

Public Abstract

First Name:Shaina

Middle Name:Ruth

Last Name:Cavazos

Adviser's First Name:Scott

Adviser's Last Name:Swafford

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

Graduation Term:SP 2014

Department:Journalism

Degree:MA

Title:News Framing of Accountability Systems After No Child Left Behind

This research analyzes the frame and tone of education news stories, determining whether the two variables have a relationship, as well as the incidence of civic and personal frames and tones that are supportive, neutral, or critical of accountability systems and the No Child Left Behind Act. The study involves a content analysis of 289 articles from three newspapers across the Midwest — The Chicago Tribune, The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, and the Minneapolis Star Tribune — from January 2001 to December 2004. The findings show that civic stories tend to be more neutral, and personal stories tend to be more positive. The specific newspaper a story came from did not have a significant effect on the tone. Additionally, civic frames, in which sourcing is predominantly institutional, are overwhelmingly represented in the sampled articles. The framing imbalance across education stories speaks to a notion not unpopular with journalists: that leaders and officials are commonly turned to at the expense of “real people.” Yet the results for tone were encouraging and showed that perhaps overall coverage of the sampled newspapers is more balanced, since the relationships, though significant, were not particularly strong in either direction. This study should help launch a thread of research on journalistic decision-making in regard to education reform policy, which is especially relevant given the recent Common Core State Standards.