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2009

A Cross-Cultural Content Analysis of the 2008 American Presidential Election

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Recommended Citation

TOWARD A CROSS-CULTURAL CONTENT ANALYSIS
OF THE 2008 AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION
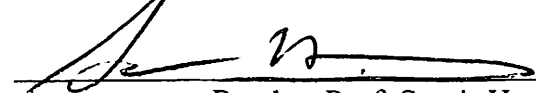

by
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
May 2009
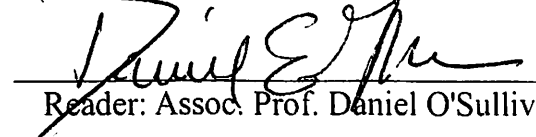
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DEDICATION

To the many wonderful people I met while studying abroad: Whether you know it or not, you all made this thesis possible. I dedicate this thesis to my host parents, Dominique and Chantal Sabatier in Angers, France, as well as my language professor, Florence Gamory, and all the many French people who tolerated my developing accent.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

TOWARD A CROSS-CULTURAL CONTENT ANALYSIS
OF THE 2008 AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION
(Under the direction of Dr. Kathleen Wickham)

Agenda-setting theory, based on the idea that journalism has a strong correlation to audience opinion and evaluation of issue salience, shows the importance of how the media present the news. Naturally, media values vary across cultures, wherein some news outlets serve only to inform and others approach news through partisan positions or evaluative tactics. Especially during a time of media upset in the United States, it is important to examine U.S. media values and those of other cultures. This thesis looks at some of the dominant and documented differences in newspaper reporting in France and the United States, using Patterson's governing and game schema as a basis. In accordance with previous research, French journalism was found to be more evaluative and American journalism to employ a game schema more often, although the results are mainly inconclusive due to the small sample size and large margins of error.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The 2008 American presidential election captured wide media attention both

domestically and internationally for more than a year, culminating when Barack Obama

was declared the victor in November 2008. For Americans, the election set milestones as

the first in which a woman or minority might occupy the seat of either vice-president or

president. Changes in fundraising and technology also allowed candidates to reach a

larger audience. Internationally, curious foreigners tuned in to more American election

news than in previous decades, primarily citing the importance of the United States in

world politics as their driving interest.[1]

The election issues at stake were significant domestically and abroad. Wars begun

by the United States continued in Iraq and Afghanistan, despite widespread criticism

concerning Iraq. Seventeen countries had already withdrawn from Iraq, and several

others were considering withdrawal or troop reductions as the American elections

approached. Conflicts in Israel and Palestine, Darfur, Pakistan, Somalia, Myanmar, and

other nations demanded world attention.

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1   Jill Dougherty, "Poll: U.S. Image improves but still negative overall," CNN, June 13, 2008,
    http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/06/13/us.poll/ (accessed March 9, 2009); and Richard Huff,
    "International news networks pull out all the stops for Election Day showdown," *New York Daily News*,
    October 28, 2008, http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/2008/10/29/2008-10-
    29_international_news_networks_pull_out_all-1.html (accessed March 9, 2009).

U.S. citizens and presidential hopefuls reexamined immigration policy, the economy and the role of the United States in the twenty-first century. Even President George W. Bush's declining approval ratings contributed to the election frenzy, pushing both dominant political parties to focus on change. All these issues sparked international debates on similar issues where United States policy had influenced policies abroad.[2]

With the future of so many internationally reaching decisions relying on the election outcome, world audiences looked to the United States, as the leader of free nations, to choose a president who might stabilize the globe. In some places, non-voting international enthusiasts seemed more or equally engaged in the election.[3]

As a worldwide news event drawing large audiences, the 2008 American presidential election provides a window through which international media can be compared to its American counterpart. Throughout the world, journalism practices and regulations vary greatly from the heavy-handed government involvement of China's press to the extensive freedoms enjoyed by reporters in Iceland, Luxembourg, and Norway.[4] Through multi-national media content analysis, researchers can develop a better understanding of how variations in press coverage influence and reflect cultural values, and also how different countries' media function and mold public opinion.

The purpose of this study is to examine the variance in the framing of election candidates between the France and the United States. France was selected because of its

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2 Christian Science Monitor editors and reporters, "Global elections watch: All eyes on U.S. race," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 2, 2008.
3 Alan Cowell, "U.S. Race Captures World's Eye, and Holds It," *New York Times*, January 26, 2008.
4 Reporters Without Borders for Press Freedom consistently ranks these countries highest for press freedom. Reporters Without Borders for Press Freedom, "Press Freedom Index 2008," http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=29031.

strong alliance with the United States, shared values and similar policies. Both countries

rank within a few degrees of one another on the Reporters without Borders index, tend to

support each other in international conflicts, and rely heavily on one another's

economies.[5] In addition to cultural similarities, France and the United States developed

their journalism at approximately the same time during the eighteenth century.

Today, though perceived as more socialist than the United States, France is one of

the few stable countries that shares as much history and common ground with the United

States. Press laws and regulations differ between the two; however, it is the spirit that

remains the same. Thus, it is relevant to examine what makes these two systems unique

so journalists, political figures and other researchers can better define the roles of

journalism and the future of the profession as cultural boundaries shift and traditional

media models give way to technology and globalization.

Of the notable press variations from country to country, framing is perhaps one of

the most subtle but also most far-reaching.[6] Each media organization and each journalist

consciously and often subconsciously employ frames, which define and emphasize

different aspects of a perceived reality.[7] These frames vary across cultures and

publications, providing a variety of different contexts for stories and creating media that

can differ greatly when presenting information on a common topic. Through the study of

the media's agenda-setting function, it's clear that frames also have a strong potential to

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5 As of the 2008 Press Freedom Index, the United States ranked thirty-sixth and France ranked thirty-
   fifth. Reporters Without Borders for Press Freedom, "Press Freedom Index 2008,"
   http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=29031.
6 Framing theory will be discussed in further depth in the Theoretical Framework section of this paper.
7 Robert Entman. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication*
   43 (1993): 51-8.

influence public opinion, especially in the realm of politics. Thus, in any media-saturated society, these subtle variations in news presentation carry a heavy significance in the community.

In recent years, researchers have been especially interested in the impact of globalization on foreign media's use of American-style framing influences. France, a socialist nation with a tendency to support more left-wing ideals, is often said to have a more ideological and opinion-driven press that favors the government, which subsidizes it.[8] The same school of thought says that the United States has a more government-critical press. But with the increasing pressures on French newspapers to conform to the American "objective" model and for French papers to increase advertising bases, the two journalism styles may be converging. This study will examine several American and French framing techniques as they portrayed political candidates in the 2008 American presidential election with the goal of applying these findings to the body of media globalization research.

First, a literature review will describe the countries' press origins, changing press laws, relationships to government, effects on public opinion and treatment of politics and international news. Also discussed here is the theoretical framework for conducting a cross-national content analysis using framing theory. Chapter three will present the parameters for research. Chapter four will discuss results with a data analysis and detailed descriptions of elements of particular interest. In Chapters five and six, a discussion and conclusion will compare the findings to existing studies and theories about the global

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8   Antoine de Tarlé, "The Press and the State in France," in *Newspapers and Democracy*, ed. Anthony Smith (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1980), 127-48.

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press, drawing this body of research into a coherent unit. Limitations of the study, as well as propositions for future studies will also be found in chapter six.

Statement of Purpose

The following research questions will be examined:

    RQ1: Did French newspapers prefer to frame the election news stories in an evaluative or descriptive manner?

    For RQ1, all election news stories in the sample will be analyzed and categorized giving consideration to each part of a story, but also the overall picture. Evaluative versus descriptive framing will be described in more detail in the methodology section. Stories that research the "why" or show clear journalistic "digging" into campaign motives carry an evaluative frame, whereas stories that describe and report on political happenings are more descriptive. Political analysts have identified the evaluative frame as being part of the political game schema.

    RQ2: Did the American newspapers frame the election news stories in an evaluative or descriptive manner?

    The same coding methods will be used as for RQ2.

    RQ3: Did the French media more frequently employ governing or game schema, or neither of these?

    Similar to RQ1 and RQ2, this research question looks at the dominant story frames, going beyond simple evaluative and descriptive connotations. Stories that further the horse race theme, rely on extensive polling results, or pit candidates against one

another have been described as portraying a game schema. Stories that focus on the original values of political journalism, those of personal ideology, policy exploration, or actual news, show a governing schema. Past studies examining these two schemas illustrate changing journalism values, but also cross-cultural norms.

RQ4: Did the American media more frequently employ governing or game schema, or neither of these?

Articles will be coded similarly as for RQ3.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Media Environment

From its birth, journalism in France has been defined by vastly different means than its American counterpart. The original function of information dissemination in France belonged to the government, which saw itself as a protector of the French people.[9] Starting with Louis XIV and his finance minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert, extreme and effective censorship reigned in France. Pamphlets written by French writers and others circulated, mostly with the help of neighboring nations, although these tracts were often seized, suppressed, and sometimes altered. It was not until censorship deteriorated that the public became saturated with these dissenting opinions and journalism became widespread in France.

Nearing the monarchy's demise, Revolutionary writers crusaded with a caustic style, winning a guarantee to the freedom of speech. Early documents, such as the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, underwent many reforms, and press freedoms changed several times after 1789 with some Revolutionary governments attempting press control. Through 1881, a new regime again restricted publication through censorship. Then in the post-war period, officials retooled the newspaper system

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9 Joseph Klaits, *Printed Propaganda Under Louis XIV: Absolute Monarchy and Public Opinion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976) 50-1.

with state aid aimed to sway the press in favor of the government. Today the remnants of

the French partisan press reflect ideals ingrained with reliance and loyalty toward

political groups and the government.[10]

In the United States, journalism developed similarly out of a rallying call focused

on governmental change. Newspapers had originally been simple publications of general

and religious information. As the *American Revolution* neared, pamphlets became

increasingly opinionated and anti-British, although not near as incendiary as their French

cousins.[11] Unlike the French revolutionaries, the colonists were able to quickly form a

new and stable government, establishing the press as an important fourth player in the

system of checks and balances.

For the French, Article 11 of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*

established in 1789 the freedom to speak, write, and print, with the stipulation that

government could still intervene by creating new laws.[12] The American Bill of Rights put

the freedom of the press in its first article, assuring that no law would abridge the

freedoms of speech.[13] This difference in press freedom approach reflects the atmosphere

in which journalism proliferated and the subtle ideological differences of what each

country saw as the media's role in democracy.

In the United States, few cases have successfully challenged the First

Amendment. The media retains the right to self regulate, except when lawsuits are

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10 Raymond Kuhn, *The Media in France* (London: Routledge, 1995).
11 Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1984).
12 French National Constituent Assembly, *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, article 3, Human and Constitutional Rights Documents, http://www.hrcr.org/docs/frenchdec.html (accessed March 9, 2009).
13 The First United States Congress, The Constitution of the United States, Amendment 1, The Charters of Freedom, http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights.html (accessed March 9, 2009).

brought against it in the cases of libel, privacy, and national security. From time to time First Amendment rights are abridged in cases such as the imprisonment of Judith Miller in 2005 for refusing to testify in a case involving the leaking of a CIA employee's name. But generally, press freedom is held in high esteem by the Supreme Court, the interpreters of the Constitution.

This is quite different from the French press's longstanding game with government powers.[14] While European Union standards have somewhat made an impact on the existing press legislation,[15] French journalists still publish knowing that they can be criminally prosecuted for offense, outrage, criticism of government figures, and the publication of certain exempted subjects.[16] Stories like Watergate and Vietnam would have been impossible for French journalists to cover because of the stories' potential to damage military morale or cause outrage to the chief of state. Cases involving attacks on press freedoms remain rare, but the November 2008 surprise arrest of journalist Vittorio de Filippis over a libel suit reminded the nation that events involving excessive government force against journalists do occur.[17]

In addition to enduring a more risky press environment, French newspapers also receives large subsidies from the government in the form of tax cuts, funding and distribution assistance. These incentives have created a system of strong ties between the

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14 Craig Eisendrath, "Press Freedom in France: Private Ownership and State Controls," in *Press Control Around the World*, ed. Jane Leftwich Curry and Joan R. Dassin (New York: Praeger, 1982), 62-71.

15 French courts have recently applied Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights in several cases, rather than relying on older French laws. Karin Deutsch Karlekar and Eleanor Marchant, ed. *Freedom of the press 2007: a global study of media independence* (New York: Freedom House, 2008), 137-138.

16 Eisendrath.

17 John Lichfield, "Outcry over arrest of French Journalist," *The Independent*, December 1, 2008.

press and the government, which funds it.[18] Kuhn refers to these initiatives as "a mixture of altruism and self-interest" on the part of the government.[19]

In the United States, however, outside players with motives sometimes contrary to journalists' hold great stakes in press operations. Newspapers in the United States rely on advertising revenue and reader support to remain viable. Increasingly, commercial interests pose a threat to journalistic integrity as many media conglomerates are also owned by parent companies with their own political and business interests to protect.[20] As Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee note in their book *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*, "Such ties are not easily evaded in *any* democracy."[21] The ties the researchers describe include political and business connections that impede upon the media's ability to transmit neutral information, whether these impediments take the form of actual press room regulations or unacknowledged but active restraints on content.

Based on existing press law and journalistic heritage in France and the United States, researchers often hypothesize that the French press is more likely to take a strong editorial perspective in a news story and to be less critical of government. At the same time, researchers predict that French newspapers would include more official sources and less community-type journalism. Research on this topic is inconclusive, but several studies have illustrated differences on a topical level. Benson and Hallin's 2007 study

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18 de Tarlé.
19 Kuhn.
20 Karlekar and Marchant, 315-318.
21 Bernard Berelson, Paul Lazarsfeld, and William McPhee, "Political Processes: The Role of the Mass Media," in *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954): 234-52.

comparing how reporting styles changed over thirty-two years, found the French prestige

press to be more critical of government. French newspapers, as they predicted, were more

politically active and more likely to take on a partisan tone or opinionated style than the

neutral tone-favoring U.S. newspapers.[22]

Brossard, Shannahan, and McComas in their cross-cultural study of global

warming coverage, found the French press to be more restrictive in the sources used,

which goes against Benson and Hallin's finding that French newspapers included a wider

range of viewpoints. This divide is most likely reflective of subject matter, since the

Brossard, Shannahan, and McComas study examined only global warming stories, a topic

on which the French media made a conscious decision to limit coverage to

knowledgeable authorities. In the case of global warming, this illustrates the American

media construct of objectivity in its need to present an equal field of viewpoints even

when a small minority of dissent has little credibility.[23] In the political realm, however,

public opinions of average people play an important role in forming democracy, and these

opinions are often reflected in media coverage. Benson and Hallin found the French

newspapers included a wider range of political viewpoints, more interpretative stories,

and more interpretations of political motives. *The New York Times*, they said, indexed its

coverage more closely to political elites than the French newspapers.[24]

Benson and Hallin also highlighted a tendency of French journalists to construct a

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22 Rodney Benson and Daniel Hallin, "How States, Markets and Globalization Shape the News: The French and US National Press, 1965-97," *European Journal of Communication* (2007): 27-48.
23 Dominique Brossard, James Shannahan, and Katherine McComas, "Are Issue-Cycles Culturally Constructed? A Comparison of French and American Coverage of Global Climate Change," *Mass Communication & Society* 7 (2007): 359-77.
24 Benson and Hallin.

story to build to a conclusion, often one including a sharp judgment. American journalists are more likely to stick with the inverted pyramid model, which delivers news, building from the most important elements to the least important. Both press engines were found to have the same quantity of news and fact-based reporting, only presented in a different manner.[25] These conclusions about news value can be seen as reflective of the differing media origins.

Even before the rise of the Internet and the increasing political pressures for a centralized European power, media theorists have conjectured that global media, much like culture, are moving toward an American model. France presents an anomaly in its strong national sentiment to retain a cultural identity and reject American influence.[26] Whether culture is retained through media practice is hard to measure, although the differences are evident. Benson and Saguy argue "There is some evidence for greater cross-national divergence in issue frames over time, as a U.S. global visibility and influence have increased."[27] Theorists in support of the globalization theory say American journalism is inspiring French journalists, but also having an impact as France's newspapers become more commercial like their American counterparts.[28] But in 2004 Benson and Hallin found that between 1965 and 1997, American newspapers became more interpretative and opinionated and the French press less so.[29] This leaves the question on whether press models are converging open as well.[30]

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25 Benson and Hallin.
26 Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
27 Benson and Saguy.
28 Benson and Hallin.
29 Benson and Hallin.
30 Kuisel.

These differences, real or perceived, between the American and French newspaper styles help explain societal variations, but when viewed through mass media theories, they also work to explain the importance of mass media itself. The press does not operate as a homogenized source of infinite information. It must also serve as a gatekeeper in selecting the important issues to highlight. It puts information into a context and brings life to otherwise colorless stories. In political terms,

> It is the role of narrowing down, of focusing, of defining what elections mean, and thus determining on what few dispositions, out of numerous possibilities, the political outcome of the election and the political history of the era will center.[31]

The media inherently serve this function of public agenda-setters especially by their description of their role as "independent referees who owe it to the public to scrutinize, judge, and report."[32]

Agenda-setting, Priming, and Framing

Agenda-setting theory, defined by McCombs and Shaw in their 1972 paper, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media" revolves around the idea that media have the ability to set the public agenda in their selection of coverage. By pairing public opinion surveys and content analyses of newspaper coverage, the researchers have found a strong correlation between what the public believed to be the dominant issues in a campaign and which issues the media had most prominently portrayed:

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31 Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee.
32 Shanto Iyengar, "Overview of Media-Based Political Campaigns," in *Do the Media Govern? Politicians, Voters, and Reporters in America*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997): 143-8.

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Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position. [33]

McCombs and Shaw followed up their 1972 study with one in 1993 that looked at three decades of agenda-setting research, concluding that it is most evident in political settings, such as elections in which audience exposure to media is the most influential pressure on voter support.[34]

An offshoot to agenda-setting looks at political priming or how the media set the rubric by which the public judge political figures. In Iyengar and Simon's 1993 study, the researchers found that the media tended to promote an evaluation of President George Bush based on his foreign policy. If the focus had been on his economic policy, they postulate that his approval ratings would have been much lower.[35] This shows the tendency of politics to be "reproduced imperfectly by individual news media," as McCombs and Shaw said.[36]

Many other studies have looked into the extent of the second-level agenda-setting effect, noting that the media seems to be able to influence not only what the public pays attention to, but also how they feel about these issues. For example, in several studies by Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder, researchers controlled the television news consumption of test subjects to that which the researchers proscribed. The content was specially selected

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33 Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* (1972): 176-86.

34 Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, "The evolution of agenda setting research: Twenty-five years in the marketplace of ideas," *Journal of Communications* 43 (1993): 58-67.

35 Iyengar and Adam Simon, "News Coverage of the Gulf Crisis and Public Opinion," *Do the Media Govern? Politicians, Voters, and Reporters in America*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997): 148-57.

36 McCombs and Shaw, 1972.

to give salience to certain issues. When questioned about the videotape's material, respondents tended to align their own opinions on issues more closely to those presented in the video than those of the general public.[37]

Typically, agenda-setting is regarded in a neutral light. Journalists, whether driven by a desire to get the best story possible or deliver it to audiences in the most accessible manner, end up remolding information from sources and tweaking how their audiences perceive reality. In some cases though, whether subconsciously or overtly, journalists end up inserting themselves and their views into stories more than they intend. Or the reverse can happen, creating stories that weigh heavily against a journalist's opinions in the hopes that this counterbalances personal bias. "That the media are primarily transmitting agents, from the parties to the voters, does not mean that they are neutral or inert in such selection (of topics/stories)," remarked Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, noting again that newspapers are owned and operated by people with contending interests in business[38]

It is generally accepted that the media hold a strong influence over public opinion, but one prominent aspect of agenda-setting theory analyzes stories based on the frame used to convey information. A frame, defined by Robert Entman, most notably in his "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," is a way in which a story is told that defines problems, diagnoses causes, makes moral judgments, and suggests

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37 Iyengar and Simon, "News Coverage of the Gulf Crisis and Public Opinion," and "Framing Responsibility for Political Issues: The Case of Poverty," in *Do the Media Govern? Politicians, Voters, and Reporters in America*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997); Iyengar and Donald Kinder, *News that matters: Television and American opinion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); and Iyengar, Mark Peters, and Kinder, "Experimental demonstrations of the 'not-so-minimal' consequences of television news programs," *American Political Science Review* 76 (1982): 848-58.
38 Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee.

15

remedies.[39] For any given story, numerous frames can be employed, and several may be at work. In a typical crime story, for example, the reporter could frame the event using anecdotes from the mourning victim's family, he could give only a basic news account with information from police, or he could talk about the crime as one part of an overarching trend. Any of these might be equally acceptable to an editor, and all can be reported in an unbiased manner. But each frame invokes in the audience a different feeling about the event.

Kahneman and Tversky illustrated framing in their 1984 paper with an example of misleading statistics. They asked test subjects a question in which a certain percentage of people would live or die, phrasing the odds in different ways. Subjects generally failed to recognize that two options were the same, showing the effectiveness of a simple frame to sway support.[40] One journalism-based example is Iyengar's poverty study in which he found that readers applied causality based on dominant news frames. When the media framed poverty as a national trend or a public policy issue, study participants more often blamed poverty on the government. When the frame was changed to one of personal struggle, study participants found the impoverished individuals at fault.[41]

Some of the most dominant news frames deal with the ways in which the media portray politics. Entman noted that politicians and journalists often compete to frame news in their preferred perspective.[42] The Project for Excellence in Journalism conducted

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39 Entman, 1993.
40 Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, "Choice, values, and frames," *American Psychologist* 39 (1984): 341-50.
41 Iyengar, "Framing Responsibility for Political Issues: The Case of Poverty," 1997.
42 Entman, "How the media affect what people think: An information processing approach," *The Journal of Politics* 51 (1989): 347-70.

a 1998 study, concluding that only 16 percent of front page stories carried a straight news form, an indication that the U.S. media is becoming increasingly interpretative. Conflict frames accounted for 30 percent of front page stories, explanatory frames that look at how things work were found in only 18 percent of the sample, and 8 percent of front page stories showed policy framing. Put into context of agenda-setting, these dominant frames tended to be triggered by government statements or a newsroom desire to keep ahead of the news.[43]

When examined through the lens of political journalism, the influence and power held by the media becomes almost penetrative of public opinion. As Thomas Patterson noted in *Out of Order*, presidential elections are based, more than ever before, on issues that the public does not even identify as important. He argues that while watchdog journalism is important and necessary for a healthy democracy, when applied to politics, it creates a cynical campaigning environment unlike that in any other country. Rather than focusing on issues and values, the political reporters look for gaffes and missteps on which they craft an image of conflict-based political games.

> In the game schema, a change in a candidate's position, however slight, is a calculated attempt to manipulate the electorate. In a different schema – that of governing – flexibility and compromise are a vital part of the political process. [44]

In essence, this style of journalism is what Republican running mates Sen. John McCain

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43 Project for Excellence in Journalism, "Framing the News: The Triggers, Frames, and Messages in Newspaper Coverage," www.journalism.org (1998).
44 Thomas Patterson, *Out of Order: An incisive and boldly original critique of the news media's domination of America's political process* (New York: Vintage, 1994): 87-8.

and Gov. Sarah Palin attacked in the 2008 election, calling it "gotcha" journalism.[45]

Patterson argues that the role of the watchdog and the information provider work in

conflict in the political realm, where the media is not accountable for its effects on the

public, as a political party is through elections.[46]

While Europe is still resolving the extent to which their news process should

mirror the American model, Claes de Vreese suggests in *Framing Europe: Television*

news and European Integration, that some medium is necessary. Acknowledging the

scarcity of cross-cultural frame studies, de Vreese discusses the important differences

between sacerdotal and pragmatic journalism approaches, especially how researchers

have found these frames responsible for lapses in journalistic judgment.[47] Sacerdotal

style assumes that all political happenings are news, but journalists act cautiously and

reactively toward politicians. Conversely, the pragmatic approach, similar to what

Patterson calls the political game scheme, weighs political stories against traditional news

values, such as newsworthiness, conflict or novelty.[48]

In Germany and Spain, studies have pointed to sacerdotalism as responsible for

creating too much laissez-faire political reporting, leaving politicians nearly

unaccountable. However, the opposite is true for the American model of "conspicuously

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45 Howard Kurtz, "McCain Accuses Press of 'Gotcha Journalism,'" *The Washington Post*, September 29, 2008, http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/09/29/mccain_accuses_press_of_gotcha.html (accessed March 9, 2009).
46 Patterson.
47 Claes de Vreese, *Framing Europe: Television News and European Integration*, (Netherlands: Het Spinhuis, 2003).
48 Steve Barkin, Jay G. Blumler, Michael Gurevitch, Holli A. Semetko, David H. Weaver, and Cleveland Wilhoit, *The Formation of Campaign Agendas: A comparative Analysis of Party and Media Roles in Recent American and British Elections* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991).

absent" sacerdotalism,[49] which de Vreese describes through NBC's 1983 political coverage, which was found to focus primarily on political conflicts and drama. [50]

It's clear that the field of cross-cultural content analysis, especially in politics, still has many areas to be explored. American and European journalism models differ greatly, but more research is necessary to better understand the two changing worlds. This study will use Patterson's political journalism governing and game schema test to better define the differences and similarities of French and American political journalism. In answering the research questions, techniques developed by Patterson to detect tone and schema will be employed.[51]

49 Jay G. Blumler and Michael Gurevitch, "'Americanization' Reconsidered: U.K.-U.S. Campaign Communication Comparisons Across Time," in *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

50 de Vreese.

51 Patterson.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Research Overview

This content analysis explores Patterson's governing and gaming schemas in conjunction with other standard political reporting techniques to evaluate each country's media. According to Patterson, media models that rely on governing schema, or frames that explore policy or ideology with a more descriptive approach, lie closer to the true purpose of media. Gaming schema, found in stories that evaluate the effectiveness of opponents in a race, convey a message contrary to the media's goals.[52] Hallin and Benson based their thirty-two year study of French and American prestige press on Patterson's definitions, finding the French and the United States media distinctly different through the frames they employed to illustrate politics.[53]

This study aims to answer two main questions, divided into four specific research questions. Those main questions are as follows: (1) Does French or American political newspaper reporting employ one of three non-basic reporting political journalism frames (political game, ideology or policy) more often? (2) Are French or American newspapers more likely to be evaluative or descriptive in their political coverage? This section defines the research parameters including the sample, units of study, coding method, and

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52 Patterson.
53 Hallin and Benson.

study reliability.

Content Analysis

As a means of quantitative research, this study employs content analysis to evaluate gaming and governing schema. Content analysis, as defined by Kerlinger, "is a method of studying and analyzing communications in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner to measure variables."[54] Using a content analysis allows the researchers to analyze media coverage in an empirical, rather than conjectural manner, drawing conclusions from data instead of assumptions. It's important here to note that while this study is a content analysis, some non-empirical analysis of data may be necessary and is generally acceptable as a supplement to hard data.[55] No content analysis can provide an exhaustive portrait of press coverage without some context and interpretation on behalf of the coders.

Following this approach, a content analysis is performed much like a science experiment adhering to some general steps: (1) defining the research question or hypothesis, (2) defining a population, (3) selecting the sample, (4) selecting the units of research, (5) developing a measurement system, (6) measuring reliability with a pilot study, (7) data collection, and (8) data analysis.

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54 Fred N. Kerlinger, *Foundations of Behavorial Research* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973).
55 Ole R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Reading, MA: Adison-Wesley, 1969).

period of campaigning. By September 2008, both newspapers and political parties had ample exposure to the candidates to form framing strategies, whether consciously or not, which would be used up to election night. Over this period, several important developments occurred, including the presidential and vice-presidential debates, startling news and candidate reactions to the state of the economy, and some of the most focused campaigning in American history.

Articles from all sources were identified through the Lexis®-Nexis® databases. From a population of articles that mentioned either candidate's name at least four times, articles marked as opinion or editorial were removed. Remaining in the population were all news stories, news analyses, some long analytical news pieces, and the occasional outlier. For *The New York Times*, The Week in Review was excluded in the sample, as were special regional articles (Connecticut or New Jersey edition stories). This left a population of 1,424 articles made up of 641 from *The New York Times*, 612 from *The Washington Post*, 70 from *Le Monde,* and 101 from *Le Figaro*. Of these, 50 were selected at random from each newspaper as a representative sample to be used in the study.[56] When "outlier" type articles, such as *The New York Times'* "Inside the Times," a summary of articles inside the paper, were chosen by the generator, the next article was substituted. Other outliers included corrections and info-box type data recognized by Lexis®-Nexis® as articles. The total sample population included 200 articles.

56 Mads Haar, "Random Sequence Generator," Random.org, True Random Number Service, http://www.random.org/sequences/ (accessed March 9, 2009).

Coding Procedure

University students fluent in English and studying French at a graduate level were trained on a coding manual and instructed on how to code articles from American and French sources. The coding manual and other coding materials appear in the Appendices. Through coding several articles together and addressing any questions, coders appeared to be knowledgeable of the task and aware of the definitions in use. For the pilot study, three coders analyzed French articles and six analyzed English articles. In the actual study, the number of articles coded varied between coders, but each article in the sample was analyzed by two coders.

A pilot study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the coding manual and coding definitions by determining the inter-coder agreement factor. In the pilot study, twenty articles were analyzed by the six coders as though for the study. This represented approximately ten percent of the articles to be examined. The pilot study articles were chosen from the discarded population to ensure the integrity of the actual study population. Using Scott's Pi method, the inter-coder reliability factor of 74.4 percent was calculated, which is adequate for a preliminary or exploratory study, although not ideal.

Table 1 – Inter-coder Reliability – Scott's Pi

Inter-coder Reliability Scott's Pi	Pilot 1	Pilot 2
Agree	120	126
Disagree	48	42
Reliability	74.4	80.8

$$\text{Sample calculation (Pilot 1):}$$
$$\frac{120/168 - .083^2 + .5^2 + .25^2 + .167^2}{1 - (.083^2 + .5^2 + .25^2 + .167^2)}$$

In reviewing inter-coder reliability, it was found that original directions allowed for too much variance among coders. Definitions were updated and narrowed to ensure that they still addressed research questions but allowed for less variability. Coders met and discussed their evaluations of the articles. With improved definitions and an updated coding manual, inter-coder reliability increased to 80.8 percent.

Coding definitions

The methodology for all but the first two research questions is generally original, although based on an understanding of previous research. Benson and Hallin's method of analyzing journalistic schema was employed. Modified from Patterson's concept of the political game schema versus the governing schema, Benson and Hallin categorized articles into political game, policy and ideology stories.[57]

Political game looks at the behind-the-scenes strategies of politicians. Policy looks at which policies achieve certain goals, and ideology looks at values or themes that go beyond policy. Articles that did not employ any dominant schema were marked as straight news.

For this study, coders were instructed to place each of three article parts into one of these schemas. First, coders analyzed an article's headline, then the first five sentences, and finally the article as a whole. Sub-headlines were considered part of the headline. Secondly, coders assigned a broad "evaluative" or "descriptive" label to each story, based on whether the story looked primarily at why (evaluative) or what (descriptive). For example, a "what" story would simply explain a new policy or state that an event had

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57 Benson and Hallin.

occurred; a "why" story would look into the causes or possible outcomes of the policy or

occurrence.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

News content of the crucial sixty-day period leading up to the 2008 American

Presidential election was analyzed from both two French and two American prestige

press outlets, or newspapers of record. Coders analyzed each of 200 articles looking for

gaming and governing schema as they appeared through article frames and overall article

tone. Each article's headline, lede or first five sentences, and body were evaluated before

assigning an overall assessment for the article. This section will discuss findings and data

analysis. Each research question will be presented with specific related data.

Data analysis

Data was analyzed by cross-calculation tables taking a number of variables into

account. Because the study is shallow in scope and only looks at quantity and type, other

data analysis was not deemed necessary. Data presented by discrete number represents

the average of two coders' decisions. Occasionally coders disagreed, leading to some

stories being coded as half political game and half ideology, for example. Thus, when

numerically represented as half an article (.5), it is important to note that for each

newspaper examined results were based on a set of 100 coding decisions reduced to 50 to

represent individual articles. Additionally, statistics in the data set represent the

percentage of each category, not the total population. For instance, looking at Table 3, in *The New York Times*, 52.7 percent of evaluative stories showed a political game frame. The tables that follow this chapter include the tabulated results for all data discussed in the chapter.

Inter-coder reliability

As in the pilot study, inter-coder reliability was calculated for the study itself based on each variable. For each newspaper set, the inter-coder reliability for both tone and frame was determined using Holsti's Coefficient of Reliability. Holsti's formula was chosen because, although several coders collaborated on the data for the final study, only two full coded sets of each sample were created. Thus, the data represents the work of two coders, and Holsti's Coefficient is sufficient. Scott's Pi is more useful in studies with more than two coders. Inter-reliability results for the study can be found in Table 2.

Coverage over time

There appears to be no significant correlation between the type of article frame or tone employed and the article's proximity to the election date. Data sets for specific newspapers suggest that frames may follow short date-related trends, but judging by the size of the sample and the relatively low correlation, it's impossible to discern whether these small trends represent gaps in the sample or actual reporting trends surrounding a news event. One such trend would be the increase in policy stories toward the end of the election season in *The New York Times*. While coverage showed only 4.5 policy stories from September 5, 2008, to October 31, 2008, November's coverage included three

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policy frame stories. Additionally, 1.5 of the 4.5 early policy stories occurred after

October 28, 2008.

Table 2 – Inter-coder Reliability – Holsti's Coefficient

Inter-coder Reliability Holsti's Coefficient	
Tone	
Le Monde	.88
Le Figaro	.84
The Washington Post	.88
The New York Times	.84
Frame	
Le Monde	.80
Le Figaro	.82
The Washington Post	.86
The New York Times	.82

Holsti's Coefficient of Reliability

$$\frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

M = coding decisions agreed on
N_1= decisions by Coder 1, N_2= Coder 2

Tone by Nation

French newspapers showed a considerable dominance in the number of stories

that portrayed an evaluative tone. For both *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde*, coders identified

nearly equal numbers of evaluative and descriptive stories, whereas American

newspapers carried 68 percent descriptive stories, on average. When grouped by frame

and by tone, American newspapers displayed an overall greater percentage of descriptive

stories in all frame categories. For the French, all categories showed more evaluative

stories, except the news or other frame category, which was overwhelming descriptive at

83.3 percent.

Of the American evaluative stories, the most, 62.5 percent, were political game stories, which corresponds to the overall larger percentage of American political game stories. French newspapers had similar numbers of both political game and ideology stories with an evaluative tone, 59.7 percent and 65 percent, respectively.

Similarly, American descriptive stories tended to favor a political game frame (41.9 percent), whereas French descriptive stories were generally news (40.2 percent). Interestingly, both the French and American newspapers published a similar percentage of descriptive news stories, with 40.2 percent and 34.6 percent, respectively.

Frame by Nation

Of the two American newspapers, the political game frame was the most prevalent in articles with 48.5 percent of articles showing key attributes. French newspapers seem much less focused on the political game frame (36 percent) with more emphasis on ideology stories (30 percent.) Both newspaper groups showed lagging numbers of policy stories with only 12 percent of total American stories and 9.5 percent of total French stories showing this frame. For the American newspapers, ideology stories were the second most neglected with 13 percent of the population, whereas French newspapers embraced this story style with 30 percent of their stories.

When grouped by frame and tone, news stories are the most descriptive for both countries, with 83.7 percent of French news stories and 90.4 percent of American news stories identified as descriptive. Other numbers in this area are quite close, except for the

reversal in the distribution of game stories. For the French, 59.7 percent of game stories were evaluative, whereas the Americans published a similar percent, 58.8, of descriptive game stories.

The distribution of news, including stories that did not fit into one of the political frame categories, was nearly even between French and American newspapers, with the number of news stories nearly equally proportioned between evaluative and descriptive tones. Of all the frames, policy appears to be the most neglected, but it is also the most specific frame category. The political game frame was defined as encompassing several smaller frames, while policy-framed stories have one general purpose.

Comments on Individual Newspaper Results

Among national newspapers, the numbers of evaluative and descriptive stories appears relatively even. With the American newspapers, while the numbers do not always match perfectly, the ranking of each type of story, even when broken down by tone, matches for both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. The French newspapers show more variance in their coverage. *Le Figaro* has far more evaluative political game stories with 66.7 percent, where *Le Monde* shows a greater trend toward evaluative ideology stories (45.8 percent), followed close by evaluative political game stories (31.25 percent). Excepting news stories, *Le Figaro* is more evaluative overall (49 percent) than *Le Monde* (41 percent).

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Summary

Although a small sample size coupled with a moderate inter-coder reliability says that results would generally be inconclusive, researchers were still able to measure important trends in the data. French newspapers were found to be more evaluative in their coverage, but also less focused on the political game frame. It appears that general news content is very similar between the two countries with France being more evaluative in non-news type stories and more favoring of these types of stories overall. Among national groupings, newspapers tend to be closely related in the tone and frame of stories, although France shows a greater divide.

Table 3 - Breakdown of Frames by Tone - American

The New York Times	*n*/percent	Evaluative *n*/percent	Descriptive *n*/percent
Total	50	18 / 36%	32 / 64%
Political Game	21.5 / 43%	9.5 / 52.7%	12 / 37.5%
Ideology	9 / 18%	5 / 28%	4 / 12.5%
Policy	7.5 / 15%	1.5 / 8.3%	6 / 18.75%
Straight News	12 / 24%	2 / 11%	10 / 31.25%
The Washington Post			
Total	50	14 / 28%	36 / 72%
Political Game	27 / 54%	10.5 / 75%	16.5 / 45.8%
Ideology	4.5 / 9%	3 / 21.4%	1.5 / 4.17%
Policy	4.5 / 9%	0 / 0%	4.5 / 12.5%
Straight News	14 / 28%	.5 / 3.57%	13.5 / 37.5%

Table 4 - Breakdown of Frames by Tone - French

Le Figaro	n/percent	Evaluative n/percent	Descriptive n/percent
Total	50	25 / 50%	25 / 50%
Political Game	21 / 42%	14 / 56%	7 / 28%
Ideology	14 / 28%	8.5 / 34%	5.5 / 22%
Policy	4.5 / 9%	2 / 8%	2.5 / 10%
Straight News	10.5 / 21%	.5 / 2%	10 / 40%
Le Monde			
Total	50	24 / 48%	26 / 52%
Political Game	15 / 30%	7.5 / 31.25%	7.5 / 28.8%
Ideology	16 / 32%	11 / 45.8%	5 / 19.2%
Policy	5 / 10%	2 / 8.3%	3 / 11.5%
Straight News	14 / 28%	3.5 / 14.6%	10.5 / 40.4%

Table 5 - Breakdown of Frames by Tone - All

American	n/percent	Evaluative n/percent	Descriptive n/percent
Total	100	32 /32%	68 / 68%
Political Game	48.5 / 49%	20 / 62.5%	28.5 / 41.9%
Ideology	13.5 / 13%	8 / 25%	5.5 / 8.1%
Policy	12 / 12%	1.5 / 4.7%	10.5 / 15.4%
Straight News	26 / 26%	2.5 / 7.8 %	23.5 / 34.6%
French			
Total	100	49 /49%	51 / 51%
Political Game	36 / 36%	21.5 / 43.9%	14.5 / 28.4%
Ideology	30 / 30%	19.5 / 39.8%	10.5 / 20.6%
Policy	9.5 / 9.5%	4 / 8.16%	5.5 / 10.8%
Straight News	24.5 / 24.5%	4 / 8.16 %	20.5 / 40.2%

Table 6 - Breakdown of Tone by Frame - American

The New York Times	Game n/percent	Ideology n/percent	Policy n/percent	News n/percent
Total	21.5	9	7.5	12
Evaluative	9.5 / 44.2%	5 / 55.5%	1.5 / 20%	2 / 16.7%
Descriptive	12 / 55.8%	4 / 44.4%	6 / 80%	10 / 83.3%
The Washington Post				
Total	27	4.5	4.5	14
Evaluative	10.5 / 38.9%	3 / 66.7%	0 / 0%	.5 / 3.6%
Descriptive	16.5 / 61.1%	1.5 / 33.3%	4.5 / 100%	13.5 / 96.4%

Table 7 - Breakdown of Tone by Frame - French

Le Figaro	Game n/percent	Ideology n/percent	Policy n/percent	News n/percent
Total	21	14	4.5	10.5
Evaluative	14 / 66.7%	8.5 / 60.7%	2 / 44.4%	.5 / 4.8%
Descriptive	7 / 33.3%	5.5 / 39.3%	2.5 / 55.5%	10 / 95.2%
Le Monde				
Total	15	16	5	14
Evaluative	7.5 / 50%	11 / 69%	2 / 40%	3.5 / 25%
Descriptive	7.5 / 50%	5 / 31%	3 / 60%	10.5 / 75%

Table 8 - Breakdown of Tone by Frame - All

American	Game n/percent	Ideology n/percent	Policy n/percent	News n/percent
Total	48.5	13.5	12	26
Evaluative	20 / 41.2%	8 / 59.3%	1.5 / 12.5%	2.5 / 9.6%
Descriptive	28.5 / 58.8%	5.5 / 40.7%	10.5 / 87.5%	23.5 / 90.4%
French				
Total	36	30	9.5	24.5
Evaluative	21.5 / 59.7%	19.5/ 65%	4 / 42.1%	4 / 16.3%
Descriptive	14.5 / 40.3%	10.5 / 35%	5.5 / 57.9%	20.5 / 83.7%

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The results of the study tend to support previous research in that American reporting styles follow a more sacerdotal approach and French newspapers are more evaluative. An evaluation of the four research questions stated in the Introduction follows.

Tone

RQ1: Did the French newspapers frame the election news stories in an evaluative or descriptive manner?

RQ2: Did the American newspapers frame the election news stories in an evaluative or descriptive manner?

Previous researchers looking at journalistic tone have hypothesized that French newspapers, founded on a strong partisan press system, are more likely to be evaluative in their coverage. This study shows that French papers tend to be equal in their evaluative and descriptive tone, although significantly more evaluative than American newspapers. The two French newspapers used an evaluative tone in 50 percent of stories. Individually, *Le Monde* used an evaluative tone in 48 percent of stories and *Le Figaro* in 50 percent of stories.

In Benson and Hallin's study, they found that 7.4 percent of French paragraphs during the 1960s and 5.9 percent of paragraphs in the 1990s showed an evaluative or normative voice. These percentages were higher than their American counterparts.[58] Although Benson and Hallin looked at individual paragraphs rather than story tone as a whole, their research still corresponds with this study, both finding French journalism more evaluative.

Governing and Game Schema

When policy and ideology stories are combined to create what Patterson describes as his governing schema,[59] these stories accounted for 32.5 percent of overall coverage, and the game schema accounted for 42.3 percent of stories. Evaluated by both tone and frame, an evaluative tone with a game frame is the ultimate example of the opinion-driven story, the descriptive toned governing story being the opposite example. Combining the two countries data, 20.74 percent of game stories are evaluative and 16 percent are governing frame descriptive stories.

RQ3: Did the French media more frequently employ Patterson's governing or game schemes, or none of these?

For the two French newspapers, governing schema represented 39.5 percent of stories, and political game represented 36 percent. These percentages are very close, similar to the finding that tone was spread nearly equally among stories. When tone and frame are combined, 21.5 percent of stories show an evaluative game schema, and 16 percent show

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58 Benson and Hallin.
59 Patterson.

a descriptive governing schema. These results, presented in Table 9 are very close to the overall ratio within the population.

Table 9 - Governing vs. Game Schema - French

French	n/percent	Evaluative n/percent	Descriptive n/percent
Game	36 / 36%	21.5 / 59.7%	14.5 / 40.3%
Governing	39.5 / 39.5%	23.5 / 59.5	16 / 40.5%
Other (news)	24.5 / 24.5%	4 / 16.5 %	20.5 / 83.7%

Table10 - Governing vs. Game Schema – American

American	n/percent	Evaluative n/percent	Descriptive n/percent
Total	100		
Game	48.5 / 48.5%	20 / 41.2%	28.5 / 58.8%
Governing	25.5 / 25.5%	9.5 / 37.3%	16 / 62.7%
Other (news)	26 / 26%	2.5 / 9.6 %	23.5 / 90.4%

RQ4: Did the American media more frequently employ Patterson's governing or game schemes, or none of these?

Critiques of American journalism support the hypothesis that the governing frame would be far less prevalent in American political coverage due to commercial strains and American journalism traditions. This study supports that theory. American stories were coded as political game schema (49 percent) far more than as governing (25.5 percent). A combination of a game frame with an evaluative tone accounted for 41.2 percent of American stories. The descriptive tone with a governing frame accounted for 62.7 percent of stories. American journalism represented by the sample is slightly more favorable to Patterson's game schema, although nearly identical to the French percentages. Table 10

includes a more comprehensive look at the American schema results.

While researchers are curious to know whether American journalism values have affected French reporting, it is impossible to make guesses from only the study's data. However, when coupled with Benson and Hallin's 2007 study, the results seem to support, if meagerly, the hypothesis that American journalism is becoming more interpretative, evaluative, and opinionated, and French journalism less so.[60] Patterson's game and governing schema produced very inconclusive results, contrary to that which Benson and Hallin found. Small deviations within this sample had the capacity to produce large margins of error in the results. When analyzed through the lens of globalization and Americanization theory, an American influence may be at work behind the changes in the French partisan press.

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60 Benson and Hallin.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This study sought to test Patterson's game and governing schema[61] as they applied to the state of French and American journalism and globalization. In the field of agenda-setting research, it has been shown that tone, frames, and media agenda have a strong influence on public opinion and issue salience. Through content analysis, the election coverage of the 2008 American presidential election was analyzed. The study concluded that French journalism is more evaluative and tends to prefer governing frames, while American journalism tends to focus more heavily on the political game model. However, due to the large margin of possible error in this study, the results are mainly inclusive and should be regarded as exploratory research.

Study Limitations

As stated before, the shallow scope and small sample size used in this study allow for adequate data analysis and the drawing of conclusions, but they also severely limit the validity of the results. Coding even one story erroneously in such a small sample could have caused changes in percentage values as high as 11 percent in the case of some of the tone vs. frame calculations. Aside from this limitation, several other factors contribute to

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61 Patterson.

the study's inconclusive nature.

The literature review portion of this study discussed Brossard, Shannahan, and McComas' study which examined the indexing effects in French coverage of global warming. [62] Like that study, this one attempted to look only at political coverage leading up to the 2008 American presidential election. Conclusions are limited to election politics, but for the French sample, also limited to foreign politics. It's quite possible that a study comparing French coverage of their own elections to American election coverage would prove quite different and more definitive concerning French and American journalism standards. The same would hold true for a study comparing general political coverage, rather than election coverage.

Additionally, the study does not represent journalism or even print media as a whole. Four newspapers from two countries were chosen as representations, but in general, this is acceptable as it shows the dominant newspapers with the highest circulations.

Other factors that could have affected data include irregularities in the Lexis®-Nexis® system. While it was easy to select appropriate articles from American news sources, Le Figaro's population still contained many repeat articles, inappropriately indexed articles, articles whose headlines had been displaced, and articles in which the headline was the only text available. These outliers complicate sample selection in that they increase and misrepresent the overall population, causing final samples to be smaller than anticipated.

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62 Brossard, Shannahan, and McComas.

Suggestions for future research

Few true cross-cultural media studies exist, despite the growing need to examine media foundations in the digital age. While this study represents only a small fraction of the election coverage from fall 2008, its results would be greatly enhanced by a larger study with more variables and tighter definitions. In this study, data regarding the frame employed in headlines, ledes, and lower portions of an article, had to be discarded in the pilot study to ensure a reasonable reliability of results. A future study could reexamine this issue and determine how those article parts vary in their application of governing and gaming schema.

Many studies have quantified the bias or gaming schema surrounding election stories, but few look at politics as a whole over several years time. Expanding the population boundaries to include a year's worth of political stories would make an interesting comparison.

Finally, from an agenda-setting standpoint, this study would be greatly improved if combined with survey results from France and the United States concerning public opinion and the 2008 election.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Coding definitions

Frame

The stories used in this study may have many frames at work at once. By carefully examining the headline, lede sentence or paragraph, and story body, coders should identify the most salient frame at work as it affects *politics*. Some story frames won't have much to contribute to the political angle of a story. Choose the dominant political frame.

Political game

Shows the behind-the-scene strategy of politics. Rather than reporting what was said during a debate, for example, the reporter focuses on the political strategy of the message, what prominent political scientists say about the debate message, or which candidate is winning. Some common story frames that fall under political game include:

Reaction Story: A response or reaction from one of the major players, especially when the "plot" is journalist-driven and not spurred by a news event.
Reality Check: A close look into the veracity of a statement made or information given
Horse Race: Who is winning and who is losing
Conflict Story: A focus on conflict inherent to the situation or brewing among the players
Consensus Story: An emphasis on the points of agreement around an issue or event
Conjecture Story: A focus around conjecture or speculation of what is to come

Policy

Explains how a policy works, how a policy will achieve a goal or analyzes the differences between key policies, showing their strengths and weaknesses. This includes:

Policy Explored: A focus on exploring policy and its impact
Process Story: An explanation of the process of something or how something works

Ideology

An ideology story looks at why a policy or stance on an issue exists and what it hopes to accomplish, basing this on a broader exploration of ideals. This type of story explains why a certain candidature is important in a historical context or what certain viewpoints say about a group or society as a whole. Includes:

Historical Outlook: How the current news fits into history
Trend Story: The news as an ongoing trend

Personality Profile: A profile of the newsmaker, especially when the profile shows what drives the newsmaker, rather than delivering a straight biography.

Straight news

The story is solely an account of an event including the who, what, when, where, why and how. In general, stories that do not fit in other categories can be labeled news for the purpose of this study.

Tone

Other than determining the frame used in stories, the study also aims to identify the tone, using the following definitions:

Evaluative means the "why" is explored. For example, a debate story would be evaluative if the candidates are being analyzed on their performance.

Descriptive states facts, or explains complicated matters. An evaluative story often means the journalist is driving the story. A descriptive story would deliver a recap.

Are the candidates fighting in the article as a result of their own newsworthy actions (descriptive) or because the story's author has chosen an evaluative schema?

Instructions to the Coders

Analyzing themes and media messages
in the French and American coverage
of the 2008 presidential race.

Thank you for participating as a coder in this cross-cultural content analysis. I hope that we both learn from this process.

The purpose of this analysis is to identify the driving schema behind newspaper article themes. Some newspaper articles serve to illustrate a concept, others are used to facilitate a debate between prominent figures or simply illustrate breaking news. There are many ways for newspaper people to report on one event. But by identifying the functions of articles, we can gain insight into how newspapers convey information to their audiences, and how this differs between France and the United States. Concerning the presidential election coverage, this study is looking for certain frames and devices that in the past have been identified as more prominent in certain cultures.

Getting started.

For each of the articles you read, please make sure you give each question careful consideration. Reading an article more than once for each section is recommended.

Agreement among coders is important to ensure the validity of the study and can only be reached if the research methods are followed uniformly.

Section 1A

The first analysis section looks at the frames used in each article. A frame is a dominant construction or theme on which a story is built.

We will be looking at how each headline, first five sentences and article as a whole fit into one of four frames: political game, policy, ideology and straight news.

On your results sheet, fill in:
      1.) an abbreviated name of the article (some have been done for you, to get you started)
      2.) part analyzed (headline-hed, 5-first 5 sentences, low-whole article) You will analyze each part separately for each article.
      3.) type of frame (either political game, policy, ideology or straight news)

For example,

Sarah Palin rules	straight news	hed
	political game	5
	political game	low

(Headline seemed to be straight news, but article developed into a political game story.)

Section 2

Next, you will determine if the same article parts use an evaluative or descriptive schema and mark this on the coding sheet.

Go back to your results from Section 1, marking each headline, lede or lede paragraph and article as a whole on a scale of 1 to 4. 1 will signify evaluative and 4 is descriptive. You will record this in the E/D row.

For example:

Sarah Palin rules	straight news	hed	4
	political game	5	3
	political game	low	3

If you have any questions regarding this analysis, please contact Willow. You are all welcome to view the results when the study is complete.

With this guide, you should find attached one article that has been analyzed to help you complete coding. Please refer to it to familiarize yourself with the protocol.

Talked-About Ads Were Seldom Aired
Campaigns Capitalize on Controversy

By Howard Kurtz
Washington Post Staff Writer
Wednesday, September 24, 2008; Page A04

Sen. John McCain received considerable publicity for a television ad accusing his Democratic opponent of having "lashed out at Sarah Palin, dismissed her as good-looking . . . then desperately called Sarah Palin a liar. How disrespectful."

In the two weeks after the Republican convention, the commercial aired seven times.

Sen. Barack Obama drew substantial media attention for a spot declaring: "John McCain is hardly a maverick. . . . Sarah Palin's no maverick, either. She was for the 'Bridge to Nowhere' before she was against it. Politicians lying about their records." During the same period, that commercial aired eight times.

In the two-week period that ended Sunday, the McCain campaign released 25 ads, 12 of which aired fewer than 25 times. The Obama campaign released 28 ads, 11 of which aired fewer than 25 times.

"They've smartly figured out that there's news of the day, and by feeding the content beast that is cable news and the blogosphere, they're getting out their unfiltered take on the news of the day," said Evan Tracey of TNS Media Intelligence/Campaign Media Analysis Group, which compiled the figures. Given the media's hunger for controversy, he said, "the campaigns are the enabling girlfriend."

By contrast, McCain's most frequently aired spot during this period, casting him and Alaska Gov. Palin as the "original mavericks," aired 15,938 times. Obama's top spot, detailing the lobbying records of senior McCain aides, ran 14,809 times.

It is an open secret by now that both campaigns are flooding the market with what amount to video press releases. The phantom spots receive enormous amounts of free airtime, particularly on cable news channels, and are the subject of news stories and "ad watch" features in newspapers. Journalists have no way of knowing in advance which spots will involve a substantial buy and which will not.

Spokesmen for McCain and Obama would not comment on the practice.

McCain's best investment may have been the spot accusing Obama of supporting sex education for kindergarteners in Illinois, although the legislation called for "age-appropriate" teaching. It aired 43 times during the two-week period. A hotly debated commercial charging Obama with taking advice from former Fannie Mae chief

executive Franklin D. Raines aired three times. And an ad calling Obama's "lipstick on a pig" comment an insult to Palin never ran on television.

Obama made headlines with a spot calling McCain out of touch because he didn't know how to use a computer and doesn't send e-mail. It aired six times. A commercial citing media criticism in accusing McCain of running the "sleaziest ads ever, truly vile" aired 19 times. And a spot charging McCain with dismissing the wage gap between men and women ran twice.

The pattern is that campaigns are putting the least money behind their most slashing spots, the kind that tend to drive news coverage. "The stuff they're putting weight behind is not all that tough," Tracey said.

***

Section 1

article name: _Talked-About Ads Were Seldom Aired___

headline:	political game	2
first 5 sentences:	political game	3
article:	political game	4

The headline, first five sentences, and article as a whole revolve around the political game — the pitting of the candidates against each other in a type of horse race story. Although the media has not created this horse race — the candidates have through advertising, it still focuses on that aspect of the campaign.

Here, the headline is evaluative in that it comments that the campaigns are "capitalizing." The rest of the article serves primarily descriptive means in that it explores a history of what happened when, not what will happen next or which candidate behaved worse.

APPENDIX C

Sample Coding Sheet

Article Name	hed/5/low	Frame	E/D
Sarah the Diva	hed		
	five		
	low		
Verizon and AT&T	hed		
	five		
	low		
McCain Fights to Keep Crucial	hed		
	five		
	low		
What Happens to Public Financing	hed		