It analyzed not only the bodies, or the main texts, of those stories but also other aspects of the article packages, including headlines and subheads. The 10 video interviews with candidates discovered in the sample were coded as news articles.

Photographs are listed among Tankard's framing mechanisms for newspaper stories, but those that appeared as part of the subject newspapers' election coverage were coded separately.

Categorizing frames

The research also employed what Wimmer and Dominick call "a priori coding" (p. 159), in which the categories are established before the data are collected. Tankard, too, advised researchers to develop a list of potential frames within the domain to be

studied, then to define those frames with the types of information, keywords and catchphrases one is likely to find within them (p. 101).

For this study, articles were analyzed and coded for the totality of their tone and categorized as employing literacy, horse-race, strategy or substantive issue frames. Each article was assigned only to one framing category. Although some articles contained nuances of two – or sometimes more frames – it was the coder's job to ascertain which frame was dominant in the story and to assign it to that category.

On a secondary level, the study tallied how many times news stories used any of 102 keywords that might indicate or lend to a particular frame. The list of keywords – developed based on the author's experience reading, writing and editing election stories over a period of more than 25 years and through consultation with collaborating content analysts – was broken into groups that matched the larger framing categories. It was intended to be thorough but not exhaustive.

Keywords were coded and tallied when they appeared in any tense or alternate form but with keen attention focused on the context in which they were used. It's far different, for example, to say one candidate is "challenging" another than to say that candidates at a debate discussed "challenges" facing the city. It's far different to say that a fourth candidate has entered the "race," than to say "race" has emerged as an issue in the campaign.

Although keywords were one means of deciding in which overall frame a particular news article might belong, the keyword tallies were intended as a separate level of

analysis altogether. Overall, framing and keyword findings are presented and discussed separately in later sections.

 Horse-race frames were assigned to stories that focused most on who was leading, who was favored or who had the most money in a campaign for a city council or town board seat. Key terms such as "opponent," race," "run," "winner," "loser," "favorite," "front-runner" or "war chest" were coded and counted as examples of horse-race terms. Opinion polls that invited the public to tell how they planned to vote were coded in this category. Articles that told which organizations were endorsing which candidates were coded as horse-race frames unless they included substantive information about stances the candidates held to earn such endorsements. Although there were none (see results), photographs that depicted a candidate collecting money at a fundraiser or pointing his finger at an opponent during a forum, would have fit this category.

 Strategy frames, while closely related to horse-race frames, were defined as stories that discussed why a candidate was making certain statements, which segments of the electorate he or she was targeting, what sorts of campaign tactics he or she was using (yard signs, radio and newspaper ads, television commercials, door-to-door campaigning, etc.) or other aspects of the campaigns. Although there were none (see results) photos assigned to strategy frames might have depicted a streetscape full of political yard signs or a candidate going door to door.

 Substantive issue frames were defined as those that reported to readers a candidate's or multiple candidates' specific stance(s) on or solution(s) to a challenge, issue or problem of public concern. Keywords such as "economy," "budget," "tax,"

"infrastructure," "safety" and "crime" were searched and coded, again with particular

attention to the context in which they were used. Other issue terms sought and coded –

such as "propose," "promise," "solution," "position" or "stance" – were intended to

indicate whether candidates were making statements in news stories that provided

information about their intentions if elected to public office. Question-and-answer articles

in which candidates explained platforms in their own words fell into this category.

Although there were none (see results), photos assigned to this category might have

depicted candidates in candid settings that help illustrate them as people. Or, they might

have included photographs that someone illustrated and helped define the issues being

discussed in the campaign.

Finally, **literacy frames** were assigned to news stories that simply relayed to the public

information about how to vote, when to vote, who was on the ballot, or when a forum

was being held. Candidate profiles that offered little more than basic biographical

information or that failed to go beyond the simple mention of issues were included here.

Keywords tallied as literacy terms included, for example, neutral references to

"campaigns," the "ballot," "election, re-election," or "candidates" and "candidacy."

Photographs that were simply portraits (or mugshots) of the candidates or images of the

dais at a candidate forum, fell into this category.

Substantive issue frames were perhaps the most challenging to code, given that

substance is a difficult thing to decipher. Iyengar, Woo and McGrady (1995) defined

substantive coverage as news "stories linking vital policy issues to candidates' positions,

competence and experience, as well as articles taking readers beyond the daily polling or

the insider's analysis of the campaign" (p. 85). Stevens, in his study of Minneapolis television news, aimed for far more precision:

> "We ascertained whether each story was concerned with an issue (and, if so, which issue), with some aspect of a candidate's biography or personal life, or with the 'horse-race' aspect of polling and campaign strategy. We evaluated depth of coverage by distinguishing discussion or analysis of an issue from the mere mention of a current political concern. For example, stories will sometimes mention an issue, such as simply saying 'Candidate Doe talked about the issue of health care today,' without engaging in any analysis or presenting any other information or insight. Past research into media coverage of issues has tended not to distinguish between the mere mention and more in-depth analysis and discussion of issues … yet clearly they differ greatly in the quantity and quality of information they provide" (p. 64).

For this research, the more precise method employed by Stevens seemed initially to be a better fit, given that most election reports, particularly at the local level, are likely to feature at least a passing reference to some issue of political or government concern. Whether those stories offer any real substance – the kind of substance that actually helps a voter decide which candidate should get his or her vote – is a far different question. Passing references to issues are easy, but journalists must work much harder to put the issues raised in election campaigns into the proper context or to do any reporting that helps voters understand which candidate offers the better solution or approach to a given problem or challenge.

Although it was the initial intent of this research to lean heavily toward Stevens' definition of issue frames – those that go beyond the mere mention of an issue to add some depth or analysis to the discussion – in the end the coding reached a compromise

with Iyengar, Woo and McGrady's method, in which issue frames were applied to stories that merely linked an issue to a candidate's position.

Again, it was not the goal of this research to assess the overall quality of coverage but only to analyze how it was framed. Although many of the substantive issue stories identified in this research failed to go beyond cursory statements of the candidates' positions, the headlines, leads and overall presentations established frames that suggested they would. And readers got at least a small dose of the candidates' stances on issues of demonstrated community concern.

Striving for reliability

To increase the reliability of the research, this study incorporated the work of three content analysts: the author and two research assistants who were graduate students at the Missouri School of Journalism and who both were trained in the classroom and in the newsroom for qualitative and quantitative research. Because inter-coder reliability is important, these analysts worked to ensure before the study that they understood the categories and criteria outlined. As an initial test, all three independently coded 52 news articles and accompanying photographs from the Springfield News Leader and the Columbia Daily Tribune. These articles represented 17.5 percent of the total article sample.

The results were more than encouraging. On 85 percent of the stories, the three analysts reached the same conclusion about how to categorize the sampled stories' frames. There was not a single instance in which at least two of the three researchers did not agree on

the appropriate framing category. Although a cursory glance made it clear the level of agreement was impressive, the researcher employed Fleiss' kappa, a statistical measure of intercoder reliability for studies in which more than two raters are used. In the calculation for the original sample, $k = 0.816$, which is at the lower end of the scale for "almost perfect agreement." Given that level of consistency, the remaining 240 stories and accompanying photographs were then divided among the three for individual coding.

Although the use of three coders initially complicated matters, it was an attempt both to streamline the research and, more important, to ensure reliability. Tankard, in advocating for empirical methods of studying frames in the news, argued that anything less than multiple analysts striving for at least minimal agreement would be less than reliable. A scholar, he wrote, cannot appoint himself a definitive expert on framing then sit alone in room and do his own classifications without compromising the quality of his research:

> "Does one reader saying a story is using a *conflict* frame make that really the case? Indeed, coming up with names for frames itself involves a kind of framing" (p. 98).

Point well taken. Given the high level of inter-coder reliability, the rigorous and detailed approach, and the volume of sampled material, the findings of this study should prove useful and significant.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

If the dominance of horse-race and strategy frames in the news media's coverage of national elections is a bad thing, the news – at least from a framing perspective – is much better regarding community newspapers' coverage of municipal elections, where this study found literacy and issue frames to be much more common. Still, it's fair to say that these small newspapers' political coverage leaves much to be desired. Although it was outside the purview of this content analysis to evaluate the quality of the election news, further discussion of those findings is warranted.

Again, a total of 292 news articles across 23 websites and 28 newspapers were coded for this study. See Table 1 for a list of the newspaper websites, their print circulations and the number of articles coded from each. See Appendix 1 for the headlines, URLs and coding categories for each of the stories studied.

The websites searched represented newspapers with average circulations of 11,659 and a median circulation of 8,000 (excluding smaller newspapers that were not listed as members of the Missouri Press Association but whose content was included on the websites), and they provided an average of just fewer than 13 election stories apiece over the course of the 12 weeks studied. Article counts ranged from a high of 34 in the Columbia Daily Tribune to a low of two in the Hannibal Courier-Post. There was no obvious correlation between circulation size and the number of election articles published, although further examination of that premise might be warranted.

Understandably, newspapers covering communities with few or no contested elections tended to have fewer articles.

Table 1. Circulation and article counts of newspapers studied

Newspaper	Circulation*	Article count
Aurora Advertiser	2,415	5
Bolivar Herald-Free Press	5,504	14
Boonville Daily News	2,000	12
Branson Tri-Lakes News	8,000	12
Camdenton Lake-Sun Leader	5,000	5
Cape Girardeau Southeast Missourian	13,775	5
Columbia Daily Tribune	18,500	34
E-Missourian**	16,034	24
Hannibal Courier Post	6,925	2
Independence Examiner	11,890	14
Jefferson City News Tribune	18,266	24
Joplin Globe	28,000	15
Kennett Daily Dunklin Democrat	3,655	4
Kirksville Daily Express	3,105	6
Lebanon Daily Record	5,535	10
Liberty Tribune (KC CommunityNews.com)***	9,000	17
Mexico Ledger	5,097	6
Park Hills Daily Journal	6,478	17
Salem News	3,800	4
Sedalia Democrat	10,971	19
Sikeston Standard Democrat	8,000	5
Springfield News-Leader	44,862	18
St. Joseph News-Press	31,349	20
Total	**268,161**	**292**
Mean	**11,659**	**13**

*Source: Data from Missouri Press Association 2011 Newspaper Directory.

**Includes content from Washington Missourian, Union Missourian, St. Clair Missourian and Warrenton Warren County Record.

***Includes content from Liberty Tribune, Smithville Herald and Louisberg Herald.

Categorical frame results

Figure 1 summarizes the general and overarching findings of the study. Of the 292 stories coded, 185, or 63 percent, were found to exhibit literacy frames, while 80, or 27.7 percent, adopted substantive issue frames. Only two, or 0.7 percent, exhibited strategy frames, and 25, or 8.9 percent, exhibited horse-race frames.
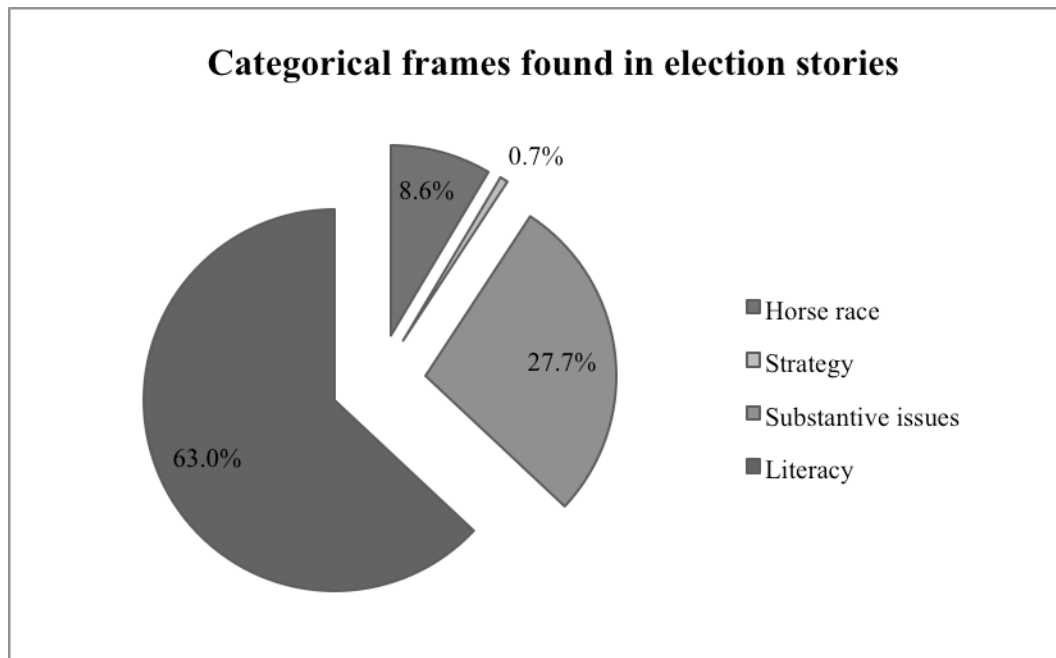

Figure 1. Categorical frames found in election stories

Those findings were remarkably consistent across all the newspaper websites studied. Table 2 offers a complete breakdown. Indeed, 18 of the 23 websites included in the study published zero articles that fell into the horse-race or strategy frame categories.

Table 2. Frequency of news frames in articles coded, by newspaper

Newspaper	Article count	Horse race	Percent total	Strategy	Percent total	Substantive issue	Percent total	Literacy	Percent total
				Primary framing categories of articles coded					
Aurora Advertiser	5	0	0%	0	0%	2	40%	3	60%
Bolivar Herald-Free Press	13	0	0%	0	0%	6	46%	7	54%
Boonville Daily News	13	0	0%	1	8%	5	38%	7	54%
Branson Tri-Lakes News	12	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	12	100%
Camdenton Lake-Sun Leader	5	0	0%	0	0%	1	20%	4	80%
Cape Girardeau Southeast Missourian	5	0	0%	0	0%	2	40%	3	60%
Columbia Daily Tribune	34	15	44%	0	0%	9	29%	10	26%
E-Missourian	24	0	0%	0	0%	11	46%	13	54%
Hannibal Courier Post	2	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	100%
Independence Examiner	12	0	0%	0	0%	7	58%	5	42%
Jefferson City News Tribune	24	1	4%	1	4%	7	29%	15	63%
Joplin Globe	15	0	0%	0	0%	5	33%	10	67%
Kennett Daily Dunklin Democrat	4	0	0%	0	0%	2	50%	2	50%
Kirksville Daily Express	6	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
Lebanon Daily Record	17	0	0%	0	0%	4	24%	13	76%
Liberty Tribune (KC CommunityNews.com)	17	0	0%	0	0%	1	6%	16	94%
Mexico Ledger	6	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
Park Hills Daily Journal	16	0	0%	0	0%	1	6%	15	94%
Salem News	5	0	0%	0	0%	1	20%	4	80%
Sedalia Democrat	14	0	0%	0	0%	8	57%	6	43%
Sikeston Standard Democrat	5	0	0%	0	0%	1	20%	4	80%
Springfield News-Leader	18	7	39%	0	0%	3	17%	8	44%
St. Joseph News-Press	20	2	10%	0	0%	4	20%	14	70%
Total	**292**	**25**	**9%**	**2**	**1%**	**80**	**28%**	**185**	**63%**
Average	**12.7**	**1.1**	**4.2%**	**0.1**	**0.5%**	**3.5**	**26.1%**	**8.0**	**69.2%**

On average, 69 percent of each newspaper website's election coverage fell into the
literacy category. In other words, seven out of 10 of the election stories published gave
readers simple and basic information about the election. These items included news briefs

about candidate filings or offering lists of candidates, short items announcing scheduled candidate forums or articles explaining to people when, where or how to vote. At three newspapers, every election article published carried a literacy frame.

A few of these "literacy" articles went beyond the basic but were categorized as literacy because they offered little or no information about candidates or political issues. The Branson Tri-Lakes News, for example, published an interesting story about the county clerk's plans to save money by closing some polling places where historically only handfuls of voters had cast ballots. The Sedalia Democrat reported to its readers that voters for the first time would encounter electronic polling machines. The St. Joseph News-Press told of an ethics controversy surrounding a city employee's use of her government email account to support one candidate over another. The E-Missourian featured a piece in which the county clerk reminded candidates they would have to comply with a "no visit" list preventing them from knocking on some constituents' doors. So, although a handful of the literacy-frame stories had substance, they had less to do with candidates or campaigns and more to do with issues involving the conduct of the elections themselves.

Far more common were literacy stories that provided straight-up information about who was filing for office (or not), when candidate forums would be held or how voters could participate. A few examples follow.

- An excerpt from an item in the Aurora Advertiser. It appeared Jan. 8, 2011, under the headline "Filing period ends January 18:"

  "Aurora, Mo. – The filing period for the april (sic) *election will remain open until 5 p.m., January 18, at area city halls and schools.*

People desiring to serve on city councils and school boards should visit the respective offices to file for office.
Local openings include:
[School board paragraphs omitted here.]
Aurora City Council
The seats held by Dan Broyles and Darlene (Hedrick) Moore on the Aurora City Council will be included on the ballot.
Moore has filed as a candidate, along with Eddie Breeding and Steve Ramirez."

- This "story" published by the Kirksville Daily Express on Jan. 18, 2011. It appeared under the headline "Council race up to five candidates:"

  "Kirksville, Mo. – City Clerk Vickie Brumbaugh said Tuesday afternoon that two additional citizens had filed to run for Kirksville city council.
  As of 3:30 p.m., the five who have filed are:
  Kevin A. Alm
  Roger A. Edge, Sr.
  Jerry Mills
  Chris Drennan
  Eddy A. Williams."

- This one-sentence article that appeared on the Mexico Ledger's website on Jan. 25, 2011, under the headline "Kevin Lowrance withdraws as candidate:"

  "Mexico, Mo. – Kevin Lowrance has signed a Withdrawal of Candidacy for the April 5 Municipal Election for the Office of City Councilman."

- This brief in the Bolivar Herald-Free Press, which appeared March 9, 2011, under the headline "Bolivar mayoral candidates to answer readers' questions."

  "Do you have questions to ask the three candidates for Bolivar mayor in the April 5 election?
  Bill Jones, Dr. John Best and Roger Hicks Jr. are featured in video interviews at www.bolivarmonews.com and have agreed to another round of interviews on video. This time, the questions will be ones asked by you, the BH-FP readers.
  To submit a question, contact Sarah at 777-9725 or e-mail sarahw@bolivarnews.com.

Substantive issue frames were the second most common at most of the newspapers studied. On average, 26 percent of each newspaper's election coverage was included in this category. The Sedalia Democrat ranked highest, with 57 percent of its stories carrying a substantive issue frame. Nine of the 23 newspaper websites carried no articles coded in this category. Because these frames deserve more explication, examples will come later.

Horse-race frames were far less frequent. On average, 4.2 percent of the websites' election stories carried horse-race frames, but even that number is misleading. Of the 25 total horse-race news items identified, 15 were polls in either the Columbia Daily Tribune or the Springfield News-Leader that asked voters to indicate for whom they would vote in the election. Five more – from the St. Joseph News-Press, the Jefferson City News Tribune and the Springfield News-Leader – reported the results of primary elections. Nineteen of the 23 websites published no stories coded as horse-race frames.

Of the remaining five horse race stories, two dealt with endorsements, and three focused on how much money candidates had collected to finance their campaigns. These stories were coded as horse race frames primarily because they lacked any information about why certain citizens or citizen groups were giving money to particular candidates. This excerpt from a story in the Springfield News-Leader, published just a week before the election on March 29, 2011, and under the headline "Campaign finance reports updated in Springfield City Council races," is a good example:

"Campaign finance activity in City Council races has been limited in the past month, with one exception.

> *General D candidate Thomas Bieker, reported total contributions of $30,119*
> *– up from about $7,800 in late February – on a committee report filed Sunday.*
> *Included in that total was a $16,400 donation from the Springfield Good*
> *Government Committee, which lists Home Builder's Association CEO Matt*
> *Morrow as treasurer.*
> *Other donations included $2,500 from businessman Matt O'Reilly, $2,000*
> *from Missouri Citizens for Ethical Government and $500 from the Coalition for*
> *Building a Better Tomorrow, which also lists Morrow as treasurer.*
> *Bieker reported having a little more than $2,100 on hand after spending*
> *more than $20,000 since late February.*
> *In addition to campaign signs, radio and newspaper advertising, Bieker spent*
> *more than $14,000 to put ads on television.*
> *His opponent, Fred Ellison, filed a report stating he had received and spent*
> *less than $500 since February."*

Finally, strategy frames were nearly non-existent, comprising an average of 0.5 percent

of each site's coverage. In fact, only two newspapers, the Jefferson City News Tribune

and the Boonville Daily News, carried even a single strategy-frame story. (The

Springfield story cited above contained elements of strategy, but was assigned to the

horse-race category as the dominant frame.) In the case of the Jefferson City News

Tribune, the story was published after voters made a surprisingly lopsided decision in a

primary election that eliminated the need for a follow-up vote on the April municipal

ballot. The reporter interviewed two candidates for mayor in the wake of the primary to

learn how they had decided to allocate their campaign money. The winner,

unsurprisingly, had chosen to spend his money quickly in an attempt to claim the mayor's

seat early. Here's an excerpt of the story, which appropriately appeared on Feb. 20, 2011,

under the headline "Reports reflect candidates' strategies:"

> *"Eric Struemph went for broke in the primary, draining most of his campaign*
> *coffers with the confidence that he could win the race outright before the*
> *general election.*

His tactic of spending down his war chest apparently paid off – the 4th Ward councilman was elected mayor Feb. 8 with 65 percent of the vote. If none of the three candidates topped 50 percent, a general election between the top two would have been required.

"We put most of our chips on the table, so to speak," Struemph said.

The candidates potentially needed to stretch their campaign dollars through the general election in April.

"We had always anticipated trying to wrap this up in February, because that's what many of the voters and business leaders told us we could do," Struemph said.

George Hartsfield had about four times as much cash on hand as Struemph eight days before the election.

Hartsfield said he was anticipating a run-off election. "I thought it was a high probability of a run-off, and I didn't want to be left with zero," he said.

Hartsfield also led Struemph in overall fundraising, but it was mostly due to a $20,000 contribution to his own campaign."

Categorizing substance

As anticipated in the methodology, the challenge of sorting literacy frames from substantive issue frames at times proved difficult. While intercoder reliability in the initial sample was strong, there were six occasions among the 52 stories in the initial sample in which two coders cited a literacy frame and one a substantive issue frame, or vice versa.

Throughout the entire sample for this research, there were many instances in which a newspaper would report on the comments candidates made at community forums. Candidates commonly would offer brief thoughts or opinions on a given issue – too frequently boiled down to a single quote – but few of the stories carried any meaningful context or background that would lend "substance" to the debate.

The Columbia Daily Tribune offers a good example. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People hosted a forum on March 22, 2011, featuring four

candidates for Columbia's First Ward city council seat. Here's an excerpt from the story,

which featured the headline "NAACP forum focuses on First Ward issues" and the

subhead "Candidates talk police board, area services:"

> *Columbia's First Ward candidates for Columbia City Council answered*
> *questions last night about the Citizens Police Review Board, affirmative action*
> *and payday loan operations, among other things. The questions came during a*
> *forum hosted by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored*
> *People at Second Baptist Church on Broadway.*
> *Fred Schmidt, Mitch Richards, Darrel Foster and Pam Forbes are running to*
> *represent the ward. They would replace Councilman Paul Sturtz, who isn't*
> *seeking re-election.*
> ***Review board.*** *Local NAACP President Mary Ratliff called the Citizens*
> *Police Review Board one of her group's most important issues. Richards said*
> *he sees the review board as a check on the police department. He described one*
> *raid that captured a crack dealer. He said the department's policy was followed*
> *and the man was a bad guy.*
> *"But does that mean we need to send guys wearing military garb and sticking*
> *machine guns in his 16-year-old sister's face?" he asked. "I don't think so, and*
> *it is to address those kinds of issues that the Citizens Police Review Board*
> *exists."*
> *He said he would like to change the board so that only the city council can*
> *overturn its decisions. The power now rests with the city manager.*
> *Foster said the board was needed because it is important not to let police*
> *watch over themselves. He also thought the manager shouldn't be able to*
> *overturn board decisions. He then said many black males are arrested for drug*
> *charges and it is law enforcement who supplies the drugs in the first place.*
> *"Those must be the guys that are giving these guys the drugs, because I live*
> *in this community and I don't see any poppy plants, I don't see any marijuana*
> *trees growing around here."*

This is an example of a substantive issue story that initially confounded the coders. The

headline and subhead suggest the reader is about to learn about the candidates' opinions

on some important issues. Although the issue frame carries on throughout the story, the

reporting reads more like the minutes of a meeting than a serious discussion of issues. It

is devoid of depth. How much does the reader know about the raid on the crack house cited by Candidate Richards? What is a voter to make of Candidate Foster's claim that police are supplying drugs to central city residents? Is it a good idea to let the city manager, rather than the city council, overturn review board decisions? Why are the statements of Candidates Forbes and Schmidt's omitted from the discussion? In the truest sense of the content, what we have here is literacy – a straightforward report of what two candidates said at a forum. But the frame is decidedly about substantive issues.

On the other hand, there were stories that carried straightforward headlines – such as "Council Hopefuls Vie for 3rd District Seat," published by the St. Joseph News-Press – that were presented blandly but evolved into cursory but constructive comment on issues of local concern. The headlines in these sorts of cases served more as labels so conventional to the newspapers' presentation styles that regular readers might have anticipated them as frames promising constructive discussion. These types of articles, then, also were coded as substantive issue frames. Here's an excerpt from the St. Joseph News-Press example:

> "Next month will bring the first indicator of whether City Hall should expect another house cleaning.
> St. Joseph voters showed incumbents little kindness in 2006 when they elected seven new faces to the City Council.
> Third District council member Mike Bozarth will be the first incumbent to defend his seat when he faces Steve Sewell, P.J. Kovac and Don Peters in the city's primary election March 2.
> With the election a month away, the News-Press introduces the 3rd District candidates in the order they will appear on the ballot.
> The Rev. Steve Sewell moved to St. Joseph in May 2003 and now serves as pastor of new Hope Foursquare Church and chaplain for Kendallwood Hospice.

As a potential council member, Mr. Sewell identifies himself as someone with a religious background, but not necessarily a religious platform. If elected, he would strive to bring more businesses to the South Side, focus closer on street and alley repairs, and find a way to route more trucks onto Interstate 229 to reduce traffic on residential roads.

Mr. Sewell said the council needs to review the needs of its service sector workers.

'How can anyone say we have a great police or fire department without giving them a raise the past three years? We have to find a way to help our employees,' Mr. Sewell said.

P.J. Kovac has dealt with the public since he held his first job as an 11-year-old. The longtime South Sider owns P.J.'s Fireworks, a mini-storage business and a part interest in the grocery stores that bear his family name.

If elected, Mr. Kovac would continue to press for construction of a bridge over the South Side viaduct to alleviate traffic problems at the intersection of Alabama Avenue and U.S. Highway 59. He hopes the city can push a plan to restore the Stockyards Exchange Building.

To help the city as a whole, he said he thinks steps should be taken to eliminate the adversarial relationship many perceive between city inspectors and people who try to open a new business.

'I would just like to see a can-do attitude in the city, and treat the businesses in more friendly terms instead of feeling like it's us against them,' Mr. Kovac said."

Photographic framing results

The newspaper websites' photographic coverage of the municipal elections was remarkably consistent – and bland. In all, 220 photos were included with the election stories; 205, or 93 percent, were head-and-shoulders portraits of the candidates, commonly known as mugshots. Fourteen, or 6 percent, were pictures of the candidates sitting at tables during candidate forums or, in one case, of a forum host holding a microphone out to a citizen so he could ask a question of the candidates. One, in the Branson Tri-Lakes News, depicted a woman standing at a rostrum complaining about the decision to close polling places. Figure 2 shows the distribution of photos.

Distribution of election-related photos

1%

6%

■Portraits

■Forums

■Others

93%
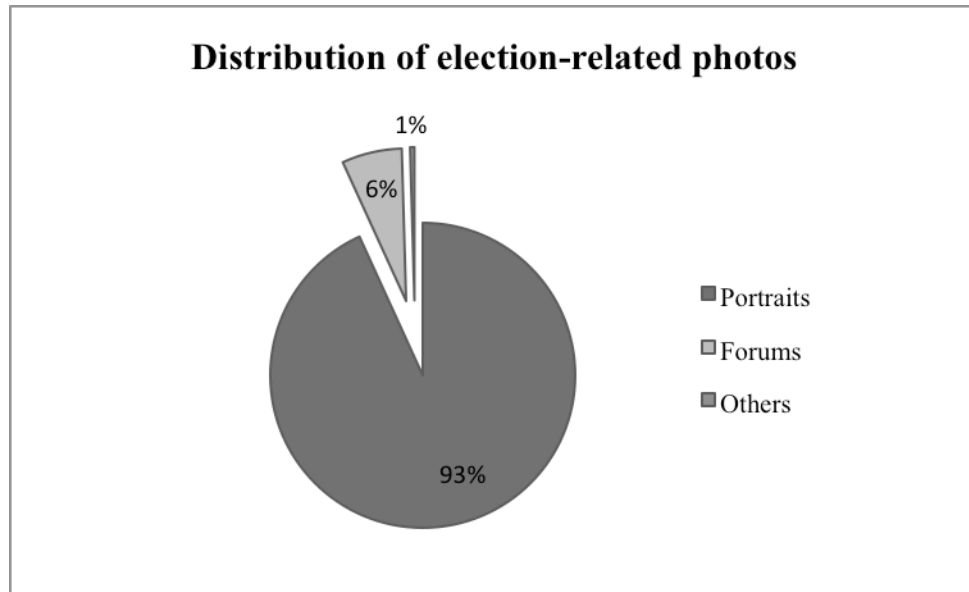
Figure 2: Distribution of election-related photos

Absent from the content studied were any photographs of the candidates in candid situations, such as in the workplace, on the campaign trail or at home. No photographs spoke to any of the issues in the myriad campaigns that were covered. Given that, every photograph examined was included in the category of literacy frames. The photos, that is, simply "reported" what the candidates looked like or that a forum had taken place.

One partial explanation is the limitations of some of the sample newspapers' websites. Several make it clear that their archives feature neither photographs nor graphics. Also, the findings aren't surprising when one examines the photographic content in light of the rest of the news coverage. If nearly seven out of 10 of the stories published carry literacy frames – and if small-town newspapers are generating an average of about one election

report per week during the campaign season, it stands to reason that the photo departments – if they exist – would pour little energy into the efforts. Photo captions were a fairly significant contributor to keyword findings, however, as those results will show.

Keyword framing results

The results of the keyword analysis in some ways are inconsistent with the categorical frames assigned to the subject stories. Given that only 4.2 percent of the articles studied were classified as horse-race frames, one understandably would be surprised to learn that 1,011 uses of horse-race terms were recorded. Strategy terms were on track. The analysis found only 18 uses. The use of substantive issue and literacy terms also were the reverse of what one might initially expect. While there were 3,671 recorded instances of substantive issue keywords, there were 2,142 uses of literacy terms. These tallies include headlines, subheads, the full body of the articles, video interviews with candidates and photo captions.

The keyword analysis was an inexact science intended to provide a secondary indication of how journalists frame their news stories. One simple reason for the odd results was the number of keywords searched in each category. The researchers sought and tallied the uses of 30 horse-race terms, eight strategy terms, 56 substantive issue terms and eight literacy terms. To some extent, it's only natural that coders would find more uses when searching for more terms.

Literacy keywords, however, stood out as the exception. Although only seven "literacy" keywords were tallied, those words are inherently common in news about

elections. One of the literacy keywords, for example, was "elect, election, re-elect, re-election," which was found to occur 803 times in the articles, videos and photo captions. Similarly, the keyword "candidate, candidacy," was recorded 757 times, 35 times in photo captions alone. Those two keywords accounted for 72.8 percent of all the literacy terms found. Table 3 offers a complete look at the literacy terms tallied.

Table 3: Incidence of literacy terms in election coverage

Literacy keywords	Tally in text stories	Tally in headlines	Tally in videos	Tally in captions	Total
Ballot	138	13	0	0	**151**
Campaign	72	3	1	0	**76**
Candidate, candidacy	603	101	18	35	**757**
Elect, election, re-elect, re-election	735	57	4	7	**803**
Forum	79	23	0	6	**108**
Incumbent	224	10	0	1	**235**
Newcomer	10	1	0	0	**11**
Total	**1,861**	**208**	**23**	**49**	**2,141**

The relatively high number of horse race terms bears further explanation. Some of these terms – "run," "race," "opposed/unopposed," and "face," for example – have become so ingrained in the parlance of election conversation and journalism that a reporter could hardly be blamed for defaulting to them.

These terms were tallied hundreds of times in stories that, in the end, were classified as carrying literacy frames. If a newspaper simply reported that Jim Smith had decided to "run" for city council, that Jane Jones was "unopposed" in her bid for a second term or that Tom Brown was "facing" another candidate in the "race," for example, the horse

race terms were tallied, but the assigned framing categories were in most cases unaffected.

Still, there's something to learn here. Table 4 shows the incidence of horse race terms that were searched and occurred in the texts. It's worth noting that candidates were cast as "challengers" or said to be "challenging" another candidate 85 times. That's an average of more than one reference for every three stories, videos or photo captions included in the study.

The term "endorse/endorsement" tallied 21 uses, nearly all in stories that were cited as examples of horse race frames. Incidence of terms such as "lose, loser, lost," or "win, winner," were relatively low, most occurring in reports on the outcomes of primary elections.

Table 4. Incidence of horse-race terms in election coverage*

Horce race keywords	Tally in text stories	Tally in headlines	Tally in videos	Tally in captions	Total
Adversary	0	0	0	0	**0**
Attack	1	0	0	0	**1**
Battle	2	0	0	0	**2**
Beat	4	0	0	0	**4**
Challenge, challenger	80	3	1	1	**85**
Clash	0	0	0	0	**0**
Compete, competition	19	1	0	0	**20**
Confront	1	0	0	0	**1**
Contend, contender	7	1	0	0	**8**
Contest, (un)contested	54	8	0	0	**62**
Endorse, endorsement	21	2	0	0	**23**
Face	63	3	0	0	**66**
Favorite	0	0	0	0	**0**
Fight	0	0	0	0	**0**
Foe	0	0	0	0	**0**
Front-runner	0	0	0	0	**0**
Lag	0	0	0	0	**0**
Lead	1	2	0	0	**3**
Oppose, opponent, opposition, unopposed	149	1	3	0	**153**
Funds, fund-raiser, raise	25	0	0	0	**25**
Lose, loser, lost	7	0	0	0	**7**
Poll	12	4	0	0	**16**
Race	220	34	0	0	**254**
Rival	0	0	0	0	**0**
Run	218	8	4	2	**232**
Square off	3	1	0	0	**4**
Vie, vying	26	4	0	0	**30**
War chest	1	0	0	0	**1**
Win, winner	19	2	0	0	**21**
Total	**926**	**74**	**8**	**3**	**1,011**

Strategy terms were nearly absent from the sampled stories. The keyword "ad, advertise, advertising" was discovered 14 times, accounting for 77.7 percent of the 18 total strategy term references. There was one instance each of the keywords "approach," "seeks, sought to," "strategy" and "tactic." Table 5 reflects this.

Table 5. Incidence of strategy terms in election coverage

Strategy keywords	Tally in text stories	Tally in headlines	Tally in videos	Tally in captions	Total
Ad, advertise	14	0	0	0	**14**
Approach	1	0	0	0	**1**
Cast (himself/herself or another candidate)	0	0	0	0	**0**
Labeled (himself/herself or another candidate)	0	0	0	0	**0**
Portrayed (himself/herself or another candidate)	0	0	0	0	**0**
Seeks, sought to	1	0	0	0	**1**
Strategy	0	1	0	0	**1**
Tactic	1	0	0	0	**1**
Total	**14**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**18**

Finally, we come to keywords associated with substantive issue frames. There were several subcategories within the keywords, however. Terms such as "assure," "believe," "think, thought," "wants" and "we need" sought to determine how often candidates were being allowed to state their positions. Others sought plain labels for substantive discourse: "issue," "discuss, discussion," "priority" and "problem." Still others were incorporated to learn whether specific issues were on the candidates' minds, keywords such as "economy," "business," "safety," "development" and "infrastructure." Table 6

gives a full accounting of the results, which upon close examination prove quite

interesting.

Table 6: Incidence of substantive issue terms in election coverage*

Keyword	Tally in text stories	Tally in headlines	Tally in videos	Tally in captions	Total
Annex, annexation	27	0	1	0	28
Assure	0	0	0	0	0
Believe	90	0	4	0	94
Budget	79	1	3	0	83
Business	317	4	36	0	357
Called for	1	0	0	0	1
Concern	76	2	4	0	82
Crime	18	1	0	0	19
Cut	34	0	8	0	42
Development	178	2	2	0	182
Differences	11	1	0	0	12
Discuss, discussion	23	3	1	1	28
Economy	142	0	7	0	149
Explain	5	0	0	0	5
Favor	8	0	0	0	8
Feel, feeling	50	0	1	0	51
Fire, firefighter	61	0	8	0	69
Goals	47	1	1	0	49
Grants	36	0	4	0	40
Growth	126	1	12	0	139
Idea	25	1	7	0	33
Infrastructure	67	0	3	0	70
Issue	214	9	15	2	240
Jobs	129	2	4	0	135
Like (I would like)	62	0	2	0	64
Matter	0	0	0	0	0
Opinion	15	0	3	0	18
Oppose	14	0	0	0	14
Plan	29	1	7	0	37
Platform	11	0	0	0	11

Pledge	3	1	0	0	**4**
Police	82	1	5	0	**88**
Position	9	0	0	0	**9**
Priority, prioritize	117	1	1	0	**119**
Problem	38	0	15	0	**53**
Promise	24	0	0	0	**24**
Propose, proposal	22	0	3	0	**25**
Push	13	0	0	0	**13**
Represent	71	0	5	1	**77**
Revenue	55	0	9	0	**64**
Roads	45	0	4	0	**49**
Safety	47	3	3	0	**53**
Sewer	78	0	8	0	**86**
Sidewalks	26	0	5	0	**31**
Solution, solve, resolve	20	0	2	0	**22**
Spend, spending	54	0	7	0	**61**
Stance, stand	3	2	0	0	**5**
Streets	60	0	3	0	**63**
Suggest, suggestion	18	0	3	0	**21**
Support	59	1	6	0	**66**
Tax, taxpayers	183	1	54	0	**238**
Think, thought	121	1	57	0	**179**
Transparency	16	0	1	0	**17**
View, viewpoint	12	3	0	0	**15**
Vow	0	1	0	0	**1**
Wants	107	0	9	0	**116**
Water	38	0	6	0	**44**
We need	58	0	10	0	**68**
Total	**3,274**	**44**	**349**	**4**	**3,671**

Perhaps the most salient points that come from the analysis of substantive issue

keywords stem from the topics that candidates most often discuss and journalists most

often report. Four primary areas of interest dominate the relatively small amount of issue coverage that exists: the economy, government budgeting, infrastructure and public safety. Figure 3 breaks it down.

Categories of specific issue terms used in election coverage

2.1%	
10.9%	■ Business/Economy
16.3%	■ Budget/Taxes
45.7%	■ Infrastructure
25.1%	■ Public Safety
	■ Other
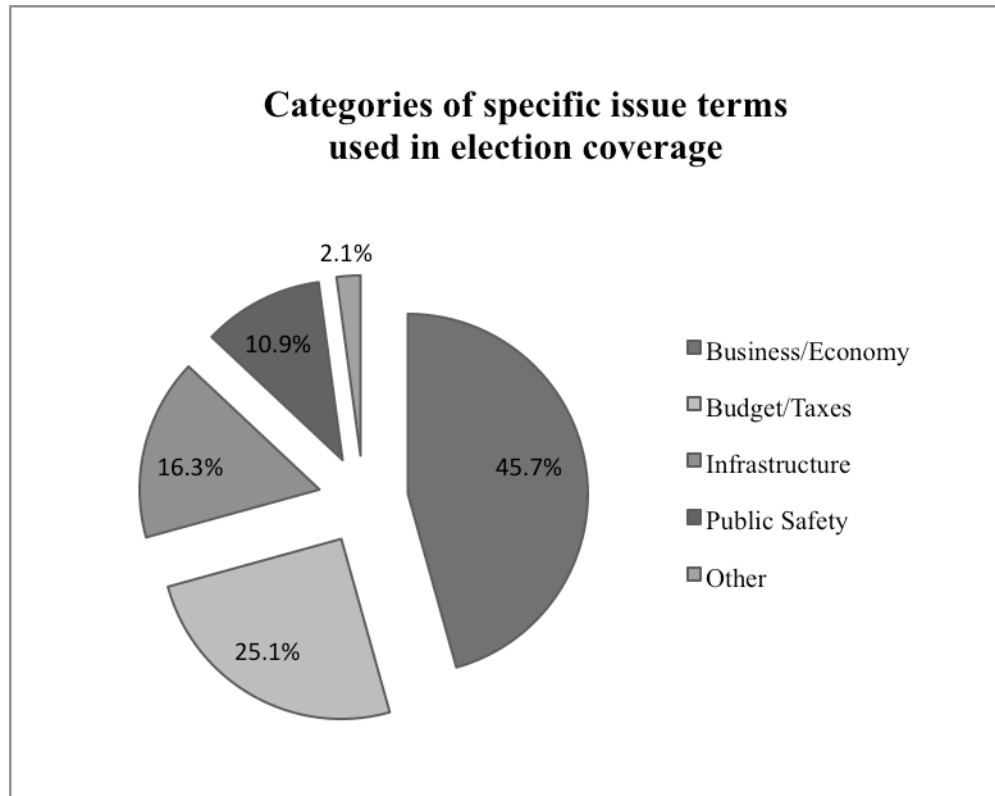
Figure 3. Categories of issue terms used in election coverage

Clearly, the economy was the compelling issue – at least in the minds of journalists and candidates – in the newspapers that were the subjects of this research. Keywords that referenced the economy, including "business," "development," "economy," "growth" and "jobs" were tallied 962 times across 292 news articles. That's an average rate of 3.3 times per story. Most remarkable is that the keyword "business," with 357 mentions, was the

third most tallied of any keyword across all categories. Only the terms "elect, election, re-elect, re-election" and "candidate, candidacy" were counted more often than "business."

Figure 4 ranks the incidence of these sorts of issue terms in the news articles studied.

Incidence of issue terms in newspapers' election coverage
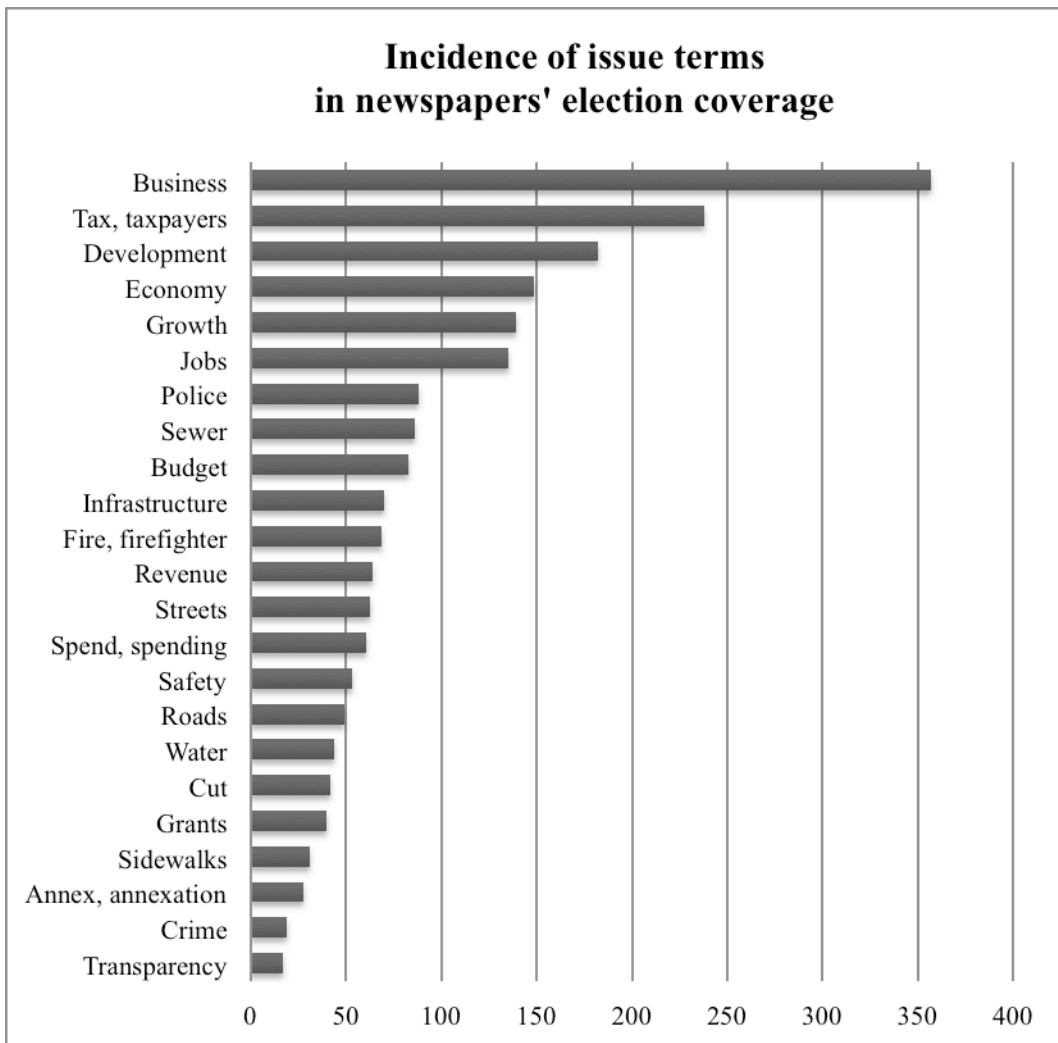
Figure 4. Incidence of selected issue terms in newspapers' election coverage

Closely related to commercial and private economic concerns were discussions of how town governments were handling their money. References to government budgeting and financial issues – identified by the keywords "budget," "cuts," "grants," "spend, spent," "revenue" and "tax, taxpayers" – occurred 528 times, or an average of 1.8 times per story.

Infrastructure, too, proved important in local political campaigns. The keywords "infrastructure," "roads," "sewer," "sidewalks," "streets," and "water" were tallied a total of 343 times. That's an average of 1.2 times per story.

Finally, public safety proved a central issue. The election stories analyzed referenced "crime," "fire, fighter," "police" and "safety" a total of 229 times. That's an average of less than once per story but still anecdotally important. Many of those references were made by candidates who believed their cities should invest more in equipment for their police officers and firefighters. Crime, however, did not appear to be a compelling concern.

As enlightening as these data are, they also are a bit sobering. It's quite possible that framing research, at least as it was framed in this study, simply missed the most fascinating mark. It appears that research looking for the same sorts of horse race and strategy frames that dominate election coverage in the national media will not find it to the same degree on a local level. That's a good thing.

But at times, it seems questionable whether any true – or deliberate – framing occurs at the smallest of community newspapers. One has to ask: Can a researcher truly assign any meaningful frame to a news brief saying that the deadline for candidate filing is

tomorrow? Can one say there's any real framing in a published list of candidates, or in any of the dozens of candidate question-and-answer articles that were coded for this study? Is literacy truly a frame?

In the context of this study, the answers would be yes. One way to address the question would be to eliminate news briefs from the analysis and focus on longer stories in which reporters and editors make more choices about how to present the news.

A different tack altogether, though, might prove more productive.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This content analysis of municipal election coverage in small-town Missouri newspapers produced some encouraging results. Community journalists for the most part are shunning the horse-race and strategy frames that dominate the American news media's reporting on national political campaigns, particularly those for president. Whether they do so consciously, however, is doubtful.

it's clear that horse race language – if not horse race framing – is pervasive in these small-town newspapers' election coverage. Although only 10 news items other than polls adopted horse race frames – and several of those were reports on primary outcomes – the language incorporated in even the most basic of election stories lends an overall game or contest atmosphere to the process. Still, these newspaper stories refrained from going overboard. The literacy keyword "election" and its alternate forms, for example, occurred more than three times as often as the horse race keywords "compete, competition," "contest, uncontested," and "race" combined.

This arguably is the most distinct difference between election reporting on a local level and that of the national news media covering campaigns for federal office. One might argue that the complexity of a federal campaign lends itself more naturally to journalism that explores the strategies candidates are using: Which presidential candidate is in which state addressing what group of people for what intended gain? How many electoral votes are at stake? How is the candidate trying to cast himself to voters? How is she trying to

portray her opponent? Candidates for local offices certainly cater to different interests and constituencies and, notably, use many of the same tactics as the big-time politicians. Yard signs, T-shirts, buttons, campaign websites and social media are common to the smallest and the largest of political machines. Still, much of the more nuanced and complex strategies that pervade a national or statewide race are inherently absent from small-town campaigns.

Beyond the relatively good news about the pre-eminence of literacy and substantive issue frames in small-town political reporting, there is little to like about the findings of this study. Collectively, community journalists at newspapers included in this research – with a few exceptions – simply failed to live up to their responsibilities to inform their audiences and engage them in the political process.

A pattern of political coverage emerged as news articles to be coded for this research were identified. The subject newspapers typically published a flurry of news briefs or short stories early in the campaign season as candidates filed the paperwork necessary to get their names on the ballot and as deadlines for doing so approached. Similar spurts would occur one or two days before a primary election and just before the April vote, reminding people that elections were at hand and that certain people would appear on the ballots. The bulk of these items did little more than report to readers who had filed for council or aldermanic seats most recently, review who had previously filed and note whether any "contested races" were on the ballot. Many of these items literally were nothing more than lists of candidates' names. There were a total of 73 such news items, representing 25 percent of the entire sample, published in the subject newspapers.

Once filing deadlines passed, many of the newspapers were silent about the elections until a week or two before the April vote. This is when reporting on candidate forums and question-and-answer pieces with the candidates began to appear. Only a handful of newspapers – the Columbia Daily Tribune, the Jefferson City News Tribune, the E-Missourian, the St. Joseph News-Press and the Boonville Daily News – offered any substantive issue reporting independent of forums or candidate question-and-answer pieces. The Jefferson City paper led the pack with four such items. The others offered one or two apiece. Even those articles lacked any journalistic analysis or context that would help a voter decipher whether one candidate's answers were any better than another's.

Toward the end of the campaign season, newspapers often ran stories featuring county clerks' predictions of low voter turnout. In a twist of irony, several also published editorials (which were not coded for this study) admonishing citizens about their responsibility to go to the polls and participate in the democracy. The very newspapers that provided an average of one election story per week during the campaign season for local offices – many of those stories the most cursory briefs – saw fit to chide readers uninspired by local politics.

Altogether, the subject newspapers relied heavily on question-and-answer (Q&A), "in their own words" or one-interview "candidate profile" formats to relay to readers information about candidates' stances and reasons for seeking office. A total of 73 such articles were coded in the study, representing another 25 percent of the entire sample.

These sorts of reports have their advantages. Mainly, they allow candidates to convey messages directly to voters without worrying about how a journalist might filter their comments. Whether they lend any substance to the public debate depends largely on the quality of the questions being asked and the quality of the candidates' answers. Those questions and answers in this research largely determined whether the reports were categorized as literacy or substantive issue frames.

The Liberty Tribune, for example, asked only two questions: "Why are you running?" and "What are the most important issues facing Liberty in the next five years?" The query brought predictably shallow responses. Here's how Paul Jenness, the successful candidate for Liberty's Ward 1 city council representative, responded in his lone online newspaper interview. It was aptly headlined: "CANDIDATE PROFILE: Paul Jenness, Ward 1:"

> *"**Why are you running?** 'I felt this would be an excellent way to serve the citizens of Liberty.'*
> *"**What are the most important issues facing Liberty in the next five years?** 'Doing all we can to enhance the business/job environment in our city. Addressing our significant infrastructure needs is also a high priority.'"*

The E-Missourian also took a general approach in its Q&As, asking wide open questions that gave candidates for mayor of St. Clair, Mo., broad leeway for how to answer: "Why did you decide to run for mayor?," "If elected, what would be your priorities?," and "If elected, what are your goals for the next two years?" The Camdenton Lake-Sun Leader asked four questions of candidates for mayor of Lake Ozark, Mo.: "Why should people vote for you?," "What do you feel is the biggest challenge facing the

city?," "Why?" and "If elected, what do you plan on doing differently, if anything?" These articles in nearly all instances were categorized as literacy frames.

More specific questions in other cases, however, helped frame the election in terms of issues. At the Boliver Herald-Free Press, for example, candidates for mayor were quizzed on camera about their ideas for increasing hangar occupancy at the Bolivar, Mo., airport amid a rift between private pilots and the airport's fixed-base operator. They were challenged to tell what they would do to promote economic development and job creation in town, and how they would manage issues surrounding the city's public golf course. They also were asked what made them more qualified than their opponents. In one of the two sets of interviews, the questions were submitted by readers of the Bolivar paper. What's clear is that these specific questions, at least in some instances, elicited specific proposals for solutions to specific community challenges. Hence, they were coded as substantive issue stories. What we don't know is whether journalists omitted some readers' questions from the interviews and, if so, how they decided which to include and which to leave out.

Although Q&As and one-shot interview profiles can contribute something to the public discourse, no one would argue that a single report asking only a few questions – no matter whether they're specific or vague – can effectively help a voter decide who might be the best candidate for municipal office. Baker (2002) argues that the national news media fail to meet their responsibilities by focusing too much on daily episodes in horse races for federal offices and too little on substantive issues. Although these community newspapers didn't turn to horse-race coverage, per se, in most cases they

certainly left their readers without the depth of information necessary to promote healthy

deliberation.

An example from the Sedalia Democrat stands out. Becca La Strada, a candidate for

the Ward 2 Sedalia City Council seat, answered questions alongside incumbent candidate

Susan Collins in a video published on the newspaper's website on April 2, 2011. That

was three days before the election. Both candidates' responses also were published

unedited in text on the newspaper's website. Both raised important issues. Here is an

excerpt of remarks from La Strada, whom voters later elected:

> *"As a longtime resident and business owner, I know that we have some*
> *pressing issues within our city. Some are small, while some are much larger.*
> *We have the sewer project that must be completed, but it is essential that we*
> *complete it in the most cost-effective manner possible. The city council must*
> *remain on top of this project and see it through to its timely completion.*
> *Once elected to the city council, I will address the infrastructure problems*
> *throughout the Second Ward. Some streets have no curbs or sidewalks. Other*
> *streets need repairs. We also have standing water on the railroad property that*
> *needs to be addressed immediately for the safety of our citizens. This has been*
> *brought to my attention, and I will seek corrective action on this public hazard.*
> *There are a few more small, but important goals I will work to implement: a*
> *police dog for our K-9 Unit; an informational pamphlet for emergencies,*
> *describing the location of our new shelters and the procedure for use during an*
> *emergency; two snowplows for each ward; as well as recycling drop-off bins in*
> *each ward. Again, these are small items, but they will improve the quality of life*
> *in Sedalia."*

The good news here is that the newspaper allowed La Strada to detail the actions she

promised to pursue if elected to represent her ward – and to offer those details in her own

words – but outside the controlled environment of a news conference or a press release.

Absent from the corpus of the Sedalia paper's report, however, is any context for or

analysis of La Strada's positions. Readers are left to wonder: Has Sedalia's government

ignored the condition of streets and sidewalks in Ward 2? Is there evidence in annual budgets, or in daily life, that would back her up? Is there standing water on the railroad property? If so, is it a hazard that needs to be addressed? Why? How much would it cost to dedicate two snowplows to each ward in a city of 20,000 people? And why does Sedalia need a police dog?

The Sedalia Democrat turned none of those questions into news stories about the election. It certainly isn't alone in that, but the absence of that sort of fact-finding in newspaper journalism is a big problem. We expect the New York Times or the Washington Post to help us decide which presidential candidate has the best plan for reducing the deficit; for dealing with Social Security, Medicaid and defense spending; or for re-imagining foreign policy. We also should expect the Kennett Daily Dunklin Democrat or the Park Hills Daily Journal to tell us whether local budget priorities are sound; whether city, town or village leaders are spending tax money wisely and equitably; whether they're maintaining streets and sidewalks; whether they're doing the right things to sustain local economies and protect community values.

Several of the newspapers in this study gave it a shot. The Jefferson City News Tribune chose to interview candidates about their thoughts on development, redevelopment and public safety in three separate news reports. The E-Missourian tried to pin down a candidate for mayor of St. Clair on whether he would seek to close the town's airport. The Columbia Daily Tribune and the St. Joseph News Press asked candidates in single stories how, if elected, they would deal with the budget challenges their cities were facing.

By and large, however, these newspapers did little to establish any context for meaningful debate or to foster significant public discussion surrounding the elections. By adopting and settling for the most basic approaches to election coverage, they nearly thwarted any effort to use framing analysis to describe their work.

The news media's most important role, Kovach and Rosenstiel tell us, is to give their audiences the information they need to self govern. Yankelovich yearns for a news media that will not only raise consciousness about political issues but also will help its audiences work through those problems to reach quality public judgments about how to solve them.

The bulk of the reports in community newspapers satisfy neither goal, even when analyzed collectively, or as a corpus. Given the established importance of community newspapers as a primary source of information on local elections, that can only be bad news. It's also arguable whether any of these community journalists engaged in the kind of "selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration" Tankard (2001) cites as the primary means of framing.

Perhaps more important than the local election frames discovered through this research are the actual issues that drew the most attention during municipal campaigns. Candidates, as previously mentioned, focused largely on promoting business and economic growth and on matters surrounding government budgeting and taxes. Across many of the communities whose newspapers were the subjects of this analysis, the small-town pastoralism described by Gans (2003) was at issue. Candidates found themselves championing strategies and programs designed to help their towns and cities grow while

also promising to protect community values and quality of life. Excerpts from a Bolivar Herald-Free Press video interview with successful mayoral candidate John Best – an interview featuring questions from Bolivar residents – illustrate the inherent conflict:

> *"Question: 'How do you plan to encourage growth in Bolivar?'*
> *Answer: '… Cities by and large are centers of commerce, and commerce means trade. We must grow our industrial base, or business base, in order to increase our tax base and for more citizens to move in and more population growth."*
> *Question: 'How important are small-town values?'*
> *Answer: 'Small, home-town values are very important to me. That's what lead me to come to Bolivar…. I chose to come to Bolivar because of the family values, the Christian values of the community…'"*

The methods of framing analysis incorporated in this study were effective in determining how community newspaper journalists are delivering election news to their audiences. We've learned that although mild horse-race terminology is popular, literacy and issue frames are the techniques employed in no less than 95 percent of the news articles published. We've also learned that the coverage is shallow. Now, the question becomes: Why?

Several factors might contribute. Community newspapers often have very small reporting staffs. A journalist trying to cover the entire news landscape of even a tiny town might have trouble dedicating sufficient time to election coverage. There are obituaries to write, ribbon cuttings to attend, grain bids to collect, police blotters to mine, community meetings and festivals to cover.

This leads to the question of ownership's commitment to quality journalism. As media corporations continue to buy up and take over small newspapers, the trend toward

diminishing investment in newsrooms spreads. And as the few remaining family-owned newspapers struggle to make a profit, spending on newsrooms is a tempting target for cuts.

Societal factors might also be at play. We can see from the stories sampled that there are large numbers of unopposed races for city council and aldermanic seats. It's difficult to generate interest in elections that offer only one candidate. Similarly, campaign finance – particularly in the smallest of towns and villages – might be a non-factor. It makes no sense to focus on the money game if none of the candidates is spending or raising more than a few hundred bucks. This might contribute to the finding that horse-race and strategy frames are relatively absent from small newspapers' election coverage.

Finally, we must consider the journalists themselves. It might be that many of the reporters working in small newsrooms simply lack the training or skill to truly examine local issues on a substantive level and to write about them in ways that encourage their audiences to engage. And, perhaps, they're simply unaware of how important their roles in the democracy are. What sorts of guidance or sense of priorities are they getting from their editors or from the people above them?

It's important to determine the answers to those queries, whatever they turn out to be. Until we can discern why community newspapers are failing in their duty to help people govern themselves, we'll be ill-equipped to help them do anything about it.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Deep and focused exploration of frames in local election reporting has been missing from the literature. This study clearly shows that the same problems plaguing political news at the national level are not present in newspaper coverage of small-town elections. Community newspapers, though, suffer from a different set of problems. They provide too little content. The news they do report is unsophisticated and lacks depth. Sourcing is weak. Analysis and context are absent.

Although the problems are different, the result in each case is the same: a public that largely becomes either cynical or apathetic and disengages from the democracy. We can see it in the low levels of participation at the ballot box. Newspapers in this study reported in most cases that election officials expected only 12 percent to 15 percent of eligible voters to cast ballots. The highest projection was 30 percent in St. Joseph, Mo. In Springfield, Mo., actual turnout in a February primary, which happened to occur in the aftermath of a blizzard, was only 3 percent.

This study represented only a first step in what could be a new and lengthy thread of important research on the types of political coverage small newspapers provide, why they do so and how that coverage influences audiences and potential voters. There are several paths to take.

First, given the finding in this research that discussions of business and the economy dominated issue stories in Missouri municipal campaigns, it would be fruitful to explore

the mechanisms of agenda setting in local elections. In only a few instances did newspapers in this study generate their own questions about issues and put them to the candidates. Most often, candidates' quotes and paraphrased comments came in response to questions asked at candidate forums or to open-ended queries in question-and-answer pieces. Who is in power to set the agenda in local political campaigns? The answer could lead to a better brand of journalism.

Second, further research on the behavior of voters exposed to differing coverage certainly is warranted, especially if the goal is to find a form of journalism that stirs public interest and incites participation in local governance and politics. How do voters make their decisions in local elections? What sorts of information do they find most useful, and where do they get it? Are newspapers their primary sources of news about elections? If not, why not?

Third, it would be useful to interview reporters and editors at small community newspapers to learn how and whether they make conscious decisions about how to present their election news. Do they understand – or even care – about framing theory? Do they think hard about how the choices they make and the frames they adopt can influence their audiences? Do they deliberately avoid horse-race and strategy frames? Or do they simply not have time for that?

A healthy vein of inquiry on local election news remains untapped. New science, however, happens one step at a time.

APPENDIX 1

STORIES IN CONTENT ANALYSIS,
WITH ASSIGNED FRAMING CATEGORIES

AURORA ADVERTISER (Accessed Sept. 21, 2011)

Filing period ends January 18 (literacy)
http://www.auroraadvertiser.net/highlight/x1043375943/Filing-periods-ends-January-18

Filing period ends for April 5 election (literacy)
http://www.auroraadvertiser.net/news/education/x104384339/Filing-period-ends-for-April-5-election

Four seek two positions on Aurora City Council (substantive issue)
http://www.auroraadvertiser.net/news/x1097023657/Four-seek-two-positions-on-the-Aurora-City-Council

Marionville has seats open in each of its three wards (substantive issue)
http://www.auroraadvertiser.net/news/marionville_free_press/x1097023644/Marionville-has-openings-in-each-of-its-three-wards

One position stays same, candidates campaign for remaining seats (literacy)
http://www.auroraadvertiser.net/news/x288361840/One-position-stays-same-candidates-campaign-for-remaining-seats

BOLIVAR HERALD-FREE PRESS (Accessed Oct. 8, 2011)

Tuesday is final day for candidates to file for April election (literacy)
http://bolivarmonews.com/news/tuesday-is-final-day-for-candidates-to-file-for-april/article_e0bf4876-1f68-11e0-900b-001cc4c002e0.html

Mayoral races contested in Bolivar, Fair Play (literacy)
http://bolivarmonews.com/news/mayoral-races-contested-in-bolivar-fair-play/article_df690164-24f5-11e0-b61e-001cc4c002e0.html

County clerk's office open Saturday for voter registration (literacy)
http://bolivarmonews.com/news/county-clerk-s-office-open-saturday-for-voter-registration/article_6a33fcda-45e5-11e0-a13d-001cc4c03286.html

Bolivar mayoral candidates to answer readers' questions (literacy)
http://bolivarmonews.com/news/bolivar-mayoral-candidates-to-answer-readers-questions/article_3bcbc212-4a70-11e0-a75f-001cc4c03286.html

Submit questions for Bolivar's mayoral candidates (literacy)
http://bolivarmonews.com/news/submit-questions-for-bolivar-s-mayoral-candidates/article_154b3284-50e3-11e0-8997-001cc4c03286.html

VIDEO: Bolivar mayoral candidates answer readers' questions (substantive issue)
http://bolivarmonews.com/news/video-bolivar-mayoral-candidates-answer-readers-questions/article_54d0c9b0-5a56-11e0-b2cd-001cc4c002e0.html

VIDEO: Candidates for Bolivar mayor (substantive issue)
http://bolivarmonews.com/news/video-candidates-for-bolivar-mayor/article_fb96fa14-45b4-11e0-bc98-001cc4c03286.html

Candidate profiles: Bolivar Ward 3 alderman (substantive issue)
http://bolivarmonews.com/news/election/candidate-profiles-bolivar-ward-alderman/article_8216bc72-54f2-11e0-890f-001cc4c002e0.html

Candidate profiles: Bolivar Ward 2 alderman (substantive issue)
http://bolivarmonews.com/news/election/candidate-profiles-bolivar-ward-alderman/article_3260882a-54f2-11e0-a712-001cc4c002e0.html

Candidate profiles: Bolivar Ward 4 alderman (substantive issue)
http://bolivarmonews.com/news/election/candidate-profiles-bolivar-ward-alderman/article_e47a301a-54f2-11e0-8593-001cc4c002e0.html

Fair Play mayor candidates (substantive issue)
http://bolivarmonews.com/news/election/fair-play-mayor-candidates/article_ee3e7d52-55bc-11e0-905f-001cc4c002e0.html

Office open Saturday for absentee voting (literacy)
http://bolivarmonews.com/news/office-open-saturday-for-absentee-voting/article_3ab9c076-5a52-11e0-af25-001cc4c002e0.html

Clerk expects 20-percent voter turnout Tuesday (literacy)
http://bolivarmonews.com/news/clerk-expects-percent-voter-turnout-tuesday/article_e0aea1c4-5be5-11e0-bb8d-001cc4c002e0.html

BOONVILLE DAILY NEWS (Accessed Sept. 6, 2011)

Candidates for mid-Missouri offices in April elections (literacy)
http://www.boonvilledailynews.com/news/x512667800/Candidates-for-mid-Missouri-offices-in-April-elections

Veteran, mid-Missouri Realtor runs for City Council (literacy)
http://www.boonvilledailynews.com/features/x582664832/Veteran-mid-Missouri-Realtor-runs-for-City-Council

Hannah Cole's descendant runs for Boonville City Council (literacy)
http://www.boonvilledailynews.com/features/x1596407571/Hannah-Coles-descendant-runs-for-Boonville-City-Council

Boonville candidate prides himself on asking questions (literacy)
http://www.boonvilledailynews.com/features/x1596407612/Boonville-candidate-prides-himself-on-asking-questions

Meet city council candidates on March 24 (literacy)
http://www.boonvilledailynews.com/news/x2114543078/Meet-City-Council-candidates-on-March-24

Hombs aware of Boonville residents' frustration with council (substantive issue)
http://www.boonvilledailynews.com/news/x1512125304/Hombs-aware-of-Boonville-residents-frustration-with-council

Candidate continues City Council campaign despite cancer diagnosis (literacy)
http://www.boonvilledailynews.com/features/x1512125313/Candidate-continues-City-Council-campaign-despite-cancer-diagnosis

First Ward councilwoman seeks to continue after appointment (literacy)
http://www.boonvilledailynews.com/features/x904833698/First-Ward-Councilwoman-seeks-to-continue-after-appointment

502 Group not registered with Missouri Ethics Commission (strategy)
http://www.boonvilledailynews.com/news/x1190293319/502-Group-not-registered-with-Missouri-Ethics-Commission

Boonville City Council candidates remain civil at forum (substantive issue)
http://www.boonvilledailynews.com/news/x1405310145/Boonville-City-Council-candidates-remain-civil-at-forum

City Council Ward 1: Kathleen Conway vs. Jason Roe (substantive issue)

http://www.boonvilledailynews.com/features/x1700897047/City-Council-Ward-1-Kathleen-Conway-v-Jason-Roe

City Council Ward 2: Jim Painter vs. Noah Heaton (substantive issue)
http://www.boonvilledailynews.com/features/x816842858/City-Council-Ward-2-Jim-Painter-V-Noah-Heaton

City Council Ward 3: Chris Hombs vs. Hayes Murray (substantive issue)
http://www.boonvilledailynews.com/features/x816842880/City-Council-Ward-3-Chris-Hombs-v-Hayes-Murray

BRANSON TRI-LAKES NEWS (Accessed Oct. 8-9, 2011)

Alderwoman will not seek re-election in April (literacy)
http://www.bransontrilakesnews.com/news_free/article_983b3302-18ed-11e0-b142-001cc4c03286.html

More contenders added to April ballot (literacy)
http://www.bransontrilakesnews.com/news_free/article_8fec381e-1aae-11e0-ac14-001cc4c03286.html

Elections draw hopeful candidates (literacy)
http://www.bransontrilakesnews.com/news_story/article_8fd4250c-25ae-11e0-8598-001cc4c03286.html

Branson Ward III challenger withdraws from race (literacy)
http://www.bransontrilakesnews.com/news_free/article_23cd1f26-27d9-11e0-8543-001cc4c002e0.html

Candidates out of April election (literacy)
http://www.bransontrilakesnews.com/news_free/article_1e0fb2cc-28e4-11e0-b192-001cc4c03286.html

Polling places to be closed (literacy)
http://www.bransontrilakesnews.com/news_free/article_f2e2a64e-4f4f-11e0-87d6-001cc4c03286.html

Voters to pick mayor (literacy)
http://www.bransontrilakesnews.com/news_free/article_a4cd8538-5719-11e0-810c-001cc4c03286.html

Reeds Spring Ward II alderman seat up for grabs (literacy)

http://www.bransontrilakesnews.com/news_story/article_8d921b8e-5c6b-11e0-9d2f-001cc4c03286.html

5 seek village seats (literacy)
http://www.bransontrilakesnews.com/news_story/article_0c4d80cc-5c6b-11e0-9371-001cc4c03286.html

Bond issues, two races in Forsyth (literacy)
http://www.bransontrilakesnews.com/news_story/article_d4606048-5c6b-11e0-94e8-001cc4c03286.html

Five candidates running for Merriam Woods board (literacy)
http://www.bransontrilakesnews.com/news_story/article_bfe7d650-5c6b-11e0-b598-001cc4c03286.html

Three contested races in Rockaway Beach (literacy)
http://www.bransontrilakesnews.com/news_story/article_a97c8870-5c6b-11e0-a023-001cc4c03286.html

CAMDENTON LAKE-SUN LEADER
(Accessed Oct. 9, 2011)

Lake Ozark alderman withdraws name from April ballot (literacy)
http://www.lakenewsonline.com/communities/x698034944/Lake-Ozark-alderman-withdraws-name-from-April-ballot

Election 2011: Get to know the Laurie Board of Aldermen candidates (literacy)
http://www.lakenewsonline.com/communities/x1315033808/Election-2011-Get-to-know-the-Laurie-Board-of-Aldermen-candidates

Former mayor will run again (literacy)
http://www.lakenewsonline.com/communities/x796076807/Former-mayor-will-run-again

Election 2011: Q&A with Lake Ozark mayoral candidates (substantive issue)
http://www.lakenewsonline.com/communities/x583205507/Election-2011-Q-A-with-Lake-Ozark-mayoral-candidates

Election 2011: Last roundup of municipal elections, issues (literacy)
http://www.lakenewsonline.com/communities/camdenton/x481350918/Election-2011-Last-roundup-of-municipal-elections-issues

CAPE GIRARDEAU SOUTHEAST MISSOURIAN (Accessed Sept. 19, 2011)

Scott County candidates file for seats (literacy)
http://www.semissourian.com/story/print/1696162.html

Candidates filing for Jackson Board of Aldermen unchanged (literacy)
http://www.semissourian.com/story/print/1696053.html

Jackson Board of Aldermen candidates withdraw from races (literacy)
http://www.semissourian.com/story/1700017.html

Two Scott City council seats contested (substantive issue)
http://www.semissourian.com/story/1714418.html

Businessman, retired officer cite town knowledge as key to alderman seat (substantive issue)
http://www.semissourian.com/story/1714745.html

COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE (Accessed Aug. 25, 2011)

First Ward candidate cites police, tax concerns (substantive issue)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/jan/06/first-ward-candidate-cites-tax-police-concerns/

Hospital board, town aldermen on ballot (literacy)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/jan/09/hospital-board-town-aldermen-on-ballot/

First Ward gets fourth candidate (literacy)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/jan/11/another-files-first-ward-council-seat/

Chamber to host candidate forum (literacy)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/jan/28/chamber-to-host-candidate-forum/

Candidate forum pushed to next week (literacy)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/feb/03/chambers-candidate-forum-postponed/

Candidates talk jobs, growth at chamber forum (substantive issue)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/feb/10/candidates-talk-growth-jobs-chamber-forum/

City council candidates talk safety at forum (substantive issue)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/feb/17/city-council-candidates-talk-safety-at-forum/

Chamber endorses Glen Erhardt for Fifth Ward, no one for First Ward (horse race)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/feb/19/chamber-endorses-glen-ehrhardt-for-fifth-ward-no/

Helen Anthony ahead in council race funding (horse race)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/feb/25/anthony-ahead-in-funding/

Pledge, endorsements top Muleskinners forum (substantive issue)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/feb/26/pledge-endorsements-top-muleskinners-forum/

Fifth Ward candidates question power lines (substantive issue)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/mar/07/fifth-ward-candidates-question-power-lines/

Poll: Who will get your vote in the fifth ward race? (horse race)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/mar/07/fifth-ward-candidates-question-power-lines/

Columbia council candidates outline priorities (substantive issue)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/mar/09/columbia-council-candidates-outline-priorities/

Poll: Who will get your vote in the first ward race? (horse race)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/mar/09/columbia-council-candidates-outline-priorities/

Poll: Who will get your vote in the fifth ward race? (horse race)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/mar/09/columbia-council-candidates-outline-priorities/

First Ward faces unique concerns (substantive issue)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/mar/14/first-ward-faces-unique-concerns/

Poll: Who will get your vote in the first ward race? (horse race)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/mar/14/first-ward-faces-unique-concerns/

Chamber endorses two ballot measures (horse race)

http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/mar/19/chamber-endorses-two-ballot-measures/

NAACP forum focuses on First Ward issues (substantive issue)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/mar/23/naacp-forum-focuses-on-first-ward-issues/

Poll: Who will get your vote in the first ward race? (horse race)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/mar/23/naacp-forum-focuses-on-first-ward-issues/

Hopefuls get prepared for tight budget (substantive issue)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/mar/27/hopefuls-get-prepared-for-tight-budget/

Poll: Who will get your vote in the first ward race? (horse race)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/mar/27/hopefuls-get-prepared-for-tight-budget/

Fifth Ward tops in council funds (horse race)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/mar/29/fifth-ward-tops-in-council-funds/

Poll: Who will get your vote in the firth ward race? (horse race)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/mar/29/fifth-ward-tops-in-council-funds/

Boone County Clerk's office open for absentee voters (literacy)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/apr/02/boone-county-clerks-office-open-for-absentee/

Columbia council race puts focus on crime, safety (substantive issue)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/apr/02/columbia-council-race-puts-focus-on-crime-safety/

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http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/apr/03/columbia-residents-have-range-options-polls-tuesda/

Poll: Who will get your vote in the first ward race? (horse race)
http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/apr/03/columbia-residents-have-range-options-polls-tuesda/

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http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/apr/03/columbia-residents-have-range-options-polls-tuesda/

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http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/apr/03/rural-voters-have-few-ballot-options/

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Mayor Seeks a Third Term (literacy)
http://www.emissourian.com/news/st_clair_news/article_eb5e82e0-1a92-11e0-93a2-001cc4c002e0.html

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http://www.emissourian.com/news/union_news/article_73fc97a0-2019-11e0-ad7d-001cc4c03286.html

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http://www.emissourian.com/news/warren_county_record/article_40b07324-24b2-11e0-affe-001cc4c03286.html

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http://www.emissourian.com/news/st_clair_news/article_98a105e0-25ab-11e0-8e69-001cc4c002e0.html

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http://www.emissourian.com/news/washington_news/article_6625ca22-469b-11e0-9932-001cc4c03286.html

St. Clair Mayoral Hopefuls Give Views (substantive issue)
http://www.emissourian.com/news/st_clair_news/article_8f26313c-5a2d-11e0-9334-001cc4c03286.html

Both Washington Ward 2 Candidates Support Trash Fee Hikes (substantive issue)
http://www.emissourian.com/news/washington_news/article_1c43c27a-5a4f-11e0-beae-001cc4c03286.html

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http://www.emissourian.com/news/pacific_news/article_93d40510-5ad2-11e0-91d6-001cc4c03286.html

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http://www.emissourian.com/news/union_news/article_d0fe2844-5ad2-11e0-aef6-001cc4c002e0.html

Four Candidates Running for Ward 2 Seat in Pacific (substantive issue)
http://www.emissourian.com/news/pacific_news/article_059b2692-5ad3-11e0-a21e-001cc4c03286.html

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Pierce Says He Will Not Pursue Airport Closure (substantive issue)
http://www.emissourian.com/news/st_clair_news/article_d853de72-5a2d-11e0-a712-001cc4c03286.html

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http://www.emissourian.com/news/washington_news/article_97c9616e-5ace-11e0-8b52-001cc4c002e0.html

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Election Turnout Expected to Be Low (literacy)
http://www.emissourian.com/news/warren_county_record/article_21b35e24-5b20-11e0-965e-001cc4c002e0.html

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http://www.emissourian.com/news/top_stories/article_41670976-5c8f-11e0-837d-001cc4c03286.html

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http://www.emissourian.com/article_54cb657c-5c92-11e0-b5b0-001cc4c03286.html

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http://www.emissourian.com/news/union_news/article_4da7dff0-5c8d-11e0-97c5-001cc4c002e0.html

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http://www.examiner.net/archive/x1306275223/District-3-race-is-new-blood-or-incumbent

Blue Springs candidates tackle issues at forum (substantive issue)
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http://www.examiner.net/news/x1651174021/Mayor-to-fill-James-Mays-Planning-Commission-seat

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http://www.examiner.net/features/x512656880/Fowler-to-run-for-re-election-in-Blue-Springs

Mayor appoints May to open seat in Blue Springs City Council (literacy)
http://www.examiner.net/features/x104372120/Mayor-appoints-May-to-open-seat-in-Blue-Springs-City-Council

Election Q&A: Grain Valley Ward 2: Nancy Totton (substantive issue)
http://www.examiner.net/news/election/x1306275229/Election-Q-A-Grain-Valley-Ward-2-Nancy-Totton

Election Q&A: Grain Valley Ward 2: Chuck Johnston (substantive issue)
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Grain Valley election races set (literacy)
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Last day to register before Feb. 8 election (literacy)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=134B0B3CA4BF6110&p_docnum=8&s_dlid=DL0111110222042229209&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2012%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%2022&s_subexpires=12%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=23&s_docsread=2&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111110221520906469&s_upgradeable=no

Candidate forum on tap Tuesday (literacy)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=134D0C5B4E739D90&p_docnum=19&s_dlid=DL0111110222081113546&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2012%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%2021&s_subexpires=12%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=21&s_docsread=4&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111110221520906469&s_upgradeable=no

Candidates pitch February vote (substantive issue)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=134DB0FAAA051480&p_docnum=21&s_dlid=DL0111110222110530523&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2012%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%2020&s_subexpires=12%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=20&s_docsread=5&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111110221520906469&s_upgradeable=no

Mayoral hopefuls outline stands, trade barbs (substantive issue)

http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=13500C9440F83AE0&p_docnum=28&s_dlid=DL0111110222122414280&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2012%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%2019&s_subexpires=12%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=19&s_docsread=6&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111110221520906469&s_upgradeable=no

Mayoral hopeful vacates office: Hartsfield alleges anonymous letter 'politically motivated' (substantive issue)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=13515C1D7AA08F68&p_docnum=7&s_dlid=DL0111110223064428386&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2012%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docsbal=&s_subexpires=12%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=1&s_docsread=24&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111110221520906469&s_upgradeable=no

Mayoral candidates weigh in on economic development (substantive issue)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=1352A8D4367AD6A0&p_docnum=6&s_dlid=DL0111110223020111506&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2012%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%202&s_subexpires=12%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=2&s_docsread=23&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111110221520906469&s_upgradeable=no

Cole County clerk's office open Saturday morning (literacy)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=13530190F44C4A58&p_docnum=34&s_dlid=DL0111110222131130910&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2012%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%2018&s_subexpires=12%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=18&s_docsread=7&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111110221520906469&s_upgradeable=no

Mayoral candidates weigh in on public safety (substantive issue)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=135358DE10743438&p_docnum=5&s_dlid=DL0111110223103811885&s_ecproduct=SBK-

Clerk: Polls open one way or another (literacy)

Mayoral candidates weigh in on redevelopment (substantive issue)

Struemph elected mayor (horse race)

Holts Summit race now has a candidate (literacy)

Forum features races for school board, city positions (literacy)

Auxvasse election includes mayor, 3 alderman seats (literacy)

Holts Summit candidate forum set (literacy)

2 vie for New Bloomfield alderman seat (literacy)

County readies for use of new electronic poll books: Election to be first test of devices (literacy)

http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=136572D770207EE0&p_docnum=104&s_dlid=DL0111110222284001423&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2012%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%206&s_subexpires=12%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=6&s_docsread=19&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111110221520906469&s_upgradeable=no

Council candidate admits misdemeanor offense in 2006 (substantive issue)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=136572D779D348A0&p_docnum=106&s_dlid=DL0111110222300717525&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2012%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%205&s_subexpires=12%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=5&s_docsread=20&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111110221520906469&s_upgradeable=no

Register predicts 12 percent turnout (literacy)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=1366B9DF8A9682A0&p_docnum=114&s_dlid=DL0111110222294302999&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2012%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%204&s_subexpires=12%2F02%2F2011%204%3A52%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=4&s_docsread=21&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111110221520906469&s_upgradeable=no

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Filing deadline at hand for city, school posts (literacy)
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Candidates gear up for primary election in Neosho (literacy)
http://www.joplinglobe.com/local/x415202055/Candidates-gear-up-for-primary-election-in-Neosho

Collinsworth, Hart advance to Neosho's spring election (literacy)
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Joplin City Council aspirant withdraws from race (literacy)
http://www.joplinglobe.com/election_2010/x912866656/Joplin-City-Council-aspirant-withdraws-from-race

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http://www.joplinglobe.com/joplin_metro/x434659637/Globe-readers-react-via-Internet-s-Facebook-to-forum-statements

Council candidates square off at a forum (substantive issue)
http://www.joplinglobe.com/election_2010/x434659639/Council-candidates-square-off-at-forum?start:int=15

Sitting council members gathered signatures for some panel candidates (substantive issue)
http://www.joplinglobe.com/joplin_metro/x434659793/Sitting-council-members-gathered-signatures-for-some-panel-candidates?start:int=30

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http://www.joplinglobe.com/local/x300769626/Mayor-s-race-in-Noel-tops-McDonald-County-ballot

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Field down to five for three general seats (literacy)
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Municipal, school board filings are in (literacy)
http://www.dddnews.com/story/1696994.html

Mayoral candidates weigh in on thoughts for Kennett's future (substantive issue)
http://www.dddnews.com/story/1711978.html

3 Kennett Council seats to be decided at upcoming election (substantive issue)
http://www.dddnews.com/story/1713497.html

Tuesday is decision day for local voters (literacy)
http://www.dddnews.com/story/1715488.html

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Rowe will not seek fourth term on Kirksville city council (literacy)
http://www.kirksvilledailyexpress.com/news/x1314134210/Rowe-will-not-seek-fourth-term-on-Kirksville-city-council

Council race up to five candidates (literacy)
http://www.kirksvilledailyexpress.com/news/x1254715621/Council-race-up-to-five-candidates

Six citizens file for city council race (literacy)
http://www.kirksvilledailyexpress.com/news/x1409897365/Six-citizens-file-for-city-council-race

Council, R-III off to the races (literacy)
http://www.kirksvilledailyexpress.com/news/x512666904/Council-R-III-off-to-the-races

Four candidates certified to run for council (literacy)
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http://www.kirksvilledailyexpress.com/features/x1777828919/Meeting-the-candidates

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Race for the city's fourth ward heats up (literacy)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=134AD54AD12A8418&p_docnum=200&s_dlid=DL0111102417385515478&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2011%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%207&s_subexpires=11%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=7&s_docsread=18&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111101920225509306&s_upgradeable=no

Two of four city council seats contested (literacy)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=134AD54B2899EBC0&p_docnum=199&s_dlid=DL0111102417383115385&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2011%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%208&s_subexpires=11%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=8&s_docsread=17&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111101920225509306&s_upgradeable=no

Deadline nears to file for April 5 election (literacy)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=1363274F9B1DB620&p_docnum=194&s_dlid=DL0111102417370826487&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2011%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%209&s_subexpires=11%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=9&s_docsread=16&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111101920225509306&s_upgradeable=no

Stage set for April municipal election (literacy)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=134EAFC094E69DD0&p_docnum=190&s

_dlid=DL0111102417363930326&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2011%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%2010&s_subexpires=11%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=10&s_docsread=15&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111101920225509306&s_upgradeable=no

3 file for P-burg board (literacy)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=134F34CFE3E2BCB0&p_docnum=188&s_dlid=DL0111102417354414438&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2011%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%2011&s_subexpires=11%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=11&s_docsread=14&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111101920225509306&s_upgradeable=no

Jordan sponsors forum for candidates (literacy)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=13535567DBD4A240&p_docnum=179&s_dlid=DL0111102417343127329&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2011%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%2012&s_subexpires=11%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=12&s_docsread=13&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111101920225509306&s_upgradeable=no

Candidate forum set for tonight at the Wallace Building (literacy)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=13579E22A060FC78&p_docnum=175&s_dlid=DL0111102417340425448&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2011%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%2013&s_subexpires=11%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=13&s_docsread=12&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111101920225509306&s_upgradeable=no

Small audience attends forum (substantive issue)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=13579E22F6E9F3F0&p_docnum=173&s_dlid=DL0111102417333829254&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2011%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remainin

See files as Ward 3 write-in candidate (literacy)

Absentee voting begins for April election (literacy)

Candidate Finley seeks appointment (literacy)

Tea Party hosts forum for candidates (literacy)

Mott expects light turnout Tuesday (literacy)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-
search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=1367B06E44EB8198&p_docnum=136&s_
orderid=NB0111102417044700679&s_dlid=DL0111102417054100945&s_ecproduct=S
BK-
M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%2
0until%3A%2011%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remainin
g%3A%2024&s_subexpires=11%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docstart=25
&s_docsleft=24&s_docsread=1&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111101920
225509306&s_upgradeable=no

Davis, Chastain respond to LDR questionnaire (substantive issue)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-
search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=1367B06E3898CCD0&p_docnum=134&s_
dlid=DL0111102417075819845&s_ecproduct=SBK-
M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%2
0until%3A%2011%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remainin
g%3A%2022&s_subexpires=11%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docstart=25
&s_docsleft=22&s_docsread=3&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111101920
225509306&s_upgradeable=no

Ward 2 hopeful responds to LDR questionnaire (substantive issue)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-
search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=1367B06D10D8E1A8&p_docnum=143&s
_dlid=DL0111102417090917757&s_ecproduct=SBK-
M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%2
0until%3A%2011%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remainin
g%3A%2020&s_subexpires=11%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docstart=25
&s_docsleft=20&s_docsread=5&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111101920
225509306&s_upgradeable=no

Candidates for Ward 4 seek election (substantive issue)
http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-
search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=136773308850FF70&p_docnum=138&s_dl
id=DL0111102417082907984&s_ecproduct=SBK-
M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%2
0until%3A%2011%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remainin
g%3A%2021&s_subexpires=11%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docstart=25
&s_docsleft=21&s_docsread=4&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111101920
225509306&s_upgradeable=no

Light turnout expected for today's municipal election (literacy)

http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=1367B06E8D6D9F40&p_docnum=133&s_dlid=DL0111102417071307686&s_ecproduct=SBK-M25&s_ecprodtype=&s_trackval=&s_siteloc=&s_referrer=&s_subterm=Subscription%20until%3A%2011%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docsbal=Docs%20remaining%3A%2023&s_subexpires=11%2F23%2F2011%2012%3A05%20PM&s_docstart=25&s_docsleft=23&s_docsread=2&s_username=SwaffordS&s_accountid=AC0111101920225509306&s_upgradeable=no

LIBERTY TRIBUNE, KC COMMUNITYNEWS.COM: Smithville Herald, Louisberg Herald — kccommunitynews.com (Accessed Oct. 10, 2011)

Filing ends for city offices (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/liberty-tribune-news/26627383/detail.html

Foster, Hagan seek Ward 4 (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/liberty-tribune-news/27214913/detail.html

Council, school board races on ballot: Most voters expected to stay away from polls April 5 (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/liberty-tribune-news/27373965/detail.html

CANDIDATE PROFILE: Paul Jenness, Ward 1 (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/liberty-tribune-news/27215970/detail.html

CANDIDATE PROFILE: Greg Duncan, Ward 2 (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/liberty-tribune-news/27215988/detail.html

CANDIDATE PROFILE: Lyndell Brenton, Ward 3 (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/liberty-tribune-news/27215814/detail.html

CANDIDATE PROFILE: Michael Hagan, Ward 4 (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/liberty-tribune-news/27215299/detail.html

CANDIDATE PROFILE: Fred Foster, Ward 4 (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/liberty-tribune-news/27215215/detail.html

CANDIDATE PROFILE: Jeff Couchman, Ward I (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/kearney-courier-news/27307141/detail.html

CANDIDATE PROFILE: Judy Clough, Ward I (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/smithville-herald-news/27205943/detail.html

CANDIDATE PROFILE: Court M. Fischer, Ward II (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/smithville-herald-news/27206570/detail.html

CANDIDATE PROFILE: Ed Holicky, Ward II (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/smithville-herald-news/27206680/detail.html

CANDIDATE PROFILE: Adam Naber, Ward III (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/smithville-herald-news/27206690/detail.html

City council candidates profiled (substantive issue)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/louisburg-herald-news/27359642/detail.html

CANDIDATE PROFILE: Cathy Bullard (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/kearney-courier-news/27307247/detail.html

CANDIDATE PROFILE: Robert Borushko Sr. (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/kearney-courier-news/27307206/detail.html

CANDIDATE PROFILE: Greg Canuteson, mayor (literacy)
http://www.kccommunitynews.com/liberty-tribune-news/27215773/detail.html

MEXICO LEDGER (Accessed Oct. 9, 2011)

Competition continues to mount for April election (literacy)
http://www.mexicoledger.com/topstories/x2135344462/Competition-continues-to-mount-for-April-election

Candidates for Mexico Municipal April Election (literacy)
http://www.mexicoledger.com/topstories/x493324480/Candidates-for-Mexico-Municipal-April-Election

Candidates filing for April election (literacy)
http://www.mexicoledger.com/topstories/x684394504/Candidates-filing-for-April-election

Kevin Lowrance withdraws as candidate (literacy)
http://www.mexicoledger.com/newsnow/x1850113701/Kevin-Lowrance-withdraws-as-candidate

League of Women Voters Candidate Forum is Tonight (literacy)

http://www.mexicoledger.com/topstories/x910655972/League-of-Women-Voters-Candidate-Forum-is-tonight

League of Women Voters Candidate Forum (literacy)
http://www.mexicoledger.com/topstories/x479636212/League-of-Women-Voters-Candidate-Forum

PARK HILLS DAILY JOURNAL (Accessed Oct. 9, 2011)

Filing continues for April election (literacy)
http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/democrat-news/news/local/article_b9b8bfca-18fe-11e0-90a0-001cc4c03286.html

City, school has contested races (literacy)
http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/farmington-press/news/local/article_b854f500-19a7-11e0-a57d-001cc4c002e0.html

Filing continues for April election (literacy)
http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/democrat-news/news/local/article_819258c8-1e70-11e0-a5ee-001cc4c002e0.html

More file for school and city seats (literacy)
http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/farmington-press/news/local/article_12229838-1f36-11e0-969c-001cc4c002e0.html

More filings in Bonne Terre (literacy)
http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/news/local/article_6c761082-2272-11e0-91a6-001cc4c03286.html

Filings for April election (literacy)
http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/news/local/article_2f22540e-2315-11e0-aba0-001cc4c002e0.html

Filing closed for school and city (literacy)
http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/farmington-press/news/local/article_3bf6f408-24ac-11e0-8f32-001cc4c03286.html

Filings for April election end (literacy)
http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/news/local/article_78cc96d8-24ae-11e0-8990-001cc4c03286.html

Candidate ineligible (literacy)

http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/news/local/article_0b6b975a-2572-11e0-b9c6-001cc4c002e0.html

Filings close for April election (literacy)
http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/democrat-news/news/local/article_934f1c0c-2980-11e0-ab8f-001cc4c03286.html

Mayoral candidate withdraws from election (literacy)
http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/news/local/article_afd8756e-48c3-11e0-9180-001cc4c03286.html

Election Preview: Alderman Ward III (substantive issue)
http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/democrat-news/news/local/article_782ce1b2-54d6-11e0-81b2-001cc4c03286.html

Wide range of candidates have filed for city offices (literacy)
http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/news/local/article_a1d7fbb0-574b-11e0-ba3c-001cc4c03286.html

Write-in certified for Bonne Terre Ward I (literacy)
http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/news/local/article_45ccc9de-5b94-11e0-b281-001cc4c002e0.html

One contested race and new members (literacy)
http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/farmington-press/news/local/article_9a4d4d18-5ba7-11e0-b229-001cc4c03286.html

Don't forget to vote today (literacy)
http://www.dailyjournalonline.com/news/local/article_c101ff68-5f7a-11e0-89f9-001cc4c002e0.html

SALEM NEWS (Accessed Oct. 9, 2011)

April municipal election ballot set (literacy)
http://www.thesalemnewsonline.com/news/local_news/article_b7f8cfbc-24bc-11e0-8883-0017a4a78c22.html

Public can quiz two aldermen candidates March 29 (literacy)
http://www.thesalemnewsonline.com/news/local_news/article_57935cd6-549c-11e0-8715-00127992bc8b.html

Election is Tuesday, April 5 (literacy)

http://www.thesalemnewsonline.com/news/local_news/article_c36b3ad8-5bad-11e0-9c38-00127992bc8b.html

West Ward aldermen candidates discuss issues Tuesday night (substantive issue)
http://www.thesalemnewsonline.com/news/local_news/article_2b45d330-5bad-11e0-a9ce-00127992bc8b.html

SEDALIA DEMOCRAT (Accessed Sept. 5, 2011)

La Strada files for Ward 2 on city council (literacy)
http://www.sedaliademocrat.com/news/strada-30495-city-ward.html

Cockrell files for Ward 3 seat (literacy)
http://www.sedaliademocrat.com/articles/ward-30644-seat-former.html

Absentee voting begins Tuesday; new clerk La Strada says he's ready (literacy)
http://www.sedaliademocrat.com/news/tuesday-31648-voting-absentee.html

Ward 3 race pits incumbent against former mayoral candidate (substantive issue)
http://www.sedaliademocrat.com/news/council-32079-election-candidate.html

Ward 2 hopefuls discuss their goals for office (substantive issue)
http://www.sedaliademocrat.com/video/?videoId=827643700001&lineupId=1155224715&play=now

Ward 3 city council candidates (substantive issue)
http://www.sedaliademocrat.com/video/?videoId=815478496001&lineupId=1155224715&play=now

Business owner challenges incumbent for Ward 2 seat (substantive issue)
http://www.sedaliademocrat.com/news/owner-32260-becca-incumbent.html

Voting machines ready for the count (literacy)
http://www.sedaliademocrat.com/articles/county-32564-nick-pettis.html

Collins: Ward 2 city council candidates in their own words (substantive issue)
http://www.sedaliademocrat.com/articles/susan-32839-candidates-city.html

La Strada: Ward 2 city council candidates in their own words (substantive issue)
http://www.sedaliademocrat.com/articles/city-32840-ward-council.html

Cockrell: Ward 3 candidates in their own words (substantive issue)

http://www.sedaliademocrat.com/articles/council-32841-mayor-year.html

Cross: Ward 3 candidates in their own words (substantive issue)
http://www.sedaliademocrat.com/articles/ward-32842-city-sedalia.html

La Monte to elect 3 aldermen, 3 school board members on Tuesday (literacy)
http://www.sedaliademocrat.com/news/board-32844-three-tuesday.html

Handful of races, issues on ballot Tuesday (literacy)
http://www.sedaliademocrat.com/news/races-32855-tuesday-fire.html

SIKESTON STANDARD DEMOCRAT (Accessed Oct. 9, 2011)

Several races are on the April 5 ballot (literacy)
http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Default/Skins/StandardDemocratA/Client.asp?Skin=StandardDemocratA

Candidates face off April 5 (substantive issue)
http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Default/Skins/StandardDemocratA/Client.asp?Skin=StandardDemocratA

April 5 election will fill openings on city councils, school boards (literacy)
http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Default/Skins/StandardDemocratA/Client.asp?Skin=StandardDemocratA

Mississippi County has few races to decide (literacy)
http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Default/Skins/StandardDemocratA/Client.asp?Skin=StandardDemocratA

Be sure to cast your vote
http://www.standard-democrat.com/story/1715974.html

SPRINGFIELD NEWS LEADER (Accessed Aug. 25, 2011)

Primary needed for 2 council contests (literacy)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2246679911.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=ABS:FT&type=current&date=Jan+24%2C+2011&author=&pub=Springfield+News+Leader&desc=Primary+needed+for+2+council+contests&pf=1

Special council meeting Friday morning could cancel Tuesday election (literacy)

http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2257691841.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=ABS:FT&type=current&date=Feb+4%2C+2011&author=&pub=Springfield+News+Leader&desc=Special+council+meeting+Friday+morning+could+cancel+Tuesday+election&pf=1

Judges postpone election two weeks rather than cancel it (literacy)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2258329751.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=ABS:FT&type=current&date=Feb+4%2C+2011&author=Amos+Bridges&pub=Springfield+News+Leader&desc=Judges+postpone+election+two+weeks+rather+than+cancel+it&pf=1

Blizzard's punch could cancel primary (literacy)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2257691931.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=ABS:FT&type=current&date=Feb+4%2C+2011&author=Amos+Bridges&pub=Springfield+News+Leader&desc=Blizzard%27s+punch+could+cancel+primary&pf=1

Primary election moved to Feb. 22 (literacy)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2258329861.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=ABS:FT&type=current&date=Feb+5%2C+2011&author=Amos+Bridges&pub=Springfield+News+Leader&desc=Primary+election+moved+to+Feb.+22&pf=1

Office open for absentee voting (literacy)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2276972351.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=CITE:FT&type=current&date=Feb+21%2C+2011&author=&pub=Springfield+News+Leader&desc=Office+open+for+absentee+voting

Turnout sparse for election (literacy)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2273905421.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=ABS:FT&type=current&date=Feb+23%2C+2011&author=Mike+Penprase&pub=Springfield+News+Leader&desc=Turnout+sparse+for+election&pf=1

Incumbents hold City Council primary lead with just over three-fourths of election precincts counted (horse race)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2273950991.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=CITE:FT&type=current&date=Feb+23%2C+2011&author=&pub=Springfield+News+Leader&desc=Incumbents+hold+City+Council+primary+lead+with+just+over+three-fourths+of+election+precincts+counted&pf=1

Incumbents lead voting In City Council primary election (horse race)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2273950991.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=CITE:FT&type=current&date=Feb+23%2C+2011&author=&pub=Springfield+News+Leader&desc=Incumbents+hold+City+Council+primary+lead+with+just+over+three-fourths+of+election+precincts+counted&pf=1

Candidates identify crucial issues (substantive issue)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2289232891.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=A
BS:FT&type=current&date=Mar+11%2C+2011&author=Cory+de+Vera&pub=Springfie
ld+News+Leader&desc=Candidates+identify+crucial+issues&pf=1

Candidates differ on high-profile issues (substantive issue)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2296394351.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=A
BS:FT&type=current&date=Mar+19%2C+2011&author=Cory+de+Vera&pub=Springfie
ld+News+Leader&desc=Candidates+differ+on+high+profile+issues&pf=1

Online poll (horse race)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2306014431.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=CI
TE:FT&type=current&date=Mar+24%2C+2011&author=&pub=Springfield+News+Lea
der&desc=Online+Poll&pf=1

City council candidates to meet at forum next week (literacy)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2301655981.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=A
BS:FT&type=current&date=Mar+24%2C+2011&author=&pub=Springfield+News+Lea
der&desc=City+council+candidates+to+meet+at+forum+next+week&pf=1

Online poll (horse race)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2305717551.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=CI
TE:FT&type=current&date=Mar+25%2C+2011&author=&pub=Springfield+News+Lea
der&desc=Online+Poll

Online poll (horse race)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2305717631.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=CI
TE:FT&type=current&date=Mar+26%2C+2011&author=&pub=Springfield+News+Lea
der&desc=Online+Poll&pf=1

Online poll (horse race)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2305717691.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=CI
TE:FT&type=current&date=Mar+27%2C+2011&author=&pub=Springfield+News+Lea
der&desc=Online+Poll

Council hopefuls sound off on issues (substantive issue)
http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2304738571.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=CI
TE:FT&type=current&date=Mar+29%2C+2011&author=Amos+Bridges&pub=Springfie
ld+News+Leader&desc=Council+hopefuls+sound+off+on+issues&pf=1

Campaign finance reports updated in Springfield City Council races (horse race)

http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/news_leader/access/2304738791.html?FMT=FT&FMTS=A
BS:FT&type=current&date=Mar+29%2C+2011&author=Amos+Bridges&pub=Springfie
ld+News+Leader&desc=Campaign+finance+reports+updated+in+Springfield+City+Cou
ncil+races&pf=1

ST. JOSEPH NEWS-PRESS (Accessed Sept. 5, 2011)

Four Vie for Mayoral Post (literacy)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25722167/detail.html

Council Hopefuls Vi for 3rd District seat (literacy)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25722210/detail.html

Political Groups to Meet (literacy)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25722294/detail.html

Political Hopefuls Share Their Views (literacy)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25722346/detail.html

Candidates Agree More Funding Needed (substantive issue)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25722467/detail.html

Mayoral Candidates Debate Business Climate (substantive issue)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25723309/detail.html

Political Hopefuls Prepare for Run at Mayor's Office (literacy)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25723662/detail.html

City Voters to Decide Mayor and South Side Council Seat (literacy)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25723718/detail.html

Sipe, Falkner Advance; Kovac Wins in South Side (horse race)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25723749/detail.html

Sipe, Falkner Advance in Mayoral Race (horse race)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25723770/detail.html

Winners Will Have Difficult Work Ahead (substantive issue)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25723999/detail.html

In Brief, March 10, 2010 (literacy)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25724113/detail.html

Candidate Forum Tonight (literacy)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25724643/detail.html

Candidate Forum Set for Tonight (literacy)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25724645/detail.html

Candidates Share Plans, Ideas, with Public (substantive issue)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25724269/detail.html

E-Mail Controversy May Lead to Ethics Complaint (literacy)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25724983/detail.html

Byron Myers (literacy)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25725160/detail.html

Mayor, City Council Elections in Sight (literacy)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25725121/detail.html

Voter Turnout Estimated At 30 Percent (literacy)
http://www.newspressnow.com/localnews/25725156/detail.html

*Some urls were accessed only through online newspaper subscriptions

APPENDIX 2

KEYWORDS FOR SECONDARY ANALYSIS OF ELECTION STORIES

HORSE RACE TERMS

Adversary
Attack
Battle
Challenge, challenger, challenges
Clash
Compete, competition
Confront
Contest
Endorse, endorsement
Face (i.e., challenge)
Favorite
Fight
Foe
Front-runner
Lag
Leader, leads, lead, led
Opponent, oppose, opposition
  unopposed (candidate)
Funds, fund-raising, fund-raiser
Lose, loses, loser, losing
Poll
Race
Rival
Run
Square off
Trail
Warchest, war chest
Win, wins, winner, winning

STRATEGY TERMS

Advertising, advertisement, ad
Approach
Cast (himself, herself)
Labels, labeled (himself, herself,
  another)
Portray (himself, herself, another)
Seeks, sought to
Strategy
Tactic

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE TERMS

Annex, annexation
Assure
Belief, believe
Budget

Business
Called for
Concern, concerning, concerned about
Cut
Develop, development, redevelop
Differences
Discuss, discussion
Economy
Explain
Favor
Feel, feeling
Fire (department) firefighters
Goals
Grants
Growth
Idea
Infrastructure
Issue
Jobs
Like (I would like)
Matter
Opinion
Oppose, opposes (issue)
Plan
Platform
Pledge
Police
Position
Priority, prioritize
Problem
Promise
Propose, proposal
Push
Represent, representative
Revenue
Roads
Safe, safety
Sewer
Sidewalks
Solution, solve, (re)solve
Spend, spending
Stance, stand
Streets
Subject
Suggest, suggestion
Support
Tax
Think, thought
Transparency

View, viewpoint

LITERACY TERMS

Ballot
Campaign
Candidate, candidacy
Elect, election, re-elect,
  re-election
Forum
Hopeful
Incumbent
Newcomer

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