THE 1990 OKLAHOMA GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE OF THREE OKLAHOMA NEWSPAPERS

Ву

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PREFACE

This thesis consisted of an examination into the front-page coverage of the 1990 Oklahoma governor's race by Oklahoma's three largest newspapers, The Tulsa Tribune, Tulsa World, and the Oklahoman. Examining the relationship between the print media and their political coverage was the catalyst for doing this research.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank some very important people. First, I want to thank Dr. Marlan D. Nelson, Director of the School of Journalism and Broadcasting, for suggesting that I work on a Master's degree instead of another Bachelor's degree. That was some of the best advice; I have ever received. Second, I want to thank Dr. Charles A. Fleming, Assistant Director for Graduate Studies, for many things. He has helped me on several projects, including this thesis. He continuously offered valuable and constructive advice throughout my graduate studies. Also, Dr. Fleming was my teacher for four courses, and I must say he is one of the most outstanding instructors that I have ever had.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Insight

This thesis was a study examining one aspect of press coverage during the 1990 governor's race in Oklahoma. Throughout the primaries and the general election voters received a great deal of political coverage from all facets of the media. The purpose of this study was to gauge the amount of front-page coverage devoted to the governor's race and whether the coverage focused more on the issues or the non-issues. This research consisted of a content analysis of the front-page coverage contained in Oklahoma's three largest newspapers, the Oklahoman*, The Tulsa Tribune, and the Tulsa World.

What kind of front-page coverage did Oklahomans receive on the 1990 Oklahoma governor's race? Was there an adequate amount of front-page coverage on the governor's race? Did the amount of front-page coverage devoted to the governor's race vary among the three newspapers? Was the front-page coverage itself focused more on the issues or the non-issues and did that coverage vary among the three newspapers? What specific issues did the three newspapers

^{*} The Oklahoma Publishing Company produces three separate newspapers, the <u>Daily Oklahoman</u>, published Monday through Friday, the <u>Saturday Oklahoman</u> and <u>Times</u>, and the <u>Sunday Oklahoman</u>. For the purposes of this research, the newspapers will be referred to as the <u>Oklahoman</u>.

focus on with their front-page coverage? These were some of the questions that this study was trying to answer.

Background

A newspaper is in the business to provide a service to the general public and to make a profit. Newspapers can, as a portion of that service, provide coverage of elections which are of interest to the public. That brings up the question: should newspapers be held accountable for their political coverage?

Several different codes of ethics exist for the media.

Many of these codes address such things as the social responsibility functions of the media. The following is from the <u>American Society of Newspaper Editors Statement of Principles:</u>

The primary purpose of gathering and distributing news and opinion is to serve the general welfare by informing the people and enabling them to make judgements on the issues of the time. Good faith with the reader is the foundation of good journalism. Every effort must be made to assure that the news content is accurate, free from bias and in context, and that all sides are presented fairly. Editorials, analytical articles and commentary should be held to the same standards of accuracy with respect to facts as news reports. (Rivers, 1988, pp. 235-6)

Did Oklahoma's three largest newspapers act in a socially responsible manner by informing the general public about the campaign issues with their front-page coverage of the governor's race?

Research Problem

The overall research problem centers on the notion that the media have a social responsibility to inform the general public about the major campaign issues, so the

public can make intelligent voting decisions. This study focused on the content contained in the front-page coverage of the 1990 gubernatorial race by Oklahoma's three largest dailies.

Inherent difficulties exist in covering a political campaign as described by Denis McQuail in his book, <u>Mass</u>

<u>Communication Theory</u>. McQuail stated:

First, in many areas of social life, especially in politics and commerce, the campaign has become deeply institutionalized and has acquired something of a ritual character. The question then arises, not whether campaigns produce this or that marginal advantage, but whether it would be possible not to campaign (or to advertise) without disastrous results. Secondly, campaigners do not usually control the reality of a situation or reports about it and circumstances may intervene to destroy or invalidate the message of a campaign. However, the more power to manipulate the reality (e.g. government by policy making or information giving), the more control over the outcome of a campaign. Thirdly, most campaigns that have been studied take place under conditions of competition (counter-campaigning or with alternative courses argued). (McQuail, 1987, p. 270)

Reporters have a difficult time reporting on politics because of its institutionalized nature and problems also arise with personal bias. In many instances a reporter can adamantly oppose the views of a particular politician which would make it quite difficult for that reporter to remain objective toward that politician. Jeff Greenfield wrote about the difficulty of a reporter's remaining objective when personal bias is involved in an article published by Universal Press Syndicate. Greenfield made the following observations:

When it comes to reporting on politics and public policy, we in the press are at pains to declare our ability to separate our personal views from our reporting.

"No cheering from the press box," the old adage goes. Readers and viewers may be skeptical about our ability to put aside convictions and prejudices, but

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by and large, I think it really does reflect on how we work. I've covered campaigns of politicians whose views and whose character I cannot abide, and know the pains I took to play the story straight.

pains I took to play the story straight.

The same holds true in covering stories where cultural assumptions can get in the way of fairness. Controversies over censorship, school prayer, abortion and other "hot button" issues require a journalist to go the extra mile in putting biases to one side. (Greenfield, Tulsa World, 9/20/90, p. 13A)

Purpose of Study

This study examined the amount of front-page coverage devoted solely to the governor's race and the extent to which the content contained in that coverage by Oklahoma's three largest daily newspapers focused on the issues of the campaign. Issues consisted of such things as a candidate's stance on topics like taxes, education, government spending, economic development, crime prevention and prisons, abortion, collective bargaining, binding arbitration, right-to-work, death penalty, House Bill 1017, etc. Non-issues consisted of such things as a candidate's personal life, negative campaigning and mudslinging, the horse race aspect (who's ahead/behind or gathering speed in a race), etc.

The study used content analysis to examine Oklahoma's three largest dailies. A definition of content analysis is presented by H.J. Hsia in his book, <u>Mass Communications</u>
Research Methods: A Step-by-Step Approach. Hsia said:

Content analysis is simply the analysis of what is said, printed, broadcast, or written. But it not only examines contents but infers underlying intent, motivation, orientation, and effects, either implicit or manifest. (Hsia, 1988, p. 318)

This research will focus on the content contained in the front-page coverage of the 1990 governor's race by Oklahoma's three largest newspapers, the <u>Oklahoman</u>, <u>Tulsa</u> <u>World</u>, and Tulsa Tribune.

Research Questions

- (1) What was the amount of front-page coverage devoted solely to the governor's race found in each of Oklahoma's three largest newspapers from September 19 to November 6, 1990, the period between the primary election and the general election?
- (2) Did that amount of election coverage devoted to the governor's race, found on the front-page, differ among the three newspapers?
- (3) To what extent did the newspaper coverage of the 1990 governor's race, found only on the front-page except for continuation of front-page stories, focus on the issues versus the non-issues?
- (4) Did the amount of coverage devoted to the issues versus the non-issues, found only on the front-page with possible continuation, differ among Oklahoma's three largest newspapers?
- (5) How much of the coverage about the governor's race, found only on the front-page with possible continuation on additional pages, was devoted to a particular issue?
- (6) Did the amount of coverage which was devoted to a particular issue relating to the governor's race, found only on the front-page with possible continuation, differ among the three newspapers?

Significance of Research

The significance of this research is the documentation it provides to analyze newspaper coverage of an important political race in Oklahoma. The possible benefactors of such research could be future Oklahoma voters and perhaps even the media, especially newspapers, as well as anyone who is interested in politics and the print media.

This research is somewhat similar to previous research (Moon, 1987) performed at Oklahoma State University.

Moon's study focused on newspaper coverage of the 1986 governor's race by the same three dailies, the Oklahoman, Tulsa Tribune, and the Tulsa World.

Scope of Research

The ultimate goal of this research is to determine if the critics of political campaign coverage are indeed accurate in their assessment that the media are not socially responsible or if these three newspapers provided the general public adequate front-page coverage of the governor's race and adequate front-page coverage of the campaign issues during the 1990 gubernatorial race.

Outline of Study

Chapter I consisted of an introduction into the thesis. Chapter II is a literature review. Chapter III is a discussion of the methodology. Chapter IV is a description of the research findings. Chapter V consists of a summary of the research followed by an interpretation, inference, conclusion, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Responsibility

This study assumes that the press has a social responsibility toward the public to inform them of the critical issues of a political campaign, so the public can make informed voting decisions.

The extent to which the press has a social responsibility to the general public to inform them of the vital issues of a political campaign and each candidate's stance on those issues has been a topic of debate for some time. Clifford G. Christians brings home the point in his book, Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning. The author stated:

Democratic theory gives the press a crucial role. In most democracies, education and information are the twin pillars on which a free society is said to rest. Informed public opinion is typically heralded as a weapon of enormous power and, indeed, the cornerstone of legislative government. A free press is central to Jefferson's understanding of politics, for example, and he characteristically referred to an independent information system as 'that liberty which guards our other liberties'. (Christians, et al., 1987, p. 25)

The author went on to say:

Because of this privileged position-commonly called enlightenment function-outside critics and inside leaders have persistently urged the press toward responsible behavior. Thomas Jefferson himself lamented how such a noble enterprise could degrade itself by publishing slander and error. Joseph Pultizer worried that without high ethical ideals

newspapers would fail as a public servant and even become dangerous. (Christians, et al., 1987, p. 25)

Social responsibility theory holds that it is the media's social obligation to work in the best interest of the overall population. However, newspapers are privately owned and in the business to make a profit. Hence, the dilemma arises as to private interest versus the public interest. In the book, <u>Four Theories of the Press</u>, Theodore Peterson described some of the social responsibilities of the press, as follows:

The functions of the press under social responsibility theory are basically the same as those under libertarian theory. Six tasks came to be ascribed to the press as traditional theory evolved: (1) servicing the political system by providing information, discussion, and debate on public affairs; (2) enlightening the public so as to make it capable of self-government; (3) safeguarding the rights of the individual by serving as a watchdog against government; (4) servicing the economic system, primarily by bringing together the buyers and sellers of goods and services through the medium of advertising; (5) providing entertainment; (6) maintaining its own financial self-sufficiency so as to be free from the pressures of special interests. (Siebert, et al., p. 74)

Peterson went on to say:

The social responsibility theory in general accepts those six functions. But it reflects a dissatisfaction with the interpretation of those functions by some owners and operators and with the way in which the press has carried them out. Social responsibility theory accepts the role of the press in servicing the political system, in enlightening the public, in safeguarding the liberties of the individual; but it represents the opinion that the press has been deficient in performing those tasks. (Siebert, et al., p. 74)

Peterson further commented:

Today, when newspaper publishers speak about their calling, such phrases as "the public's right to know" and "the public responsibility of the press" are likely to creep into their talk. Such ideas and the press performance resulting from them represent an important modification of traditional libertarian

theory, for nothing in libertarian theory established the public's right to information or required the publisher to assume moral responsibilities. (Siebert, et al., p. 73)

Public's Right to Know

Lucas A. Powe, Jr. wrote about the phrase 'the public's right to know' in his book, <u>The Fourth Estate and the Constitution: Freedom of the Press in America</u>. He made the following comments:

Kent Cooper, a high corporate official with the Associated Press, claims to have popularized the phrase "right to know" in a speech he gave at the end of World War II and then promoted in a similarly titled book written in the mid-1950s. Although often tied specifically into demands for freedom of information statutes and open meeting laws, the right to know gained a momentum of its own and was, by the end of the 1960s, treated by the media as a synonym for freedom of the press. (Powe, 1991, p. 242)

Powe continued:

The initial charm of the right to know was its ability to remove the press from its seeming position of privilege. Had the right to know stopped there, Kent Cooper could have taken pride in his creation, and few others would have cared. But the media often took the right to know quite seriously and stood by its implications, which appeared to necessitate a new privileged position for the press. (Powe, 1991, p. 255)

Powe further noted:

The right to know is not a right; it's a slogan. Furthermore, it is a dangerous slogan, because it instantly invites inquiry into the actual performance of a newspaper. Instead of giving the press more rights, it runs the risk of denying the press its most sacred possession, its autonomy. (Powe, 1991, p. 257)

J. Herbert Altschull described some ideas from famous individuals that closely resemble this notion of the public's right to know in his book, From Milton to McLuhan:

The Ideas Behind American Journalism. Altschull discussed the writings of Rousseau, which can be found in Rousseau's

1762 work entitled the "Social Contract" where Rousseau presents his concept called the General Will. Altschull noted that Rousseau wrote the following:

The General Will is always right and tends to the public advantage, but it does not follow that the deliberations of the people are always correct. Our will is always for our own good, but we do not always see what it is; the people are never corrupted, but are often deceived. (Altschull, 1990, p. 88)

Rousseau also wrote:

Of itself the people wills always the good, but of itself it by no means always sees it. The General Will is always in the right, but the judgement which guides it is not always enlightened. ... Public enlightenment leads to the union of understanding and will in the social body. It is therefore necessary to make the people see things as they are...to guide them from the seducing voice of private wills. (Altschull, 1990, p. 89)

According to Altschull, "No clearer philosophical support for the concept of the 'people's right to know' has ever been provided." (Altschull, 1990, p. 89)

When discussing the concept, of the public's right to know, author Altschull mentioned the relevant ideas of two scholars, Thomas Emerson and John Merrill, when he noted the following:

Whether or not a legal mechanism can be found to incorporate a public right to know in law, Emerson wrote, Americans ought to consider such a right "an integral part of freedom of expression, embodied in the first amendment." The press he maintained, "is a principal source of knowledge about the inner workings, sometimes devious or corrupt, of the government apparatus. (Atschull, 1990, p. 252)

The author further wrote:

Agreeing with Emerson, educator John Merrill found a right to know present by inference in the First Amendment. And, he added, in impassioned language, such a right "is at the very foundation of American government, of public discussion, of intelligent voting, of public opinion, of the very fabric and essence of democracy. (Altschull, 1990, p. 252)

Author Lucas A. Powe, Jr., has some additional thoughts on the notion of the 'public's right to know.' Powe made the following comments:

The Hutchins Commission was not alone in its ability to tie rights to responsibilities. The law with regularity has taken privilege and added to it responsibility. It should have taken very little time for any serious look at the right to know to come to the conclusions that special responsibilities might be implicit therein.

How well is the press exercising its informing function? Is the press meeting its responsibilities, indeed its sole purpose, in vindicating the public' right to know? Why is there so much _____ (fill in the blank with whatever excess comes to mind: sensationalism, puffery, negativism) in the media? Can the public have the information it needs when the press wastes so much of its space on whatever filled in the blank? If the public does have a right to know, then the press ought not be complaining if the public (through some mechanism) demands an accounting. (Powe, 1991, pp. 255 & 257)

One final thought on the 'public's right to know' can be found in a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Popular Culture Association in New Orleans, March 23-26, 1988. The paper was presented by James E. Sayer and was titled "The Media as Voyeur: What is Our "Right to Know?" Sayer commented:

Current print and broadcast journalism is moving away from a concept of journalism as "information people need to know" towards a notion of the "Right to Know": everything conceivable about everyone is newsworthy. It is axiomatic that a well-informed public is a better electorate. However, the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of speech has been stretched by journalists into the "right to know," an elastic definition of newsworthiness creating a jungle of journalistic voyeurism, providing information that titillates rather than informs. The American Mass Media Machine should re-orient itself toward an ethically-based journalism, one which includes in its criteria of newsworthiness decency and fairness, "redeeming social value," and maintaining the dignity of news subjects. Otherwise, its credibility will suffer. Moreover, information important to the electorate may go unreported or be lost in trivialities. (Sayer, 1988, p. 11)

Freedom of the Press

Freedom of the press is a liberty which is guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, however, freedom of the press and the public's right to know can often times clash, especially in a scenario where a media entity is attempting to be socially responsible but has difficulties because of the institutionalized nature of its business.

Clifford G. Christians mentioned the elusiveness of fairness with his discussion about freedom of the press in his book, <u>Media Ethics</u>, <u>Cases and Moral Reasoning</u>. He stated:

Historian Charles Beard once wrote that freedom of the press means "the right to be just or unjust, partisan or nonpartisan, true or false, in news columns and editorial columns." Historically the media have been conceived as reflecting the world on their own terms and telling the particular truth the owners preferred. (Christians, 1987, p. 91)

The author went on to say:

There is now substantial doubt whether the truth will emerge from a marketplace filled with falsehood. The contemporary mood among media practitioners and communication scholars is for a reflective press, one conscious of its significant social obligations. But servicing the public competently is an elusive goal and no aspect of this mission is more complicated than the issue of social justice. Often a conflict is perceived between minority interest on the one hand and unfettered freedom of expression on the other.

The liberty of the press is established in the First Amendment and this freedom continues to be essential to a free society. Practitioners thereby tend to favor an independent posture on all levels. Whenever one obligates the press--in this case to various social causes--one restrains its independence in some manner. (Christians, 1987, p. 91)

Freedom of the press falls under the category of the overall concept of freedom of expression which is guaranteed by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. James J. Kilpatrick alluded to the idea of

freedom of expression in his article "Free Expression: It's Great For Me But Bad for You". Kilpatrick wrote:

The American people, God bless them, are a mixed-up bunch. When it comes to this business of "censorship" they are as giddy as barnyard geese. In one breath they reject censorship; in the next they embrace it. What in the name of Thomas Jefferson is going on?

The most plausible interpretation is that people are simply being hypocritical. They want freedom for themselves, but not for the other fellow.

(Kilpatrick, Oklahoman, 9/25/90, p. 10)

Even though society sometimes expects the press to be socially responsible, the public must accept the fact that freedom of the press also entitles the press to publish as they please. This point is elaborated by Kent R. Middleton and Bill F. Chamberlin in their book, The Law of Public Communication. The authors stated:

The print media, like the individual, can almost never be barred from publishing. Nor can the press be required to publish anything. A publisher has no legal obligation to be fair or evenhanded to political candidates. Publishers can ignore some or all candidates in an election. In addition, publishers do not have to publish apologies, retractions, or corrections when they make a mistake or offend someone. Furthermore, they do not have to publish a paid advertisement if they do not want to. Publishers only have to abide by normal business regulations. (Middleton, et al., 1988, p. 38)

Does the press have an obligation to be socially responsible by informing the public of the important issues of a campaign despite cries about freedom of the press?

One would presume that for society to make wise voting decisions and to be able to debate the issues they must be informed about those issues. Professor Thomas I. Emerson said:

A citizen must hear all sides of the question, especially as presented by those who feel strongly and argue militantly for a different view. He must consider all alternatives, test his judgment by exposing it to opposition, make full use of different

minds to sift the true from the false. Conversely, suppression of information, discussion, or the clash of opinion prevents one from reaching the most rational judgment, blocks the generation of new ideas, and tends to perpetuate error. (Middleton, et al., 1988, p. 40)

Negative Campaigning

Mick Hinton, a Capital Bureau reporter for the <u>Daily</u>
<u>Oklahoman</u>, noted that pollster Tom Kielhorn said mudslinging gets voters' attention. Kielhorn was a guest speaker at a gathering in Oklahoma City and had some interesting comments about mudslinging. Hinton reported:

Folks will tell you they are sick of all the mudslinging, an Oklahoma pollster says, but that's the only game in town, if a candidate is going to get much attention at all. Regarding mudslinging, he said that a candidate can issue 10 press releases noting six points of an economic plan and nobody runs it. 'Call a guy a skunk' and it hits the media, he said. He also noted that voters want a prize fight. (Hinton, Oklahoman, 10/28/90, p. 20)

Negative campaigning and mudslinging have had a long history. This point is reaffirmed by author J. Herbert Altschull's book, From Milton to McLuhan: The Ideas Behind American Journalism. The author described attacks unleashed on Horace Greeley, the editor of the New York Tribune, when he ran against Ulysses S. Grant in the 1872 presidential election. Altschull told the story as follows:

Perhaps it was because of his rumpled, baggy appearance, as he peered near-sightedly from behind narrow spectacles, strands of silver-yellow hair littered around the edges of his frayed collar, or perhaps it was because of his squeaky, high-pitched voice, but Greeley seemed to attract political opposition and indeed ridicule and contempt. Henry Raymond of the Times, whom the Whigs chose over Greeley to become New York's lieutenant governor, accused Greeley not only of labor agitation but of being a communist and, what's worse, of advocating

free love; Bennet (editor of the New York Herald) blamed the Civil War on him. No one was more vicious to Greeley than the celebrated cartoonist Thomas Nast, who gained fame for his cruel caricatures of New York's William Marcy "Boss" Tweed in the pages of Harper's Bazaar. In Greeley's losing presidential campaign against Grant in 1872, Nast pictured him as "liar, villain and scoundrel" in running his 'New York Trombone'. In Nast's image the editor was "Horrors Greedey"; his crowning blow was to portray Greeley shaking hands with John Wilkes Booth over the grave of Lincoln. A broken, bitterly disappointed man, Greeley collapsed and died less than a month after the election. (Altschull, 1990, p. 211)

An editorial from the <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> pointed to some of the reasoning for negative campaigning. It stated:

In Oklahoma, the weary business of name-calling between David Walters and Bill Price would seem to have passed the point of benefiting either. But this is an era in which negative campaigning is believed to pay big dividends.

Maybe it's a throwback to the 19th century when there wasn't much excitement in largely rural America and chaw-'em-up campaigning had cornpone crowds lifting their jugs in appreciation. Maybe it's just because if you have too many television debates the real issues wear themselves out and contestants are reduced to jawing to kill the time.

We will descend into ever-lower depths of boorishness and rudeness until it can be demonstrated that the buying or voting public wants selling on a higher plane. Perhaps the time is not yet. (<u>Tulsa Tribune</u>, 10/12/90, p. 3A)

Many individuals, along with various media people, such as columnists have complained about negative campaigning. Even the politicians themselves have complained about mudslinging and the dirty politics of negative campaigning. But, who is to blame? The Stillwater NewsPress ran an editorial titled "Who Deserves Most Blame In Mud-slinging Campaigns?", and the Daily Oklahoman published it. In the editorial, the NewsPress made these comments:

The negative, mud-slinging campaigns of David Walters and Bill Price are coming close to meeting the

definition of obscenity: They lack any socially redeeming value.

Early in this campaign-before the primaries--we admitted in an editorial that the media are as much to blame for the effectiveness of negative campaigning as the candidates. When that is all we'll print, when we headline stories and newscasts with the garbage being tossed out by candidates, our newspapers, radio stations and television stations become little more than garbage trucks.

Who is to blame? The candidates for throwing trash, or the media for picking it up? Or our readers who demand the trash? (Oklahoman, 10/21/90, p. 16)

A letter to the editor about negative campaigning entitled "Voters Will Buy Negative Campaigning" was found in 'The People's Voice' section of the <u>Tulsa World</u> and the individual made these comments:

Political candidates realize that they receive more attention if they can say something controversial about their opponents versus saying something about their convictions.

Thus we see the emergence of negative campaign tactics. It's not what the candidate stands for, or the value of his experience and academic background. No, it's how deftly he (or she) can defame - sometimes with fact, other times with falsehood.

Abraham Lincoln, in his wisdom, placed trust in the people. "... you can't fool all of them all of the time." Have the people changed since Lincoln's day? (Shannon, Tulsa World, 10/3/90, p. 8A)

Another editorial example, about negative campaigning, appeared in the editorial section of the <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> and it offers some reasons why negative ads and campaigns are used. The editorial was titled "Negative Ads Work" and it stated:

If anything can be gleaned from the remarkable victories by Bill Price and Terry Neese in the Republican runoff for governor and lieutenant governor, respectively, it has to be that negative campaigning works in Oklahoma.

While his negative tactics pale in scope and scale to those of Neese, Price spent most of his time and money between the primary and runoff trying to take Vince Orza down a peg or two, rather than trying to build on the issues.

Let's hope that the purveyors of negative campaigning don't take the Price and, particularly,

the Neese victories as signs that Oklahomans only respond to those kinds of ads. Who will be elected as our next governor and lieutenant governor are serious decisions. We need the opportunity to examine the candidates for their views and their character. (Tulsa Tribune, 9/27/90, p. 8)

Paul West, a writer for the Baltimore Sun, pointed out the effect negative campaigning was having on the Texas voters. West's story was titled "Nasty Governor's Race Has Texans Thinking 'None of the Above'." West wrote:

The prolonged, often nasty, sometimes inept campaign has Texans shaking their heads over the slim pickings on the November ballot.

But prospects for major GOP gains are clouded by concerns about voter apathy. Experts say a vast segment of the electorate in the nation's third-most-populous state has been totally turned off by the race for governor.

Negative opinions are scarcely limited to women. An astounding 38 percent of all Texas voters had an unfavorable opinion of (Clayton) Williams, according to the Gallup survey, a rating that would doom a candidate in an ordinary race.

But not this one, where the low regard for Williams is exceeded by the dim view Texans take of Ms. Richards. She was rated unfavorably by 45 percent of those surveyed. (West, Tulsa World, 10/7/90, p. 6B)

Steve Daley, a writer for the Chicago Tribune, reaffirmed that negative campaigning is alive and well. illustrated why campaigns have become so negative in his article "The Haters: Many Campaigns Pander to Voters' Worst Instincts". Daley commented:

If you travel around the campaign trail at summer's end, you keep hearing people talk about "the haters".
In Louisiana and Massachusetts, in North Carolina

and Texas, candidates and their pollsters plumb the depths of what they gingerly describe as voter anger

and alienation.

Closer to the bone, they're measuring fear, much of it generated by a cynical political culture and directed at uncertain voters. Voters have reason to be worried, and no little justification for thinking the political system is not operating in their best interest.

But in a time of genuine fiscal crisis, with a hot war brewing in the Persian Gulf, many of the 1990 election campaigns are turning on witless issues and

pandering to the worst instincts of voters.

With the setting of white on black, the middle class on the poor, the outside world against Washington, we are experiencing a mean political season.

The message, like so many others in this campaign season is divisive and dangerous. (Daley, <u>Tulsa World</u>, 10/14/90, p. 9)

Another example of voter apathy, due in part to negative campaigning, is seen in the article "Let's get back on Track". The story was written by Richard C. Crawford, who was the mayor of Tulsa and now (November 1990) is the vice president of Integrated Financial. Crawford described some of the reasons voters are becoming disenchanted with the current political scene. He said:

Tuesday is Election Day, and it promises to be quite interesting. "Throw the rascals out!" has become the clarion call across the land. Sadly, there are more than ample reasons for this growing disenchantment with our elected officials at all levels of government. In 1990, once again, millions of dollars have been spent to produce disgustingly negative campaigns, and the hypocrisy and deceit in many of the messages are regarded simply as politics as usual, the accustomed order of the day.

Just two statistics among hundreds should suffice to arouse us to take action. First it took nearly 200 years (from the founding of our republic to 1980) for us to amass a trillion dollars of debt. However it took us only the next 10 years to triple that - and the debt is still rising. Second, we went from the No. 1 creditor nation in 1983 to the No. 1 debtor nation this year. Those are the facts, unbelievable yet irrefutable.

But there is hope. However, success will depend on you and me. We have the opportunity to erase the negatives and help get America back on the right track, particularly for the sake of our children and grandchildren.

Let's get moving. The alternative is a continuing slide into sewer politics and further decay of the greatest nation on the face of the earth. (Crawford, Tulsa Tribune, 11/2/90, p. 11A)

Mary Copeland's letter to the editor was titled "None of the Above". Her letter was found in the editorial section of the <u>Daily Oklahoman</u>. Copeland had these comments:

As a registered voter in this state, I feel compelled to voice an opinion that is felt by many concerning two of Oklahoma's gubernatorial candidates.

Both of these men have consistently continued to insult the intelligence of all registered voters in this state with their blatant display of immature, childish and downright disgusting acts of mudslinging, back-stabbing and Keystone Cop antics. The filing of a lawsuit will surely be the last straw for many voters making a final decision as to whose ballot will be marked next month.

It is fortunate for those of us who are sick to death of these kind of politics, that there is at least one independent on the ballot who, even though he is not a popular candidate or well known, is obviously more deserving of the vote simply because he has yet to slap a face, sling a mud ball or file a lawsuit because his feelings are hurt.

We've had quite enough. Our craws are completely full! (Copeland, Oklahoman, 10/24/90, p. 12)

Copeland noted the choice of the independent candidate. Thomas Ledgerwood II spent the smallest amount of money on his campaign and was the least known and heard from candidate, yet he still received more than 90,000 of the total votes cast. That was the largest number of votes received by an independent candidate running for governor in Oklahoma's history. The next closest was 60,000+ in the 1986 governor's race, which was considered by many to be one of the nastiest governor's races in state history. Could it be that voters by their actions appear to be telling the politicians "enough is enough?"

Research: Media and Politics

A number of studies about the media and politics, especially related to negative campaigns and their effects on voters, have been conducted. Laurie Mason and Clifford Nass did a study titled "How Partisan and Non-partisan Readers Perceive Political Foes and Newspaper Bias." Their study looked at newspaper articles versus political

advertisements. The researchers used newspaper articles because the politician has less control over them than advertisements. The researchers commented:

This study empirically examines the effects of strength of reader's feelings about a politician on the processing of a newspaper article containing negative remarks directed at the politician. One key difference between the present research and earlier research on the evaluation of political mudslingers and targets is the switch from a political advertisement to a newspaper article as the context for conveying the criticism. Advertisements allow politicians the maximum control over presentation of their message; therefore, the mudslinging politician can be considered fully responsible for the messages. A news article containing similar mudslinging remarks brings in a new dimension. Even the moderately sophisticated reader would expect that the source of negative information in a news story would have far less control over how his or her message was presented than would a source of a political advertisement. (Mason, et al., 1989, pp. 564-70)

The researchers found the following:

For both partisan and non-partisan readers, the data suggest that the newspaper is evaluated as an independent actor in the reader's determination of whom to like and whom to dislike, with partisan readers disliking the newspaper for bias against their position and non-partisan readers using perceived bias to form their opinions.

The present research has important implications for journalistic standards. Biased reporting is commonly eschewed as unprofessional, but on a more practical level, it is thought that the reader who discerns slant regards the newspaper as less credible. (Mason, et al., 1989, pp. 564-70)

Robert Rudd conducted a study titled "Effects of Issue Specificity, Ambiguity on Evaluations of Candidate Image". He was trying to determine if a candidate who was being specific on the issues would be more advantageous than one who was ambiguous on the issues. Rudd made these comments about his research:

The important role of the mass media in contemporary American politics has been reflected in a number of recent research studies. Political and communication scholars have provided increasing evidence that the media have a considerable effect on the attitudes,

beliefs and behaviors of voters during election campaigns. (Rudd, 1989, pp. 675-82)

Rudd also noted:

The intent of "issue" commercials is more often to develop a candidate's image, than to sell voters on the policy positions of the candidate. In fact, few commercials present substantive policy discussions, or outline specific policy positions of candidates. Instead, even issue commercials employ ambiguity by expressing the candidate's concern without actually presenting a specific policy proposal.

The central purpose of such ambiguous messages is to cultivate a positive image without alienating voters who might disagree with a candidate's specific

policy proposal.

Political candidates are expected to run on the issues. A candidate who fails to address the issues during a campaign violates those ritualistic expectations and risks losing favor with the electorate.

Vague messages allow voters to perceive the candidate as being closer to their individual positions and preferences than they might if they were confronted with a very specific issue position. In the words of Benjamin Page, "A candidate who takes a specific policy stand is bound to alienate those who disagree; but a candidate who promises peace, progress and prosperity, and projects an image of warmth and honesty, is likely to please almost everyone. (Rudd, 1989, pp. 675-82)

Keith Sinclair's study of press coverage of an election sought to determine if the coverage focused more on the substantive issues or on the horserace aspect of an election. The horserace aspect has to do with which candidate is ahead, behind, gaining speed or losing momentum. Sinclair observed:

An important aspect of the literature on press coverage of election campaigns is the question of whether the press emphasizes "horserace" or "substantive" characteristics of the campaign: does the press view elections in terms of a "dramatic contest" or is more attention given to the issues. Graber noted that in the 1968 and 1972 campaigns the attention "shifted to the horse-race qualities of the presidential campaign" and away from such substantive issues as foreign policy.

All this is not to imply the value judgment that horserace coverage is necessarily bad. Such coverage may generate interest among voters who do not have

direct contact with candidates. At the same time, it can be argued that horserace coverage may have negative effects on the democratic process. Non-substantive coverage may obscure the important issues which may go unnoticed and thus trivialize the campaign. (Sinclair, 1982, p. 598)

Another group of researchers wanted to know about political campaign knowledge and activity, along with media reliance. William Rosenberg and William Elliott presented a paper at the Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association in San Francisco, California in May 1989. They commented:

Researchers recently have been focusing on the relationships between audience orientations toward specific media and their knowledge about political candidates and issues. The question of media dependency, particularly dependency on television versus newspapers, has been a focal point in the discussion.

The analysis indicated the importance of campaign interest as a predictor of campaign knowledge and activity but finds that media reliance, defined as the individual's identification of a specific medium as their dominant political information source, is unrelated to both campaign knowledge and campaign activity. Findings also showed the superiority of the newspaper as a medium for the transmission of political information. (Rosenberg, et al., p. 29)

An additional study on media use, voting, and issue or image discriminations was done by Hyeon Cheol Choi and Samuel L. Becker. These researchers wanted to determine the relationship between media use and the attainment of political information or knowledge. They observed:

The claim that campaign issues and images of candidates are important determinants of voting presupposes that the voters get information about them. This, in turn, raises the question of where they get that information. Undoubtedly, most of us, who have little chance to experience election events or see political figures first-hand, get the bulk of our campaign information from mass media.

Recognizing the media as information suppliers has led a number of researchers to shift their attention to the effects of these sources on audience's cognitions. Studies of agenda setting and information gain reflect this shift.

A number of studies of information gain have been concerned with the effects of mass media on the acquisition of particular campaign information, such as issue positions held by candidates. The purpose of the present study was to learn more about the relationship between mass media and political information gain. (Choi, et al., 1987, pp. 267-87)

They concluded:

The results of the study show that voters' increased issue discrimination during the 1982 Iowa gubernatorial election campaign was in good part the result of newspaper reading. Television news viewing made little or no contribution to issue discrimination. The result suggests that a newspaper is an effective medium in helping audience members develop a distinctive picture of each candidate and, thus, discriminate issue positions among them, whereas television is not. (Choi, et al., 1987, pp. 267-87)

A similar study by Pamela J. Shoemaker, Caroline Schooler, and Wayne A. Danielson was titled "Involvement With the Media: Recall Versus Recognition of Election Information":

The purpose of this article is to show how different kinds of involvement measures can add to our ability to explain differences between people's knowledge of election information and to investigate whether the way we measure that knowledge affects our conclusions about involvement with television and newspapers.

Our study found no difference between newspaperand television-reliant individual's recognition of election information, whereas younger respondents recalled more election facts if they were newspaperreliant. This suggests that television-reliant individuals are in fact receiving and processing election information, but that the information can be retrieved best through a multiple-choice type of question.

When recall is the measure, newspaper-reliant people may appear to be more involved in the election, but when recognition measures are used, television-reliant people can do just as well.

reliant people can do just as well.

Perhaps we should be thankful that election
ballots present multiple-choice alternatives between
candidates rather than requiring the voter to write in
his or her chosen candidate's name. (Shoemaker, et
al., 1989, pp. 78-101)

The results of David J. Kennamer's study titled, "A Partial Model for Predicting the Probability of Voting",

were presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in Norman, Oklahoma, during August 1986. His study investigated the relationship of campaign media attention to cognition, the strength of commitment to candidate choice, and voting probability. According to Kennamer:

Data analysis indicated that news media attention to the campaign did appear to have both direct and indirect effects on the probability of voting. The 1985 gubernatorial campaign in Virginia was selected for analysis. A model constructed for predicting voting tendencies hypothesizes that the role of the mass media is largely indirect, affecting voters through its effects on cognition. (Kennamer, 1986, p. 29)

A study titled "Issues in Political Advertising in a Deep South Gubernatorial Race," by Camille Elebash and James Rosene, attempted to determine which medium had produced the most issue-oriented advertisements. They reported:

This study was undertaken to examine the content of advertisements of political candidates for governor in a Deep South state, an area historically known for its demagoguery. Media observers claim that the growing use of advertising in mass media by politicians has changed the method of politicking in the Deep South, moving politicians away from the rhetoric of the demagogue to more issue-oriented campaigns. Since there is no live, and perhaps angry, audience to face when presenting a print or electronic message, are today's candidates more interested in presenting issues rather than personalities?

However, this study found political advertisements in newspapers contained a substantial number of political issues. Also, as the size of the ad increased, the number of issues increased. The data suggests that candidates and their agencies fill advertising space by adding issues rather than developing more depth or a clearer position on a fewer number of issues.

Finally, although no causality can be assumed, the candidate who produced the largest number of commercials in both electronic and print media and who presumably spent the largest amount of money won the election. This supports the widely held belief that "money talks" in political campaigns. (Elebash, et al., 1982, pp. 420-3)

While this study pertained to political advertisements found in the media, certain generalizations could be made between political advertisements and political news reporting. Mitchell E. Shapiro and Wenmouth Williams, Jr.'s research on "Agenda-Setting and Political Framing in the 1982 Illinois Gubernatorial Campaign", reported:

In 1972, M. McCombs and D. Shaw introduced the idea that the mass media have the ability to tell the public which issues are of major importance in a political campaign by virtue of the amount of coverage they gave each. This they termed the "agenda setting" function of the media. A study was conducted to investigate various aspects of the agenda setting function of the media as they occurred in a gubernatorial campaign.

The results indicated that the campaign and editorial agendas were generally more effective in setting public agendas than was the aggregate newspaper agenda. The findings suggest that if the media devoted more attention to the obvious linkages between important issues and a campaign, the agenda setting effect would be enhanced. (Shapiro, et al., 1983, p. 21)

Research: Directly Related to Thesis

A 1987 study of the 1986 gubernatorial race indicated that the three newspapers which are the focus of this thesis, the Oklahoman, Tulsa World, and The Tulsa Tribune, concentrated a majority of their coverage on a candidate's ability to sling mud rather than on the substantive issues of the campaign. Jane Moon's study of these three newspapers was titled Surface Versus Substantive News Coverage of the 1986 Governor's Race by Three Oklahoma Dailies (Moon, 1987). Moon demonstrated in her research that these three newspapers devoted a majority of their coverage to surface news, such as mudslinging or the horserace aspect, versus substantive news, such as campaign issues and a candidate's stance on those issues.

Moon's study utilized three coders who identified all newspaper coverage devoted to the governor's race, including front-page stories and coverage found elsewhere. Moon also looked at editorials, however, this study disregarded editorials because they contain more opinion than news reporting. Moon's coders examined paragraph by paragraph the coverage and then categorized the coverage as surface or substantive.

Even though Moon's study and this thesis have similarities, the two also have some noticeable Moon's study examined the entire newspapers differences. for coverage and included editorials; whereas, this thesis concentrated on front-page coverage only because of its newsworthiness and disregarded editorials. Moon used three coders; this thesis used only one due to an erratic schedule caused by the researcher's move to Houston. Moon's study wanted to determine primarily if the coverage devoted to the governor's race was more substantive or surface (similar to issues versus non-issues in this thesis) and whether this varied among the three newspapers. This thesis wanted to determine the amount of front-page coverage devoted to the governor's race and whether this varied among the three newspapers. Also, this study looked at whether the front-page coverage was more issue or non-issue oriented and whether this varied among the three In addition, this study wanted to determine newspapers. what specific issues were covered, to what extent, and whether the issue coverage varied among the three newspapers.

Moon's study found that these three newspapers, the

Oklahoman, the <u>Tulsa Tribune</u>, and the <u>Tulsa World</u> devoted a larger proportion of their coverage to surface news such as negativism, mudslinging, and the horserace aspect versus substantive news such as campaign issues and the candidate's stance on the issues.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This thesis consisted of a content analysis of the front-page coverage of the 1990 governor's race by Oklahoma's three largest dailies, The Tulsa Tribune, Tulsa World, and the Oklahoman. However, there are some important differences among the three newspapers which need to be pointed out that will affect the overall numbers and comparisons in this research.

The time-frame for this study was September 19 to November 6, 1990, which was the time period between the primary election and the general election. Not all of the newspapers are published seven days a week. The Tulsa Tribune is only published Monday through Saturday; therefore, only 42 editions were published during the specified time-frame. The Tulsa World and the Oklahoman are published Sunday through Saturday; therefore, 49 editions were published during the specified time-frame.

The Oklahoma Publishing Company produces three separate newspapers, which are the <u>Daily Oklahoman</u>, the <u>Sunday Oklahoman</u>, and the <u>Saturday Oklahoman and Times</u>. For the purposes of this research, the newspapers will be referred to as the <u>Oklahoman</u>, as noted earlier in the text.

The newspapers also have different layouts as far as

format is concerned, especially on their front page.

Hence, the overall comparisons will have to be considerate of these different layouts. For example, the <u>Oklahoman</u> has 8 columns of printed text, whereas, the <u>Tulsa World</u> and <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> have 6 columns of printed text. All three newspapers' front page averages 20 column inches of text length, except for Sunday editions which are shorter because of college football scores (above the masthead) or exceptionally large headlines.

Thus, the front page of the Oklahoman averages 8 columns x 20 inches which equals 160 total column inches. The Tulsa Tribune and Tulsa World average 6 columns x 20 inches which equals 120 total column inches on the front page. The Oklahoman uses 7 lines of text to equal one column inch, whereas, the Tulsa Tribune and the Tulsa World use 8 lines of text to equal one column inch. Counting lines of printed text to determine the column inches was a simple method applied to this research. Overall measurements were made using number of column inches x the column width. Column width was based on the average column width of 8 columns for the Oklahoman and 6 columns for the Tulsa World and The Tulsa Tribune.

Last, the front page was the major criterion used for this study because the front page was considered the most "newsworthy" part of a newspaper. Front-page editorials, commonly used in the Oklahoman, were disregarded because they promoted opinion versus unbiased news reporting. Unbiased news reporting was the central theme of this study. Also, stories which did not relate to the governor's race were not considered. Stories about polls

or who supports who were disregarded unless they dealt specifically with the governor's race. Additionally, some front-page stories were continued on other pages. The continuation on subsequent pages was included to answer research questions three through six.

The purpose of this thesis was to examine if Oklahoma's three largest newspapers, The Tulsa Tribune, Tulsa World, and the Oklahoman, were socially responsible with their front-page coverage of the 1990 governor's race by informing the public of the important campaign issues. The research approach consisted of a content analysis of three Oklahoma dailies' front-page coverage of the gubernatorial race. The study examined the time-frame between the primary run-off and the general election. focus was each newspaper's front-page coverage along with any continuations of front-page stories on the governor's The front page was chosen because it was assumed that this is the most newsworthy section of a newspaper. Additionally, the research examined how much of the front-page coverage was devoted to issues and specifically the amount of coverage devoted to particular issues.

It should be pointed out that the <u>Oklahoman</u> is situated in the state capital and does publish a great deal of state politics on its front page. The other two newspapers may typically place state and/or local news in other sections of the newspaper. Also, it is important to note that articles pertaining to the governor's race were found in other sections besides the front page of all three newspapers, however, this study concentrated on front-page coverage only.

Research Design

The research design was a comparison of the content found in each newspaper. Tabulations were made of the specific time-frame for the purpose of answering the six research questions. The study focused only on the front-page coverage, except for continuation of stories related to the governor's race, for each day during the general election, after the primaries. The study also concentrated on the actual coverage of each story. This study was not only concerned with the amount of front-page coverage devoted to stories on the governor's race, but also with how much of that coverage was devoted to the campaign issues. Going one step further, the research determined the specific issues that received coverage and to what extent they were covered.

Pilot Study

A pilot study preceded the thesis study. Changes were made to the thesis study to overcome shortcomings which surfaced in the pilot study. The pilot study focused more on the three candidates, David Walters, Bill Price, and Thomas Ledgerwood II, and the anti- or pro- coverage which each candidate received from the three Oklahoma dailies, the Oklahoman, the Tulsa Tribune, and the Tulsa World. The original research performed in the pilot study helped this thesis by providing some valuable experience and by answering some important questions.

The pilot study showed that it would be wiser to focus on the exact content of the coverage presented by the three

dailies instead of focusing on individual candidates. By getting away from personalities and the whole question of pro- versus anti- sentiment, a tremendous amount of judgment on the part of the researcher was eliminated. The researcher could be more accurate and less judgmental when looking strictly at what was published.

Population of Interest

This research examined the front-page coverage by the three newspapers between September 19, 1990, the day after the primary runoff, and November 6, 1990, the day of the general election. Past researchers were criticized for using a sample from a similar time-frame. Therefore, this study did not use a sample but instead examined every issue published by the three Oklahoma dailies during the specified time-frame.

The study concentrated only on front-page stories and their continuation because they can be considered the most newsworthy. The research considered only stories about the governor's race and not those about general election topics, such as voter turnout, polling results and front-page editorials or other stories which could be construed as being related to races other than the governor's race.

Research Instrument

The study was conducted by tabulating the average column inches of each particular newspaper's front-page. Then, a tabulation was made of each story found on the front-page which covered the governor's race. These data

formed the basis of the answers to research questions number one and two. Next, a tabulation, consisting of only the text of each story about the governor's race, was made. Headlines, pictures, and boxes were not counted because they varied dramatically in size. When determining the amount of coverage devoted to issues versus non-issues or the amount of coverage devoted to a particular issue the most accurate measurement was the number of column inches of text only. It was difficult to determine the size or the context in which the headlines, pictures, and boxes were used.

The research instruments included the microfilm machines located in the Oklahoma State library, along with other reference materials.

Data Collection Plan and Recording

The data collection plan incorporated a code sheet which was used for making the various tabulations of the content found during the content analysis. The code sheet asked the following questions:

- (1) Newspaper ?
- (2) Date of Issue ?
- (3) Page ?
- (4) Headline ?
- (5) Total column inches on front-page?
- (6) Column inches about governor's race, including headlines, pictures, and boxes (total column inches of coverage)?
 - (7) Column inches on the issues, text only?

- (8) Column inches on a particular issue, text only (several examples provided)?
 - (9) Any additional comments?

Using this code sheet the researcher was able to examine each edition from the three newspapers for the specified time-frame. This latter procedure encompassed the recording aspect and when the coding/recording were completed further analysis was made.

Data Processing and Analysis

Once the coding and recording functions were completed, the results were tabulated for presentation in tables or charts and analyzed to determine if the research supported or rejected the hypotheses.

Methodological Assumptions

The expectation of this research was that a large percentage of front-page coverage, devoted to the governor's race, could be found in Oklahoma's three largest dailies. Some additional expectations were that the coverage or at least a large portion of it would have addressed important campaign issues, especially particularly newsworthy issues.

Another expectation was that newspapers would act in a socially responsible manner with their front-page coverage by providing voters with the information about the issues in order to make responsible voting decisions. The researcher expected to find at least a sufficient amount of evidence to make wise conclusions about the results of his research.

Limitations

One limitation to this research was it concentrated primarily on front-page coverage, whereas, other news stories about the governor's race could have appeared elsewhere in the newspaper. However, the justification for focusing only on the front-page was that the front-page was considered to be the most newsworthy portion of a newspaper.

Another limitation was that measurements were based on the researcher's judgment regarding whether a story was specifically related to the governor's race or was instead more of a general election news story, such as stories about polling results of all statewide races. Also, the research made judgments regarding the categorization of specific text as being either issue-oriented or non-issue-oriented.

Other limitations include the use of only three of Oklahoma's daily newspapers, and restriction of the study to the time-frame between the primary and general election. The use of only one coder might be considered a limitation in the accurate determination of whether perceived mudslinging comments are issues or non-issues and the measurement of column inches associated with each.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Tables

This section of chapter IV consists of tables or charts which depict the numerical results of the code sheets and their tabulations. This section was incorporated into the section titled "hypotheses analyzed" and each table should be in close proximity to the research question it is associated with or is trying to answer.

Hypotheses Analyzed

The first research question dealt with the amount of front-page coverage (in the <u>Tulsa Tribune</u>, <u>Tulsa World</u>, and <u>Oklahoman</u>) that was devoted solely to the governor's race. The first research question was: 1) What was the amount of front-page coverage devoted solely to the governor's race found in each of Oklahoma's three largest newspapers during the time-frame of September 19 to November 6, 1990, the period between the primary election and the general election?

For the amount of coverage each newspaper provided on a daily basis during the specified time-frame, please refer to Table I. The <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> was published 42 days during the specified time-frame and the <u>Tulsa World</u> and <u>Oklahoman</u> were published 49 days during the same time-frame.

Table I shows the actual days when a front-page article appeared which was about the governor's race.

TABLE I

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF DAYS
WITH A FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE
ON THE GOVERNOR'S RACE

Newspaper -	days pub- ished during time-frame -	<pre># days with front-page article on race</pre>	% days with front-page ar- - ticle on race
<u>Oklahoman</u>	49	21	43%
Tulsa Tribune	42	6	14%
Tulsa World	49	6	12%

The Oklahoman had more days in which a front-page article appeared which was devoted to the governor's race. The Oklahoman had an article nearly half of the time, whereas the Tulsa Tribune and Tulsa World had considerably fewer days in which a front-page story appeared about the governor's race. Another way to look at the situation is that the Oklahoman might have had an article on the governor's race nearly every other day. The Tulsa Tribune might have had an article every seven days, whereas the Tulsa World might have had an article appear every eight days during the seven week specified time-frame.

The Oklahoman had five days in which more than one article on the governor's race appeared on the front-page. The Tulsa Tribune had one day in which more than one article, on the governor's race, appeared on the front-page and the Tulsa World never had more than one article, on the governor's race, appear on the front-page.

Table II shows the column inches of coverage (devoted to the governor's race during the specified time-frame) found on the front page of the three newspapers. The table shows the size of the front pages in column inches, then the column inches on the governor's race, and finally the percentage of space devoted to the governor's race in relation to the total space available.

TABLE II

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF COLUMN INCHES
ON FRONT-PAGE DEVOTED TO THE
GOVERNOR'S RACE

inche	column s on fp g time-frame -	Column inches % devoted to race - during time-frame	to
<u>Oklahoman</u>	7742	623	8%
Tulsa Tribune	5040	125	2.5%
Tulsa World	5880	179	3%

(note: fp stands for front-page, 8 lines of text = a column inch for <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> & <u>Tulsa World</u>, 7 lines of text = a column inch for the <u>Oklahoman</u>)

The large discrepancy in total column inches for the three newspapers was that the Oklahoman has eight columns of text, whereas, the Tulsa Tribune and Tulsa World each have six columns of text. However, percentages were based solely on what each newspaper used of its front-page space Hence, the Oklahoman averaged 160 column inches available. on its front-page, except for Sunday editions which had football scores above the masthead. Therefore, the Oklahoman had 42 days x 160 column inches plus 7 days x 146 column inches which equals 7742 total column inches of front-page space available during the time-frame. Tulsa Tribune averaged 120 column inches on its front page; therefore, 42 days x 120 column inches equals 5040 total column inches of space available during the time-frame. The Tulsa World averaged 120 column inches on its frontpage and was published 49 times during the time-frame; therefore, 49 days x 120 column inches equals 5880 total column inches of space available.

The numbers in the second column represent the total column inches devoted to the governor's race found on the front page during the time-frame. The last column represents the percentage of space used for coverage of the governor's race out of the space available during the specified time-frame.

To answer question number one, the <u>Oklahoman</u> devoted the most front-page coverage toward the governor's race during the specified time-frame; of the front-page space available the <u>Oklahoman</u> used 8%. The <u>Tulsa World</u> was second in space devoted to the governor's race; of the front-page space available the <u>Tulsa World</u> used 3%. The

Tulsa Tribune was third and close to the <u>World</u> in frontpage coverage devoted to the governor's race; of the
front-page space available the <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> used 2.5%.
The <u>Oklahoman</u> more than doubled the front-page coverage
devoted to the governor's race as compared to the other two
newspapers.

Question number two is similar to question number one in that it was interested in the front-page coverage that was devoted to the governor's race during the specified time-frame. However, it wanted to know if the coverage devoted to the governor's race varied among the three newspapers. Question number two was: 2) Did the amount of election coverage devoted to the governor's race, found only on the front page, differ among the three newspapers? A possible null hypothesis could be: There was no difference among the three newspapers as far as front-page election coverage which was devoted to the governor's race.

Table I & II illustrated that the null hypothesis would be rejected because there is a difference among the three newspapers as to the amount of front-page coverage each newspaper devoted to the governor's race. Table I shows a significant difference among the three newspapers; the Oklahoman had an article on the governor's race 43% of the possible days, whereas, the Tulsa Tribune had an article devoted to the governor's race only 14% of the possible days, followed by the Tulsa World which devoted only 12% of the possible days to the governor's race.

Table II also shows a significant difference among the three newspapers; the Oklahoman devoted 8% of its available front-page space to the governor's race during the

time-frame. The <u>Tulsa World</u> devoted 3% of its available front-page space to the governor's race during the same time-frame, followed closely by the <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> which devoted 2.5% of its available front-page space to the governor's race during the specified time-frame. The <u>Oklahoman</u> had more front-page coverage devoted to the governor's race, nearly three times as much as the other two newspapers.

TABLE III

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF COLUMN INCHES OF TEXT
IN FRONT-PAGE GOVERNOR'S ARTICLES
DEVOTED TO ISSUES

Newspaper -	Column inches of articles	Column inches - on the issues		on
<u>Oklahoman</u>	718	152	21%	
Tulsa Tribune	<u>2</u> 70	1	1%	
Tulsa World	126	6	5%	

(Note: This Table included articles which began on the front-page and may have continued elsewhere in the newspaper. Also, the major difference between Table II and Table III is that Table II concentrated on the amount of space used on the front-page and Table III concentrated on the text, not headlines, pictures, boxes, etc., and on continuation of front-page stories. Hence, the numbers are different.)

Question number three dealt with the articles themselves and was concerned with the column inches of text. The question was: 3) To what extent did the newspaper coverage of the governor's race, found only on the front page except for continuation of front-page stories, focus on the issues versus the non-issues?

A possible corresponding hypothesis to question number three could be: The coverage devoted to the governor's race focused more on the issues (greater than 50%) than the non-issues (less than 50%). The research data supported rejecting the hypothesis. The coverage was overwhelmingly devoted to non-issues such as mudslinging and the horserace aspects of the election.

As documented in Table III, substantially less than 50% of the text on the governor's race was devoted to the issues. Conversely, substantially more than 50% of the text dealt with non-issues.

The fourth research question was similar to the above question except that it asked if there was a difference among the three newspapers in their focus on issues versus non-issues. Question number four was: 4) Did the amount of coverage (found only on the front-page with possible continuation) devoted to the issues versus the non-issues differ among the three newspapers? A corresponding null hypothesis would be: There was no difference among the three newspapers, as far as coverage devoted to the governor's race which focused on issues versus non-issues. The results as reported in Table III indicate that the null hypothesis would be rejected. The research data show that

of the front-page column inches devoted to the governor's race, the amount of text that was issue-oriented was 21% for the Oklahoman; this newspaper had the most issue-oriented coverage of the three newspapers. The <u>Tulsa World</u> was next with 5% of its text being issue-oriented. The <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> was third with a 1% of its text being issue-oriented.

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF COLUMN INCHES OF TEXT
IN FRONT-PAGE GOVERNOR'S ARTICLES
DEVOTED TO NON-ISSUES

_	olumn inches in articles -	Column inches on non-issues	<pre>% of text on - non-issues</pre>
Oklahoman	718	566	79%
Tulsa Tribune	70	69	99%
Tulsa World	126	120	95%

(Note: This Table IV does represent front-page articles, along with any continuation of stories. Also, Table IV documents the non-issue coverage as a percentage of the available text.)

The non-issues far outweighed issues in the front-page coverage devoted to the governor's race. The newspapers all devoted a larger amount of text (found in the front-page coverage on the governor's race) to the non-issues such as mudslinging, the horserace aspect, and

negativism instead of focusing on the issues, especially the <u>Tulsa World</u> and even more the <u>Tulsa Tribune</u>.

The fifth research question pertained to the issue coverage and sought to identify the specific issues which were covered. Question number five was: 5) How much of the coverage about the governor's race, found only on the front-page with possible continuation, was devoted to particular issues?

For questions number five and six, the study tried to determine which particular issues received coverage from the three newspapers. Table V lists the issues that received coverage and to what degree from each of the three newspapers.

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF COLUMN INCHES OF ISSUE-BASED TEXT IN FRONT-PAGE GOVERNOR'S ARTICLES DEVOTED TO SPECIFIC ISSUES

Issues	Ok	TT	TW	Total column inches issues all 3 papers	<pre>% of text related to issues</pre>
100400	017		T M	all 5 papers	Issues
abortion	38	0	0	38	24%
church/state	36	0	0	36	23%
education/ HB 1017	29	1	4	34	21%
crime/ prisons	11	0	1	12	8%
taxes	7	0	1	8	5%
other	31	0	0	31	19%
total=	152	1	6	159	100%

(note: The category of other consisted of issues that had fewer than five column inches of coverage and they included the following topics: collective bargaining, binding arbitration, economic development, death penalty, term limitations, ethics, right to work, family values, Medicare, minority hiring, affirmative action, lottery, gun control, and flag burning. Also, OK means Oklahoman, TT means Tulsa Tribune, and TW means Tulsa World. The figures do include front-page stories that may have possible continuation.)

Table V shows the column inches that were devoted to issues and the percentage that each issue received in comparison to the total inches devoted by all three newspapers to all issues (total=159 inches). An interesting observation is that 47%, or nearly half of total inches on issues, dealt with abortion or the separation of church and state powers. Those two issues

accounted for more space than the combination of the following issues: education, HB 1017, crime, prisons, taxes and the combination of all the remaining issues.

The sixth research question was similar to question number 5 except it asked if coverage of a particular issue varied among the three newspapers. A possible null hypothesis would be: There is no difference among the three newspapers in the focus on a particular issue. The null hypothesis would be rejected by the research. Not only was there a large difference among the newspapers' coverage of particular issues, but there also was a significant difference in the total amount of coverage of issues versus non-issues, as seen in Tables III and IV.

The <u>Oklahoman</u> had considerably more coverage of particular issues, as illustrated with Table V. It also had a much wider range of issues covered than either the <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> or the <u>Tulsa World</u>. The <u>Oklahoman</u> had coverage on 23 separate campaign issues, whereas, the <u>Tulsa World</u> had coverage on three separate issues and the <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> had coverage on a one issue during the entire time-frame between the primary election and the general election. The research indicated a significant difference among the three newspapers in their front-page coverage of particular issues.

Discussion

The findings indicated substantial differences among the three newspapers and their respective front-page

coverage of the 1990 Oklahoma governor's race. The research showed that of the front-page coverage devoted to the governor's race, the Oklahoman had considerably more column inches of election coverage than the Tulsa World or the Tulsa Tribune. Also, the Oklahoman had a front-page article 43% of the days within the specified time-frame compared to the Tulsa Tribune with 14% of the days, followed by the Tulsa World with 12% of the days.

The research indicated that the <u>Oklahoman</u> devoted more election coverage text to the issues than did the <u>Tulsa</u>

<u>Tribune</u> or the <u>Tulsa World</u>. When looking at the total column inches of articles on the governor's race beginning on the front-page and then determining how many of those column inches were on issues, the <u>Oklahoman</u> had 21%, followed by the <u>Tulsa World</u> with 5% and the <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> with 1%.

The study also showed quite a difference among the three newspapers as far as their coverage of specific campaign issues. For articles beginning on the front-page, the Oklahoman included coverage of 23 separate campaign issues, the Tulsa World included coverage of three separate campaign issues, and the Tulsa Tribune included coverage of one campaign issue. Even more telling was that the Oklahoman had 152 column inches of issue coverage compared to 6 column inches of issue coverage by the Tulsa World, followed by 1 column inch of issue coverage for the Tulsa Tribune. Please note that of the 152 column inches of issue coverage by the Oklahoman, 74 column inches were on two issues, abortion and separation of church and state.

Nearly half of the <u>Oklahoman's</u> issue coverage was found in two articles. These figures were based on each newspaper's front-page coverage of the governor's race during the specified time-frame, which was equivalent to 7 weeks of possible coverage.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The results of this research indicated that while overall coverage devoted to the governor's race and to campaign issues versus non-issues may have been less than adequate, the Oklahoman had more front-page coverage on the governor's race, had more coverage of issues versus non-issues, and covered both a wider range and volume of the more specific campaign issues than did the Tulsa World and the Tulsa Tribune. The Oklahoman, along with the other newspapers, received a great deal of criticism from the public because of its emphasis on mudslinging and negativism. However, the research shows the Oklahoman did a better job of informing the public, with its front-page coverage of the governor's race, than either the Tulsa Tribune or the Tulsa World.

The first two research questions dealt with the amount of front-page coverage devoted to the governor's race; the Oklahoman had 8% of their available space devoted to the governor's race, while the Tulsa World had 3% and the Tulsa Tribune had 2.5% of its available space devoted to the governor's race. The next two research questions dealt with how much of the front-page coverage was devoted to issues versus non-issues. The Oklahoman had 21% of their

front-page coverage on issues and 79% on non-issues, while the <u>Tulsa World</u> had 5% on the issues and 95% on non-issues, the <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> had 1% on the issues and 99% on non-issues. The last two research questions dealt with the specific issues that were covered. The <u>Oklahoman</u> covered the most issues at 23, the <u>Tulsa World</u> covered six and the <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> covered one.

Interpretation

The overall interpretation of the findings was that the research indicated that the Oklahoman performed a better job than either the Tulsa Tribune or the Tulsa World in informing the public in virtually all cases including the amount of front-page coverage on the governor's race, the amount of front-page coverage on the issues versus non-issues, and the number of issues covered. The research also indicated that the Tulsa World was a distant second in virtually all cases and the Tulsa Tribune was an even more distant third in all cases, including when it came to actual coverage, coverage of issues versus non-issues, and coverage of particular issues.

It must be pointed out that a large percentage of election coverage was found in other portions of all three newspapers. Also, the military build-up in the Middle East prior to the Gulf War occupied a great deal of front-page coverage during the time-frame between the primary election and the general election. In addition, the Oklahoman received noticeable criticicism for its biased editorials and its self-interest in who became governor. Thus, the

Oklahoman had the most front-page coverage on the governor's race as indicated; however, it also had the most criticism for its biased reporting.

Inference

From the findings one could infer that the <u>Tulsa World</u> and the <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> needed to have focused more on the governor's race with their front-page coverage to have performed at a comparable level with the <u>Oklahoman</u>. Also, those two newspapers needed to have focused more on the issues versus the non-issues, and they needed to have focused more on a wider range and volume of specific issues to compare favorably or equally with the <u>Oklahoman</u>. Last, the findings seem to support the view that the <u>Oklahoman</u> did out-perform the <u>Tulsa World</u> and the <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> by two and sometimes three times as much, according to the numbers, even though it was criticized for its biased news reporting.

Conclusions

The basic assumption and the premise of this thesis was that the press has a social responsibility to the public to inform them about the campaign issues so that they can make wise voting decisions. The specified time-frame of September 19 to November 6, 1990, the time period between the primary election and the general election, can be considered to be the most critical time for voters to receive election information about the candidates and their stance on the campaign issues. But,

the results of this research showed that these three newspapers might not have produced a sufficient amount of election coverage and more importantly, a sufficient amount of coverage on the issues.

While the Oklahoman had a front-page article on the governor's race 21 out of the 49 days it was published, the Tulsa Tribune had a front-page article on the governor's race only 6 out of the 42 days it was published during the time-frame. The Tulsa World did even worse by having a front-page article on the governor's race 6 out of the 49 days it was published during the time-frame. That is a 12% during the most critical time of the election.

Looking at the space available, on the front-page during the specified time-frame, versus space which was devoted to the governor's race, gives an idea of how little coverage was truly produced. The Oklahoman used 8% of its available front-page space for coverage of the governor's race, whereas, the Tulsa World used 3% of its available front-page space for coverage and the Tulsa Tribune used 2.5% of its available front-page space for coverage of the governor's race.

Some additional telling numbers (as far as the lack of focus on the campaign issues) appeared in the articles themselves. The Oklahoman devoted 21% of its front-page coverage on the governor's race to the issues; however, the Tulsa World devoted 5% of its coverage to the issues. But, even more unexpected was that the Tulsa Tribune devoted 1% of its front-page coverage of the governor's race to the campaign issues. Is that socially responsible news

reporting on the part of these three newspapers, especially the Tulsa World and most notably the Tulsa Tribune?

Another interesting aspect of the study dealt with the issues which were actually mentioned. First, the numbers showed that the Oklahoman provided coverage on 23 separate issues, while the Tulsa World covered three separate issues and the Tulsa Tribune covered one issue. This is in seven weeks of coverage. But, nearly half of the total column inches devoted to the issues were on the two topics of abortion and the separation of church and state. These two topics had more coverage than the combination of such topics as education, HB 1017, crime, prisons, taxes. Does this say something about what is important in the state of Oklahoma or at least to these newspapers?

Some final thoughts about the press coverage of the governor's race can be seen in the following commentaries. This letter to the editor was titled "Newspaper Should Stick to the Facts". The author said:

I've had it! I've read more biased, negative editorials and articles regarding David Walters than I can stand.

Your recent editorial describes Walters as hitting below the belt. Did you do any stories on all the name calling Bill Price did to instigate this response by Walters? Not a chance. Price ripped Orza as did your newspaper and Orza did not respond. Because Walters responds to Price's accusations, you accuse him of starting the mudslinging.

You know you're endorsing Price for governor, I know it, and everyone in this state knows it. Why can't you just leave it at that and stick to reporting only the facts in an unbiased manner? (Heinen, Oklahoman, 10/24/90, p. 12)

Here is another letter to the editor titled "Paper's Bias Runs Rampant". The author said:

As I read the Oct. 21 edition of <u>The Oklahoman</u>, I found myself becoming alarmed by the obvious bias that runs rampant through the entire publication. In a year when the elections are so critical to the future of this state, I find <u>The Oklahoman</u> lacking in the area of unbiased reporting.

The job of a local newspaper is to report the news that affects the lives of its readers. It is not the place of that newspaper to influence those lives with personal opinions. In a city with only one major newspaper publication, its responsibility to unbiased reporting is even greater.

It is time for <u>The Oklahoman</u> to move back into its role as a reporter of the news. Leave the mudslinging to the politicians, they need no help from you. (Thiessen, <u>Oklahoman</u>, 10/28/90, p. 14)

Again, here is another letter to the editor that criticizes the election coverage by the Oklahoman, which is titled "Editorials Stink". The individual had these comments:

As a longtime subscriber to <u>The Oklahoman</u>, I find your editorials spray a "stench" in the air throughout the Oklahoma political races. How can the candidates for governor discontinue the negative campaigns when <u>The Oklahoman</u> continues to print the irrelevant and <u>fruitless</u> mud slinging?

Oklahoman continues to print the irrelevant and fruitless mud slinging?

My father used to say that good news will not keep a newspaper in business. It's a real tragedy that some people will make their decision of how to vote just from the "muddy" articles you print. (Voto, Oklahoman, 10/28/90, p. 14)

The individual who wrote that letter made a solid point that it is a tragedy that voters had to make decisions that were based upon insufficient coverage of the governor's race. Did these three newspapers act in a socially responsible manner with their front-page coverage?

Another question might be: How are people supposed to receive the election coverage they need to make wise voting decisions? A letter to the editor titled "Bias Appalling" made the following point:

As a longtime subscriber to The Oklahoman, I continue to be amazed and appalled at your biased reporting and

editorials. For a newspaper to endorse a certain candidate or party, when fairness and neutrality should be expected, is unthinkable. Not everyone is a Republican, nor does everyone share your opinions of David Walters and Ellis Edwards. I'm disappointed in your newspaper. (Swift, Oklahoman, 11/1/90, p. 16)

Another individual upset over the election coverage by the Oklahoman wrote a letter to the editor titled "Oklahoman Thing We Don't Need". The individual commented:

In regard to the editorial "Things We Don't Need" in last Thursday's issue of The Oklahoman.

I would like to add some things we as the state of Oklahoma don't need. We don't need a newspaper that continually bashes minority groups of all kinds. We don't need a newspaper that expresses its editorial policy on the front-page during gubernatorial runoff elections. We don't need a backward, old-fashioned newspaper that continues to press outdated, ultraconservative views.

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What we do need is a statewide voice that will address issues that are currently important and address them in a manner that is in step with the way Oklahomans really think. We need a voice that will help Oklahoma shed its backward national image.

What we need is a progressive, open-minded thinking, therefore, we don't need The Oklahoman. (Jenkins, Oklahoman, 10/17/90, p. 4)

Some important points need to be made about these commentaries. First, these people appear to be longtime readers of the Oklahoman and not persons who may have read the Oklahoman for the first time. Also, these people must feel very strongly about their convictions or they would not have taken the time to send their opinions to these newspapers. Plus, most of the people mentioned their problems with both the biased news reporting and the biased editorials by the Oklahoman. Last, the research showed that the Oklahoman far surpassed the other two newspapers in overall front-page coverage of the election, front-page coverage of the issues versus the non-issues and front-page coverage of specific issues. However, the Oklahoman also

received the most criticism from its readers about its biased reporting.

The Oklahoman was also heavily criticized for using front-page editorials during the actual election. Tom Bray, an editorial page editor for The Detroit News, had an editorial addressing this issue. His editorial was titled "A Matter of Opinion: On Too Many Papers, Too Many Pages Are Editorial Pages". He observed:

Editors need to confront the fact they are a big part of the problem. They have helped institutionalize much of the politicization of the news.

Few are the papers anymore, for example, at which top political reporters don't double as columnists. Some are more cautious than others, but over time it becomes very clear where they personally stand on the issues.

Editors and reporters love to point out that the opinion pages have relatively low readership. If that's so, why are so many editors running so much opinion on the front-page? One can only conclude that they are trying to drive readership down to the level of the editorial page. They may be succeeding, judging from the recent readership numbers. (Bray, Tulsa World, 10/20/90, p. 15A)

Should the <u>Oklahoman</u> heed this call and start printing fewer front-page editorials? A letter to the editor from the <u>Tulsa Tribune</u> titled "Slanted Coverage" stated:

In light of fair political reporting standards, the <u>Daily Oklahoman's</u> conduct is outrageous and shocking and the paper must not be allowed to get away with what it's doing. Its gubernatorial reporting record is so one-sided and unfair to Walters that one must believe that the paper's owner and editor think they can significantly influence and control who gets into the governor's office by openly misleading political reporting techniques. If this is so and it's allowed to prevail, then heaven help Oklahomans. (Dahl, <u>Tulsa Tribune</u>, 11/2/90, p. 11A)

The next editorial relates to the mudslinging found in negative campaigns; the story was from the <u>Tulsa World</u>.

The commentary was titled "Why Tolerate Mudball

Politicians?" The writer was David Broder, a writer from the Washington Post Writers Group. Broder concluded:

Many newspapers made serious, substantial efforts this year to get campaigns out of the gutter. But as we look toward 1992 and another presidential contest, we are a long, long way from having convinced the candidates and political consultants that they should try to "talk sense to the American people." Muskie can't stomach mudball politics, and the country should not be asked to tolerate it either. (Broder, <u>Tulsa World</u>, 11/7/90, p. 12A)

On a rather comical note, there was an article titled "Colorful 1990 Campaign Season Benefits 'None of the Above.'" The author is Robert Haught of the Washington Bureau and he commented:

ANOTHER WILD and wacky political campaign is about to draw to a close, and I, for one, am really sorry. Candidates and campaign organizations have supplied a full measure of entertainment over the past several months.

My nomination for the oddest campaign of the year is the 10th Congressional District race in Virginia. Rep. Frank Wolf is opposed by political extremist Lyndon H. LaRouche Jr., who is running his campaign from a federal prison in Minnesota. Yes, it's legal. If elected, he would have the distinction of having gone to jail 'before' going to congress. (Haught, Oklahoman, 10/18/90, p. 10)

The following editorial from Frosty Troy, the editor of <u>The Oklahoma Observer</u>, sums up the sentiment of many voters. His editorial also strikes at the very heart and soul of this thesis, which is the notion that a newspaper does have a social responsibility to inform the public about the candidates and the important campaign issues, so that they may make intelligent voting decisions. Troy said the following:

After a primary campaign mired in the squalor of mud slinging and issue-dodging, personalities are evolving and voters are looking more critically at the candidates for governor.

Charles de Gaulle said politics is too important

to be left to politicians. He meant that voters must pay attention, must do their homework, to make sure the real issues -- no matter how unpopular -- are addressed.

Where do the candidates stand? All are for education, law and order, better highways and mom's apple pie. Beneath the simplistic answers on a League of Women Voters TV show, roiling issues are skirted, ignored, ducked or deliberately distorted.

Sift through their campaign literature. Check their press releases. Listen to their oratory. And after all that effort, you've still not reached the heart of a candidate. (Troy, The Oklahoma Observer, 9/10/90, p. 1)

Frosty Troy could have added to his editorial: you can read the front page of Oklahoma's three largest newspapers and you still would not have reached the heart of a candidate.

In conclusion, the research indicated that the Oklahoman had more overall front-page coverage on the governor's race, as reflected in a front-page analysis, than did the Tulsa World or the Tulsa Tribune. research did have some results similar to those of the Moon study (Moon, 1987). Both studies found that these three newspapers had significantly more coverage devoted to surface topics (non-issues) such as negativism, mudslinging, and the horserace aspect versus substantive topics (issues) such as candidates' stands on the issues. But, neither research elaborated on the quality or accuracy of the newspaper coverage. According to the large number of personal responses about this 1990 coverage, some of which were quoted here, it would appear that the quality and accuracy was somewhat suspect. Therefore, and most importantly, the voters of Oklahoma were not provided a sufficient amount of political information (in front-page coverage) about the candidates or the campaign issues from

any of Oklahoma's three largest newspapers. The last vital question would be: Where are voters supposed to get this necessary political information, in order to make that all important voting decision?

Recommendations

Expanding Current Research

The primary recommendation for expanding the current research would be to include additional analysts or coders in categorizing issues versus non-issues coverage to help avoid any misjudgement or any personal bias in these decisions.

Further Research

The ultimate recommendation of this research is that it be continued in the future. This study was similar to a study done in 1987 about the 1986 governor's race (Moon, 1987). It would be nice if a study could be performed in 1995 which looks at the 1994 governor's race.

Other suggestions for further research include examining press and political coverage from a different angle, possibly looking at other races besides the governor's race, perhaps presidential elections and the effects of negative campaigning. Additional ideas might include examining negative political advertisements versus negative political news reporting. However, the most important recommendation is the one to do similar studies; in this way the results could be compared with each other.

Journalists and Journalism Students

Media practicioners and journalism students need to be aware of the ethical standards as they are a part of the media industry. Both groups should be fully aware of their social responsibility to the public in performing duties in mass media.

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ATIV

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