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WHEN THE PUBLISHER IS A POLITICIAN; A CASE STUDY OF
THE IDAHO FALLS *POST REGISTER*'S COVERAGE OF THE
2002 IDAHO GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN

by

Kristoffer D. Boyle

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Communications

Brigham Young University

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Kristoffer D. Boyle

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Kristoffer D. Boyle in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

WHEN THE PUBLISHER IS A POLITICIAN; A CASE STUDY OF THE IDAHO FALLS *POST REGISTER*'S COVERAGE OF THE 2002 IDAHO GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN

Kristoffer D. Boyle

Department of Communications

Master of Arts

In March 2002, *Idaho Falls Post Register* owner/publisher Jerry Brady announced his intent to run as the Democratic challenger in the Idaho gubernatorial race. His decision left the newspaper and its editorial staff scrambling for an appropriate way to objectively cover the state's most prominent race involving the man who signed the checks. In an effort to meet this expectation, the newspaper established a detailed plan, which included Brady moving away from the newspaper's operations, both physically and editorially. Additionally, the *Post Register* brought in an outside media professional to monitor its coverage of the race and hosted several meetings for readers.

While several studies have examined the relationship between politics and journalism, there have not been any significant studies related to a newspaper covering

one of its own, which is the focus of this work. Using a case study approach, this study examines the *Post Register's* plan for covering the gubernatorial race and analyzes whether the paper followed its plan. The study includes a content analysis of the campaign-related articles published by the paper based on five components of objectivity as presented by Mindich (1999). These components include detachment, nonpartisanship, inverted pyramid, facticity, and balance. From this analysis, this study aims to answer the question, "Was the *Post Register* objective in its coverage of the race?"

The study addresses the concept of objectivity and examines three general perspectives of journalistic morality and the viewpoints within those perspectives in an effort to determine which would apply to the *Post Register's* situation. They include the individualist perspective (autonomy, existentialism), the collectivist perspective (communitarianism), and the dialectic perspective (public journalism)

The findings reveal that the *Post Register* staff stuck to their coverage plan and was objective in its coverage of the race. The author suggests that these two elements are related. In other words, because the Post Register staff adopted a coverage plan and stuck to it, they were able to remain objective.

The author concludes that *Post Register* was not rooted in one specific viewpoint. The editorial staff chose to use public journalism tactics as tools toward maintaining a perceived autonomy. In the process, they most heartily embraced the communitarian belief. In other words, if the readers are happy, we must be doing a good job.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Dilemma

In March 2002, the editors and reporters of the *Idaho Falls Post Register* found themselves in a difficult and unfamiliar situation. The paper's owner/publisher, Jerry Brady, announced his intent to run as a Democrat in the Idaho governor's race, likely facing off against Governor Dirk Kempthorne, a Republican incumbent in a staunchly Republican state. Overnight, the decision thrust the newspaper and its credibility into the national spotlight, with managing editor Dean Miller entertaining phone calls from other media organizations across the country.

The editorial staff took several steps to ensure that Brady the candidate would be separated from the practices and content of the newspaper. He moved out of his office, took an administrative paid leave, and only consulted with the Post Company board on financial issues. He stopped writing and editing opinion pieces. The newspaper hired an ombudsman to critique its coverage of the race and write a monthly column outlining his observations. The editorial staff also hosted several meetings throughout the course of the campaign in which readers voiced their opinions on how the newspaper was doing.

Before his leave of absence, Brady emphasized in his final editorial piece on March 7 that he would detach himself from the operations of the paper and its sister television station, KIFI-TV 8, and maintain a distinct separation between Brady the journalist and Brady the candidate.

When I was asked to run for governor, an early concern for me was, "What will this mean to the company?" Would a family- and employee-owned company be hurt when its president runs for political office? The answer is, yes, it could be hurt unless readers and viewers know what the deal is. It must be abundantly clear I've cut my ties and cannot influence news coverage or opinion in any way . . . I believe I can and will win. However, if I do not, I want to return to my community and my company with head held high because of the way I've conducted myself and in particular how the wall between the candidate and the media has been maintained. (p. A6)

Brady won the Democratic primary, but lost to Kempthorne in November. He has since returned to the newspaper, but not as publisher. He currently serves as president of the Post Company and occasionally writes editorials. Overall, many on the staff believe the *Post Register* escaped from the experience with its credibility intact. However, Brady's decision placed them in an awkward position. Specifically, they had to maintain a high level of objectivity and independence in their coverage of the race. It is a responsibility that is practically impossible to accomplish, according to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001).

One might imagine that one could both report on events and be a participant in them but the reality is that being a participant clouds all the other tasks a journalist must perform. It becomes difficult to see things from the other perspective. It becomes more difficult to win the trust of the sources and combatants on different sides. It becomes difficult if not

impossible to then persuade your audience that you put their interests ahead of those of the team that you are also working for. (p. 97)

In the *Post Register's* case, the challenge came not in just covering a fellow journalist involved in politics, but covering the man who signed their paychecks. It posed an interesting paradox, particularly when many journalists view political involvement as one area that threatens their positions as fair, impartial observers. On the day Brady announced his candidacy, opinion editor Marty Trillhaase tackled the paper's dilemma in a column. "Some would call this a conflict of interest," Trillhaase wrote. "Lawyers say a conflict occurs when you try to serve two masters." He quoted an editor from a Midwest publication, who told *Post Register* editors, "Everything you write about your publisher will be taken as influenced by him, no matter how much you protest to the contrary" (Trillhaase, 2002, p. A5).

The threat of developing a perceived media bias was a justified concern for the *Post Register*. According to Stevenson and Green (1980), "Bias ... is hard to define, but many find it easy to recognize in their newspapers and newscasts" (p. 115). Stevenson and Greene described two definitions of bias as used by scholars in their study of media bias. The first is that bias is "inaccuracy," a definition that is used less frequently. The second is that bias is "the systematic differential treatment of ... one side of an issue over an extended period of time" or that it is the "failure to treat all voices in the marketplace of ideas equally" (Stevenson & Greene, 1980, p. 116).

According to Niven (2003), the focus on media bias is nothing new. As far back as the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration, critics have argued that reporters, particularly those in Washington, have been more liberal than the general public. For

instance, one study in 1936 found that 64 percent of reporters supported Roosevelt and they were more likely than the general public to vote for FDR (Niven, 2003).

However, media professionals are quick to point out that journalists have many incentives that push them to keep their opinions out of their work. Gans (1985) suggested that “personal political beliefs are left at home, not only because journalists are trained to be objective and detached, but also because their credibility and their paychecks depend on their remaining detached” (p. 32). Rosen (1996) suggested that journalists cling to detachment for two reasons. First, it is the journalist’s job to remain isolated from the rest of the public so he or she can obtain facts, information, truths, that regular people are too blind to see. Second, any relationship or loyalty to anything other than the truth is a handicap. “No value is more important in journalism than the independence of the press. Indeed, a journalism that is not independently crafted and independently published should go by some other name – publicity, rhetoric, salesmanship, anything but journalism” (Rosen, 1996, p. 3).

Statement of Purpose

Independence is a goal set by most traditional newspapers and objectivity is a tool widely used in achieving this goal. The *Post Register* was no different, opting to use an objective approach in its coverage of the governor’s race in an effort to maintain a perceived independence from Brady. Using a case study approach, this study will examine the *Idaho Falls Post Register’s* plan for covering the gubernatorial race and analyze whether the paper followed its plan. The case study will include a content analysis, based on five components of objectivity as presented by Mindich (1999), of

campaign-related articles published by the paper. From this analysis, this study aims to answer the question, “Was the Post Register objective in its coverage of the race?” Answering this question is important because it can help journalists gauge just how involved they should or shouldn’t be in their respective communities. The line between objective autonomy and public journalism is an issue often debated among journalists, so investigating issues such as this can provide some clarity to an otherwise murky subject.

In Chapter 2, the literature review will examine objectivity, including views on what it is and how it came to be. The review will also explore Mindich’s components and other viewpoints guiding objectivity’s role in journalism. Chapter 3 introduces the methodology incorporated into this study, including a detailed discussion of the *Post Register’s* coverage plan and an outline of the content analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study, while Chapter 5 discusses its ramifications. The final chapter, Chapter 6, summarizes the conclusions, discusses the limitations, and suggests areas for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will examine the beginnings of journalistic objectivity and the debate surrounding its role in society. Additionally, this review will discuss Mindich's components of objectivity. Finally, it will examine several viewpoints from which journalists define objectivity in an effort to determine which would apply to the *Post Register's* situation. Along with discussing the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective, this review will discuss which of Mindich's components of objectivity best fit with each viewpoint.

There was a time when a politically involved journalist or newspaper was commonplace. In the early nineteenth century, the partisan press, not the independent penny press, dominated American journalism (Mott, 1950).

Let a political leader come forward, and one or more newspapers were immediately to be found devoted to pushing his interests; let a party schism develop in a state organization, and soon certain papers came to be known as organ of the two factions. Politicians arranged such newspaper affiliation with care, and considered them essential to success. (Mott, 1950, p. 253)

By the late 1800s, the role of a journalist began to change. According to Kaplan (2002), the power of political parties in the public sphere began to weaken, taking with it the incentives that came from newspaper partisanship. Freed from the parties, newspapers began to issue declarations of party independence. "They needed reasons to justify their

prominence in the public arena and to mask the arbitrariness of their reporting” (Kaplan, 2002, p. 190).

Shortly after the turn of the 20th century, journalists began to develop a belief in remaining independent from community affairs so as not to compromise their newspaper’s ability to report independently on their communities. According to Walter Lippmann (1922), this belief is due in a large in part to the unique relationship between the press and society.

The casual and one-sided relationship between readers and press is an anomaly of our civilization. There is nothing else quite like it, and it is, therefore, hard to compare the press with any other business or institution. It is not business pure and simple, partly because the product is regularly sold below cost, but chiefly because the community applies one ethical measure to the press and another to trade and manufacture. (p. 321)

This ethical measure, according to Lippmann, is based on the community’s moral standards. The press is expected to live on the “same plane” as the school, the church and the “disinterested” professions. The community expects its press to present news that is not artificial, but instead comes naturally (Lippmann, 1922).

In the eyes of many journalists, the key to achieving this expectation is objectivity. They want to remain independent and maintain a sense of credibility, so they look to objectivity as a bulwark against personal and institutional bias.

Overview of Objectivity

Objectivity is often the source of many debates, particularly when it comes to discussing its beginnings, what it means, and whether it is really useful. Many scholars believe objectivity was born in some form around the 1830s (Cunningham, 2000; Mindich, 1999; Schudson, 1978; Stensaas, 1986). But what that form was and when exactly it became an important issue is uncertain and widely debated. One theory points to the organization of the Associated Press by a handful of New York newspapers in 1848. The Associated Press was gathering news for publication in a variety of newspapers, so it seems there was a need for the news to be objective in order to please all its clients (Mindich, 1999).

However, Schudson (1978) argued there is little evidence that supports this theory and two good reasons to doubt it. First, why should a practice, obviously important to the survival of the wire service, become a guiding ideal for organizations not subject to the same constraints? Instead, the availability of the wire service gave newspapers a chance to focus on other kinds of reporting. Schudson also argued that there is a more serious problem with this theory and that is that objectivity didn't become the "chief norm" in journalism until the late nineteenth century. Sensationalism was newspaper's focus at the time and journalists often sought to write "literature" as much as news.

Equally debated is how to define objectivity. Some scholars, such as Schudson (1978), considered it a belief that one can and should separate facts from values. Others view objectivity in its original sense as a rigorous scientific instrument meant to find the truth (Ryan, 2001; Streckenfass, 1990). McQuail (2000) suggested the main features of

objectivity include adopting a position of detachment and neutrality toward reporting. There is an absence of subjectivity and partisanship. It requires strict attachment to accuracy and presumes a lack of ulterior motive, according to McQuail. However, Merritt (1995), an advocate of public journalism, argued that detachment is not a part of objectivity. In his view, a journalist can be objective in looking at facts while still caring about the implication of those facts.

Ryan (2001) positioned himself between both views, stating that the responsibility of objectivity rests solely with the journalist, who should gather facts and opinions that conflict, verify information carefully, seek to determine why accounts conflict and which most accurately reflect reality, and evaluate and fully identify sources. Objective journalists are accountable to their audiences and they never assume that their employers bear the ultimate responsibility for their behavior.

Despite the differing - and often contradictory views - of objectivity, Cunningham (2003) argued there is one important reason this principle has remained at the forefront of journalism: nothing better has replaced it.

Objectivity, or the pursuit of it, separates us from the unbridled partisanship found in much of the European press. It helps us make decisions quickly - we are disinterested observers after all - and it protects us from the consequences of what we write ... And as we descend into this new age of partisanship, our readers need, more than ever, reliable reporting that tells them what is true when that is knowable, and pushes as close to truth as possible when it is not. (p. 26)

Components of Objectivity

This study relies on the five components of objectivity, as introduced by Mindich (1999). These include detachment, nonpartisanship, inverted pyramid, facticity, and balance. What follows is a brief description of the components and why they are an important part of objectivity.

Detachment. According to Mindich, the idea of detachment surfaced with the introduction of the penny press era in the 1830s. These papers were sold for one cent and, unlike the six-cent competition, were not supported by a political party. They were more sensational and focused more on news that was outside the “narrow realm” of the partisan press. This new form of press detached itself from political parties and created an alternate paradigm (Mindich, 1999). In the context of this thesis, detachment is discussed in terms of keeping news free from internal and external influences, including both institutional and personal views. A detached reporter would be one who is interested in presenting the truth – whether good or bad – regardless of the outcome. According to Mindich, detachment implies “pulling oneself out of one’s life” and a journalist “separating his mind from his body” (p.38).

Nonpartisanship. Nonpartisanship, as defined by Mindich, is keeping one’s political preferences out of news stories (Mindich, 1999, p. 41). He suggested numerous studies have shown that American journalists tend to occupy the middle of the political spectrum and they pride themselves on being praised and demeaned on both sides of politics for their stance. According to Mindich, nonpartisanship is a vital part of objectivity because it can “lead to more specific language about what a reporter is doing” (p. 142).

Inverted pyramid. There are two widely held theories about the development of the inverted pyramid. First, events such as the Civil War pushed reporters to use the most important information first in their stories. Second, the Associated Press used the inverted pyramid as a way to remain impartial (Mindich, 1999). In this study, a story successfully using the inverted pyramid is one where the central fact of the piece is at or near the top and avoids a narrative form. According to Mindich, inverted pyramid is a vital part of objectivity because it is a “system that appears to strip a story of everything but the ‘fact,’ and changes the way we process news” (p. 65). The focus of newspaper reporting before the creation of the inverted pyramid was on “point of view.” Now its focus is “unambiguous facts.”

Facticity. While reporters in the late nineteenth century often ventured into both ideals of entertainment and information writing in the news, their employers often chose to emphasize one ideal or the other (Schudson, 1978). According to Schudson, facts are “assertions about the world open to independent validation. They stand beyond the distorting influences of any individual’s personal preferences” (p. 5). For the purposes of this thesis, a factual story is considered one that attributes statements of fact to a source.

Balance. Mencher (2000) argued that balance in a story doesn’t mean the reporter stations themselves at the midpoint of an issue. If a political candidate makes an important speech today, it may be front-page worthy. But if on the same day, the candidate’s opponent repeats what he said the day before or utters nonsense, the newspaper is under no obligation to give the story the same prominence as the piece on the first candidate. Balance is a moral commitment, Mencher said, and cannot be measured by the stopwatch or ruler. This thesis will use the Associated Press’ policy on

balance, as outlined by Mencher. That includes making every effort to get a comment from someone who has a stake in the story - especially if the person is the target of an attack or allegation (Mencher, 2000, p. 53).

Before examining the *Post Register* case, it would be beneficial to review literature discussing ethical issues that can arise from political involvement. A majority of the literature deals with three general perspectives of journalistic morality and the viewpoints within those perspectives. They include the individualist perspective (autonomy, existentialism), the collectivist perspective (communitarianism), and the dialectic perspective (public journalism). What follows is an examination of arguments for and against each one, and an application of each one to objectivity.

Individualist Perspectives

The Autonomous Journalist. Journalists traditionally consider autonomy to be a principle, which allows the press to fulfill its duty of informing the citizenry, free from partisan bias and other corrupting influences (McDevitt, 2003). Under this view, journalists feel serving the public is best done by reporting with balance, fairness, and independence.

According to McDevitt (2003), understanding autonomy as a developmental and multidimensional concept will shed light as to why both young and veteran journalists reject its opposite. First, young journalists, in making the transition into the professional field, come with a deteriorating support for a journalist's involvement in the community. According to McDevitt, this erosion is often attributed the students' experiences with campus newspapers, where they develop a strong sense of autonomy and independence.

It's a belief that is compounded during the beginning years in the professional field because the young journalists have a desire to develop a sense of self-identity.

According to McDevitt, professionals consider community involvement a threat to autonomy both inside and outside the newsroom. Inside the newsroom, the biggest threat has come from the crumbling wall between business and editorial departments. Organizations are undertaking alternative methods of news delivery (i.e. the Internet). More than 150 newspapers have closed since 1970, and chain ownership is on the rise (Stamm & Underwood, 1993). These kinds of changes have pushed journalists closer to the profession and away from their prospective organizations. In a study of organizational and professional identification among journalists, Russo (1998) found that the journalists she surveyed at a Midwest metropolitan newspaper identified more with the profession of journalism than with their newspaper employer. According to Russo, professional identification served as a source of collective inspiration, energy, and strength for the journalists. Professional values, including autonomy, were especially important in sustaining the group through restructuring and management changes that affected all members, as well as through their day-to-day challenges and frustrations.

Outside the newsroom, relying too much on the same influential sources is viewed as the biggest threat to autonomy, which is why, according to McDevitt, editors will provide an analysis and interpretation in news coverage so that source comments are subordinate to the reporters' narrative. This represents a form of narrative autonomy, where journalists produce highly coherent, thematic, structured stories.

According to McDevitt (2003), citizens are better served if they are left out of the decision-making process in the newsroom. Additionally, a journalist's independence

within a community helps to legitimize him or her as an autonomous moral actor with a unique role in society. When journalists choose to be involved in civic affairs, even the promotion of a common good, their ability to question the very consensus about what constitutes the common good is diminished (p. 160).

Supporters of autonomy would view objectivity as the practice of distancing journalism from the community, or playing the role of the unbiased observer. In the context of Mindich's objectivity, they would side most heavily with the detachment and nonpartisan components of objectivity. In other words, an objective news story, newspaper, and journalist would need to be detached from outside influences. Calling it the "dominant stance of professional journalism today," McCombs (1997) said "this vision of journalism is captured in descriptions of the news media as our window on the world. It is summed up in the signoff phrase of a famous former American television anchor, 'And that's the way it is'" (p. 438)

The Existential Journalist. According to Merrill (1989), existential journalism is mainly a subjective journalism, in the sense that the focus is on the person who creates the journalism. At the same time, it does not ignore the outside world of objective reality. A moderate journalistic stance, existentialism recognizes the need for journalists to form relationships with the community while also emphasizing the importance of objectivity and freedom.

Existentialists maintain that persons who attempt to shed freedom are living inauthentic lives - living "in bad faith." In spite of the personal pain it may cause, freedom - especially positive freedom - is necessary in an open society, one in which democracy and a pluralist journalism are

important . . . Without freedom, there is no creativity, no pushing toward progress in journalism. Even if the masses do not fully appreciate the value of freedom, journalists should constantly defend it and protect it. (Merrill, 1989, p. 147)

The best way to understand existentialism, according to Merrill, is by recognizing that it is a philosophy that emphasizes relationships, especially between the objective world and the subjective person. The existential journalist knows that truth in the objective sense will never really emerge and only subjective views of bits and pieces of the truth will filter through. So the idea of existential objectivity accepts that facts exist in the objective world, but focuses on the importance of the subjective person reducing those facts to an accurate account of the truth. Thus, existential journalism accepts that a journalist's responsibility is to interpret objective facts truthfully and accurately from the perspective of the individual journalist. (Stoker, 1995).

According to Stoker (1995), existentialism helps make journalists aware of their moral duties. It provides objectivity with its moral base and encourages journalists to be true to themselves and to society. In other words, existentialism makes it possible for a journalist to report stories accurately, fairly, impartially, and completely. Stoker provided a framework in which he believed journalists could "justify taking liberties with the general norms of objectivity." (p. 18)

This existential model focuses on creating both social and moral responsibilities through combining objectivity (professional and organizational responsibility) and subjectivity (individual responsibility). At the same time, the feelings of anxiety and alienation make way for authenticity. According to Stoker, authenticity moves the

journalist beyond his or her social responsibility to the point of individual moral responsibility.

Existentialism focuses the journalist inward and evokes questions about the morality of the actions of each individual journalist and thus the actions of all journalists. Objectivity is outcome orientated, defensive in nature; it allows the journalist to avoid taking responsibility for what he or she does. By introducing existentialism into the equation, the door is opened for the journalist to take the offensive, to focus on process-orientated obligations and duties, and to assume responsibility as a human being in a society of human beings. (Stoker, 1995, p. 20)

However, Ryan (2001) argued that existential journalism shares the same fatal weakness that is found in other alternatives to objectivity, such as communitarian and public journalism. They are all reflections of what traditional objectivity critics believe is “good.” They require that journalists develop personal agendas (e.g. to improve democracy, to adopt perspectives of marginalized groups, to expand freedom). They all favor a “progressive” journalism that requires deliberate ideological intervention.

According to Ryan, the argument that existential journalism aims to improve the community is admirable, but at the same time problematic because it can’t be applied on a case-by-case basis. For instance, a few years ago, the *Houston Chronicle* undertook a campaign to encourage voters to approve funding for a new baseball stadium, a move that officials claimed would solve some of the city’s urban problems. However, many citizens opposed the addition of the stadium and felt the *Chronicle* was acting irresponsibly (Ryan, 2001).

Some proponents of existential journalism would argue that the newspaper's support for the stadium was not an example of existentialism, while others would agree that it is a perfect example, according to Ryan. The theoretical framework underlying the idea of existential journalism cannot be used to remedy the discrepancy because each proponent can hold a different view while citing the same philosophical constructs for support. Similar to Stoker, Ryan's suggestion is that existential journalists should insist that individual journalists adopt a moral responsibility. They should accept a definition of objectivity that reflects their concerns so they can turn their attention to curbing unethical journalism.

According to Merrill (1996), the existential journalist recognizes that objectivity goes beyond having accurate quotes and correct name spellings.

He knows that factually correct stories do not comprise objectivity. He is convinced that neutrality and dispassionate writing do not assure objectivity in a story. He is aware, of course, that he does not really know himself what objective journalist is, but he is sure that it has aspects and subtleties not present in the highly regarded journalist concept of reportorial 'neutrality. (p. 86)

Merrill said that existential journalists have a respect for subjectivity. They recognize that true objectivity "would also be that which involves the interest of the reporter. It is impossible for the journalist to detach himself from his story if he is to give an honest and full ('encompassing') account" (p. 91). In other words, a journalist is a better reporter when he or she removes the distance barrier and allows some involvement, in an effort to get a more complete story.

So, in the context of Mindich's criteria for objectivity, existential journalists would not view objectivity through the lenses of detachment or nonpartisanship. They would also hesitate to embrace facticity as a part of objectivity, at least when it is considered the practice of "merely reporting facts" or "giving bits of pieces of information" (Merrill, 1996, p. 89). They are more in favor of facticity when it is considered the practice of getting to the essence of a story or asking questions that "get beneath the normal journalistic objectivity" (p. 89). This desire for completeness and encompassing reporting would lead existential journalists to view objectivity based on the balance aspect of Mindich's definition. Adopting a subjective objectivity, they would consider an objective reporter one who completely covers a story or event.

Collectivist Perspective

Communitarian Journalist. The most common weapon journalists will use in fighting their critics is usually composed of arguments involving the ideas of individualism and freedom of the press. These are both positions that some feel are close to unconditional (Christians, Ferre, & Fackler, 1993). However, according to Christians et al., the public's distrust and constant criticisms toward the press continues to increase because the press's protection is not as infallible as once thought. Using Enlightenment individualism as a defense for the media's actions is becoming noticeably deficient. The answer to this problem, they argue, rests with the community.

To counter Enlightenment individualism successfully, a normative ethics of news reporting must insist that both community and personhood are central to the nature of human being; that our account of what constitutes

human existence will necessarily influence beliefs about the proper conduct of democratic government; and that the media stand in a vital position-at the center of those webs of meaning by which people understand and transform culture (p. 54).

Communitarian journalism redefines the constitutional protections to favor the audience. When the focus of the news content is shifted from autonomy to communitarian, the press's mission also changes and the goal of reporting becomes civic transformation (Christians et al., 1993). Within this sphere, the media seek to provoke a like-minded philosophy among the public. "A revitalized citizenship becomes the press's aim – not merely readers and audiences provided with data, but morally literate persons" (p. 89).

However, Barney (1996) warned that this "cure" of communitarian journalism may be more detrimental than the illness. The consequences of the communitarian draw are widely visible in the world. Nearly 80% of the worlds' population lives in rule-bound traditional cultures that change little from generation to generation, mainly due to the efforts of communitarians in the past (p. 141). However, the drive towards a communitarian approach continues to ignore history and other factors, like declining readership and viewership. The media grasp after communitarian journalism as a response to intense competition, installing audience-orientated policies, like "tell them what they want to hear" and "don't make them angry," according to Barney.

Barney argued that this view of "we do whatever you want us to do if you will read/listen," actually blinds the media to its responsibility and function of stimulating participation in the decision making process both locally and nationally. At best, the press

is providing society with what it feels is wanted, when in reality it is merely trivia. At worst, it is pandering. “This communitarianism is far more responsible for social problems than is individualism” (Barney, 1996, p. 143).

While Altschull (1996) argued that it is foolish to dismiss the idea for a new direction for journalism, he also is not sure communitarian journalism is the answer. According to Altschull, community journalism’s biggest weakness is that it puts the public’s interest before maximization of profit. He argued that “working stiffs,” no matter how high, cannot force a formula like this on people or corporations that pay their salaries. The only way to overcome this obstacle is to convince bosses that involving society in the process of journalism will still produce earnings while serving the needs of the people.

Northington (1992) offered a model that journalists could use to assess the risks of practicing community activism. The model is based on four broad principles: acting to create intrinsic goods, cultivating citizenship, respecting persons as ends, and appealing to universal principles. Applying this model to the community involvement of the *Messenger-Inquirer* in Owensboro, Kentucky, Northington concluded that the tension between activism and allegiance to independence was balanced effectively.

That is not to say, though, that activism ought to be common for any mainstream newspaper. Minimizing risk depends on the ability of news employees to resist real or perceived pressures from sources and employer and on the capacity of the audience to look beyond appearance of conflict of interest to understand a newspaper’s workings. (p 230)

Still, a newspaper's involvement in the community, particularly when it involves political activism, can complicate journalists' efforts to maintain their credibility with the public. According to Niven (2003), nine out of 10 Americans believe that members of the media are regularly influenced by their personal views when covering politics.

This distrust may have dire consequences. Media credibility influences not only how people react to the news, but also consumption of news, and even trust in government . . . Given the potential import of media bias beliefs, it is important that credible evidence be assembled to address this concern. (p. 312)

When considering objectivity, communitarian journalists view the practice from a social perspective. According to Massey (1998), the aim of community journalism is based on "strengthening public life – seeing to it that people involve themselves in the civic affairs of their communities . . . tuning in and acting on a community's collective concerns to deliver the kind of news that engages people in public life" (p. 395). So a journalist would be considered objective if he or she is "producing journalism that's unmistakably written from the citizens point of view" (p. 395).

Returning to Mindich's criteria, community journalists would obviously be opposed to objectivity involving detachment and nonpartisanship. The focus of community journalism is going "beyond the mere transmission of information to increase political participation, and focusing on news that helps a community to solve problems" (McDevitt, Gassaway, & Perez, 2002, p. 89). Communitarian journalists argue that objectivity is not based on detached reporting, inconsiderate of whether it is good or bad for the community. Instead, objective journalism is that which involves the community in

presenting factual, beneficial information. So advocates would view objectivity based on facticity.

Dialectic Perspective

Public Journalist. The idea of public journalism has been widely debated since principal founders Jay Rosen and Davis Merritt Jr. coined the phrase in the early 1990s. It is based on the view that journalists should take a more proactive role in their communities, stepping away from the traditional stance of being a detached disseminator of fact and embracing the idea of community activism. Rosen (1995) stated that public journalism is at least three things. First, it is an argument about the proper task of the press. Second, it is a set of practices that are slowly spreading through American journalism. Third, it is a movement of people and institutions.

According to Merritt (1995), public life and journalism are inextricably intertwined. When public life is in trouble, so is journalism. Both citizens and journalists, as members of society themselves, share common goals. Thus, it is important that journalists help citizens re-engage in public life. If they view their objectivity as merely telling the news in a detached way, journalists will not be particularly helpful to public life or the profession.

However, critics of public journalism argue that it is a movement responding to profit-driven media corporations, and its focus on the community compromises journalistic integrity and credibility (Glade & Perry, 2003). Arguments are often based on examples of news organizations that were unsuccessful in their attempts to implement practices of public journalism. For example, 16 major media organizations in North

Carolina revised their political campaign coverage in 1994 in ways they felt focused it more on issues considered important by citizens. They considered it a way to move beyond the traditional “horse race” coverage and connect more closely with readers’ concerns (Efron, 1997). The organizations relied on public polls in selecting the issues and then interviewed the candidates, using questions based on these issues. In the end, local politicians felt the project didn’t improve the electoral process, and it drew widespread criticism from elite news organizations around the country, such as *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. They contended that by relying on polls to guide their coverage, journalists were pandering to readers, abandoning professional responsibility to assess the newsworthiness of events, undermining the candidates’ own political judgments, and ignoring the equally important public issues that didn’t show up in the polls (Efron, 1997).

In response to these types of examples, Merritt presented a two-fold argument. First, many newspaper editors attempt public journalism without understanding its underlying philosophy. Second, those who understand its philosophy should realize that the results of any one project are unimportant. According to Merritt, public journalism is a partnership between journalists and their communities and if it is not viewed as a long-term commitment, it is destined to fail (McMasters & Merritt, 1996).

However, Voakes (1999) stated that examples similar to the one discussed above raise deeper concerns with critics of public journalism. First, some worry about its rejection of detachment. McMasters argued that journalists need to be dispassionate and detached in their coverage of news just like doctors separate themselves from their patients’ medical problems (McMasters & Merritt, 1996). Second, critics are concerned

about the perceived loss of the “watchdog” responsibility as implied in the First Amendment. By committing to finding solutions to problems, journalists align themselves with policymakers who plan and implement these solutions, thus constricting their ability and right to criticize these officials and their policies. Finally, critics worry that in responding too eagerly to citizens’ views, news organizations become no more than public polls and market research (Voakes, 1999). Content will reflect what audience members want to consume rather than what journalists feel the audience should consume.

Proponents are quick to dismiss each of these concerns. Concerning a rejection of detachment, Friedland (1996) argued that public journalism depends on the proposition that news institutions depend on a vibrant public and civic life for their own survival. Because of this, they cannot remain neutral on whether public life should go well. However, public journalism institutions remain neutral on what particular solutions to public problems work best in any given community. In other words, a rejection of detachment doesn’t mean a journalist should take sides on a certain issue or use biased reporting.

According to Merritt (McMasters & Merritt, 1996), public journalism does not mean the end of the “watchdog” aspect in journalism. Unsuccessful attempts to implement this movement have failed because the organizations have abandoned such ideals.

Public journalism is not aimed at solving problems; it is aimed at reengaging citizens in solving problems. It does not seek to join with or substitute itself for government (in either case an outrageous and impossible aspiration); it seeks to keep citizens in effective contact with

the governing process. Its goal is not to better connect journalists with their communities, but to better connect the people in communities with one another. (p. 30)

Finally, Rosen (1996) responded to concerns of pandering to the audience by arguing that journalists are members of a community and not a mechanism outside of it. While it doesn't mean that they become an advocate to the cause, it also doesn't mean they withdraw into a stance of "civic exile."

Whether arguing in behalf of or against public journalism, several scholars have suggested ways the ideal of public journalism can succeed. For instance, Massey and Hass (2002) believed that public journalism's ultimate goal is to help revitalize civic life. In order to do that, it must succeed in two objectives. First, journalists must be convinced that public journalism can be used to fix the damage that traditional journalism has been accused of causing to the public's interest and participation. Second, public journalism must make a difference among news audiences.

Merritt (1996) believed that successful public journalism comes after journalists take the "philosophical journey." The first two steps in that journey include accepting that journalism is an integral part of the system of public life and recognizing journalism's integral role public life, which is imposed on its journalists.

Public journalists would most likely advocate for a scientific objectivity. They reject a "conception of objectivity that requires journalists to disengage from all aspects of community life." Public journalists instead "function as fair-minded participants in community life whose participation focuses on nonpartisan processes and procedures" (Glasser & Craft, 1996, p. 154). According to Holbert and Zubric (2000), public

journalists do not use objectivity simply because “it allows them to accurately gather facts; rather, they use objectivity because without it, they argue, no pure facts would exist” (p. 59).

So public journalism advocates would not view objective reporting based on detachment. It would be more important for a reporter to be involved in the problem-solving, not just presenting the information. That being said, such practices would not ignore factual and balanced reporting. So public journalism would argue that nonpartisanship, balance, and facticity are all important aspects of objectivity.

These positions were selected because they each provide a different view on the journalist’s role in their community. Autonomy focuses on the press fulfilling its duty of informing the public, free from partisan bias and other corrupting influences.

Existentialism recognizes the need for journalists to form relationships with the community while also emphasizing the importance of objectivity and freedom. Under communitarianism, a journalist is highly involved in the community, helping to create and promote policies vital to a community’s existence. Lastly, public journalism encourages journalists to help citizens re-engage in public life, bridging a gap of distrust between the media and the public, while clinging to a level of independence.

In the case of the *Post Register*, even if Brady was fulfilling a community need by getting involved in politics, it is still important that his paper maintain a certain journalistic independence. Thus, this study aims to answer the following questions.

RQ1: Did the *Idaho Falls Post Register* follow its plan to maintain independence from Brady, as outlined in a published article at the beginning of the campaign coverage?

RQ2: Was the newspaper objective in its coverage of the 2002 Idaho gubernatorial race?

Based on the answers to these questions, this study will apply the viewpoints previously discussed to the *Post Register's* case in an effort to determine which approach to objectivity the staff used in their coverage of the race.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Once Brady announced his intent to run for governor, managing editor Dean Miller sent e-mails to news professionals literally scattered across the country, looking for suggestions as he drew up a plan for the paper's coverage of the race. He relied on much of their feedback in creating a five-step plan, which was published the day after Brady made his announcement. In a related column, Miller assured readers this plan would keep Brady separate from the practices and content of the newspaper.

The problem the newsroom faces is how to guarantee that readers get an even-handed report if Jerry Brady, a major stockholder in the company that owns this newspaper, wins the Democratic primary and faces incumbent Gov. Dirk Kempthorne. I'm confident readers will get a solid report, but what matters is your confidence. We'll act in good faith. Readers must, too. (Miller, 2002, p. A1)

In his column, Miller outlined specifically what steps they would take in separating themselves from Brady. First, Brady would move out of his office, taking an administrative paid leave, and only consulting with the Post Company board on financial issues. Second, he would stop writing and editing opinion pieces. Third, campaign stories mentioning Brady would include clarification as to his relationship with the paper. Fourth, the newspaper hired an ombudsman to critique its coverage of the race and write a monthly column that would outline his observations. Fifth, the editorial staff would host

meetings throughout the course of the campaign where readers voiced their own opinions on how the newspaper was doing.

Using a case study approach to answer the first research question, there were several ways this study gauged whether the *Post Register* followed its plan. Interviews with staff members helped verify Brady's presence at the paper (Did he move out of his office?). An examination of editorial pages published during the campaign determined whether he wrote editorials or opinion pieces. A similar examination of the published campaign stories were used to determine whether the paper ran its clarification of Brady's involvement in every story mentioning his name. A study of the ombudsman's articles, as well as letters to the editor, provided some insight as to how well the paper followed the last two steps in its plan.

Yin (1994) defined a case study as an empirical inquiry using multiple sources of evidence to investigate an issue within its real-life context. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2003), the case study approach is advantageous because a researcher can gather a wealth of information about their topic. Additionally, it also makes it possible for a researcher to deal with a wide spectrum of evidence.

This approach fit the *Post Register* case, mainly because the data came from a variety of sources, including published stories, interviews with staff members, and emails to and from managing editor Dean Miller, which he willingly provided for the purpose of this study.

In answering the second research question, this thesis used a content analysis to examine all *Post Register* stories mentioning the two candidates or the race itself. The articles were written by a member of the staff and published between March 7, 2002, the

day Jerry Brady announced his intent to run for governor, and November 6, 2002, the day after the election. The sample excluded reports from the Associated Press, the ombudsman columns, and letters to the editor, mainly because the editorial staff was not responsible for writing those pieces. The articles were accessed electronically, using the *Post Register's* Web site and through visits to the paper's morgue in Idaho Falls.

This thesis employed a content analysis because the approach allows researchers an opportunity to examine information in an objective and quantitative manner, according to Kerlinger (2000). Berelson (1952) listed seventeen uses of content analysis, including the ability to expose propaganda and/or bias techniques. Some valuable functions of content analysis include auditing communication content against objectives, exposing propaganda techniques, identifying the intentions and other characteristics of the communicators, determining the psychological state of persons or groups, reflecting attitudes, interests of population groups, revealing focus of attention, and describing attitudinal behavioral responses to communication (Berelson, 1952).

Wimmer and Dominick (2003) outlined 10 steps in conducting a content analysis: 1) Formulate the research question or hypothesis. 2) Define the population in question. 3) Select an appropriate sample from the population. 4) Select and define the unit of analysis. 5) Construct the categories of content to be analyzed. 6) Establish a quantification system. 7) Train coders and conduct a pilot study. 8) Code the content according to established definitions. 9) Analyze the collected data. 10) Draw conclusions and search for indications (p. 145).

Conducting a content analysis is beneficial to this thesis because it provided an accurate picture as to whether the *Post Register* was truly objective in

its coverage of the race. Rather than trusting the newspaper's public statement of intent, looking at the content of each story can tell us whether they put into practice what they promised.

The individual units of analysis were the articles about the governor's race published in the *Post Register*. Each story, or unit, was coded based on a framework using Mindich's components of objectivity. These components were measured, as outlined below, using several dimensions introduced by Malaney and Buss (1979) in a similar study on campaign coverage. These include frequency and amount of coverage, favorableness of coverage, and sources of news.

Operational Definitions

Detachment. As discussed before, detachment is the practice of keeping news content from favoring one side of an issue over another. This component was measured by examining favorableness of the coverage, as defined by Malaney and Buss.

Specifically, stories involving the candidates were judged as favorable if they associate attributes of success to their campaigns. These attributes included winning, gaining, being successful, skilled, being a hard worker, diligent or responsible, being greeted by a favorable crowd reaction or approval. Unfavorable stories were those using negative traits, such as losing, losing support, failing, being negligent, lazy, foolish, irresponsible, and being greeted by an unfavorable crowd or disapproval. Stories not classified as predominantly favorable or unfavorable were considered neutral.

Inverted pyramid. Inverted pyramid style was measured by coding for the Five Ws. (who, what, where, when, and why). Specifically, how many of those elements are in

the story's lead? Additionally, the author examined whether the story followed the basic inverted pyramid rule, which requires that a reporter organizes a story with the most important information at the top.

Facticity. A story's factual basis was measured by coding for variables such as the number and type of cited sources. Similar to Malaney and Buss, the sources were grouped into general categories: Republicans, Democrats, elected (including executive, judicial, legislative branches of government), interest groups, experts, and other sources. When no other source was mentioned in a story, the reporter was considered the source.

Balance. Both balance and nonpartisan components were coded under the same category (balance), due to their similarities. The author measured balance by counting the number of paragraphs in a story mentioning Brady versus the number that mention Kempthorne. Another variable considered was whether the story has a picture, and if so, who is featured in that photo.

A more complete coded sheet can be found at the end of this thesis, labeled as Appendix A.

In addressing reliability, the author tested inter-rater reliability by conducting a pre-test with another graduate student. Each individual analyzed a sample of 10 articles, and using the Holsti formula, the author measured the consistency between coders. The higher their agreement, the greater the intercoder reliability. The Holsti formula was used in order to gain a correlation coefficient that ranges from .00 (no agreement between coders) to 1.00 (full agreement between coders). The initial test produced a coefficient of .70, which met the requirement for reliability (Holsti, 1969). However, further tests were conducted in an effort to improve the correlation. Adjustments were made to the coding

instructions, which proved to be a slight hindrance in the initial tests, and subsequent testing resulted in a coefficient of .80.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the content analysis was analyzed by using SPSS 11.5. By conducting frequency tests and means procedures, the author was able to conclude whether or not the *Idaho Falls Post Register* was indeed objective in covering the Idaho governor's race in 2002.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Coverage Plan Examination

In formulating the *Post Register's* coverage plan, managing editor Dean Miller did not depend just on outside professionals. He also solicited any feedback he could from his own staff. The reaction was somewhat mixed. One reporter told Miller in an e-mail, provided by Miller for this study, that he should not expect a lot of input from her fellow co-workers.

I think a lot of people are afraid to speak out because they fear getting into trouble. No one I've talked to feels comfortable about criticizing Jerry's decision. My concern is that if we already feel that way now what is going to happen during the election? I wish he wasn't doing this. I think it will cost the paper down the road. We can do the best job in the world, but people here want to believe the worst about the paper. And to many of them, this confirms their irrational thoughts that we are just a tool for Jerry to spout his liberal views. (Reporter's e-mail to Dean Miller, March 4, 2002)

Ironically, the paper's political reporter, responsible for covering the election and faced with the task of covering his boss, was not worried about the paper's conundrum. In fact, he told Miller in an e-mail, provided by Miller, that he looked forward to the upcoming campaign.

“I’m probably in the minority but I’m glad he’s running,” he said. “It throws us right into the middle of the biggest race of this political season and ensures that everyone will be watching us closely and reading everything we write. And that’s when this job is the most fun” (Reporter’s e-mail to Dean Miller, March 4, 2002).

With help from those outside and inside the newspaper, Miller and staff put the plan, as outlined earlier, into action. What follows is an analysis of each part of this plan.

Brady’s Removal. The same day Brady made the announcement to run for office, he told readers in a column that he had every intention of staying away from the newspaper and its daily operations.

I have taken a paid leave of absence from anything to do with the Post Register or the company, with one exception I’ll discuss below. I’ve moved out of the building into a home office. I’ll turn in my cell phone and will drop the company car before its lease expires March 25. The next time I walk in the door will be as candidate for governor of Idaho, expecting to be treated no better or worse than the other candidate for the office, Gov. Dirk Kempthorne. (Brady, 2002, A6)

According to Miller, Brady kept to his promise. With the exception of the rare Post Company board meeting, Brady was not seen in or around the newsroom during the campaign. Brady’s prior responsibilities as publisher were given to Roger Plowthow, the paper’s general manager who was named acting publisher. Additionally, Brady’s name was removed from the masthead of the paper and his greeting on the phone mail system was replaced with a greeting by Plowthow. “We were so overly-sensitive about it, that I

think we probably went out of our way to keep our distance” (Miller, personal communication, May 26,2005).

Editorial Influence. Brady also kept his distance from the editorial page.

According to Miller, enforcing this aspect of the paper’s guidelines “turned out to be remarkably easy.” Since Plowthrow was not heavily involved in editing the opinion page as general manager, Miller took a bulk of that responsibility upon himself during the campaign, which helped ensure that Brady was not part of the process. In fact, opinion editor Marty Trillhaase penned a few editorials criticizing Brady during the race. In one particular editorial, Trillhaase blasted Brady for his reluctance to adopt his own platform for fixing the state’s economy and school budget problems.

Being the anti-Kempthorne candidate simply isn't enough. Brady's the challenger. He needs to fill a leadership vacuum. It's his job to tell Idahoans they can no longer be both for schools and against taxes . . . The question Idahoans need to answer is do they want their schools to be worse - or better - four years from now? Are they willing to pay a little more now to get the right result later? Unless Brady asks them - it's a sure thing Kempthorne won't - we'll never know. (Trillhaase, 2002B, A6)

According to Miller, Brady wrote one last editorial before announcing his candidacy and then stepped away completely. “Jerry didn't interfere a bit . . . It's one of the things I respect about Brady. He really observed the bright line between his old role and his new role” (Miller, personal communication, May 26, 2005).

Brady's editorial disappearance was not just for the benefit of the readers, but the staff as well. One of the copy editors stressed the need for Brady to remain absent from the opinion page in an e-mail to Miller.

Jerry Brady should not be writing any more editorials, even ones saying he's not the publisher anymore. That defeats the purpose. "I'm not the publisher anymore, but I'm writing an editorial on the pages of the paper I'm not supposed to be publisher of." . . . If he's now candidate Brady, he is just like everyone else. He doesn't get ANY say in how ANY newspaper covers his candidacy . . . If he is, in fact, not the publisher anymore, he does not get to have expectations. Period. It's like a mom leaving you with a baby-sitter. She tells you the baby-sitter is in charge, but tells you she expects you to behave and clean your room. Well, who's really in charge? Not the baby-sitter. (Copy editor's e-mail to Dean Miller, March 2, 2002)

Critiquing the Critic. Following the advice of other media professionals, Miller chose to hire an outside observer to critique the news stories about the governor's race and to investigate any complaints. "I'm still answerable to the readers and will continue to return your calls, but when you complain about how stories are written or reported, someone else will investigate those complaints, too," he told readers in his March 8 column. (Miller, 2002, A1).

That critic was Lee Warnick, an instructor at Brigham Young University-Idaho who spent several years working as a journalist in the industry. According to Warnick's contract with the paper, which was made available to the public, his main responsibility

was to write a column specifically focusing on the *Post Register's* coverage of the gubernatorial race. The 500-word column would run at least monthly beginning March 24, run every other week during the month of September, and every week during the month of October. He was also responsible for a wrap-up column, which would be published the Sunday following Election Day. This aspect of the paper's plan was one of the most visible and thus, was the easiest to study.

From the very beginning, Warnick assured readers that he would keep a watchful eye on the paper. In his first column, Warnick predicted that the *Post Register's* coverage would be generally up-to-standard and that most errors would be unintentional or simple judgment calls. "But I'm also ready to be proven otherwise. I hope these reports over the next several months will help move the spotlight from the paper and its unavoidable complications to an important political race and a healthy exchange of ideas and views" (Warnick, 2002A, A6).

An examination of Warnick's columns seems to show that he took his responsibilities seriously, taking the paper to task whenever he felt they made a mistake. For instance, in a piece published just a few weeks before the May primary election, Warnick pointed out that the newspaper ran an article on a local long-shot challenger running for a Senate seat, but failed to do the same for Brady's challenger in the upcoming Democratic primary – a little-known candidate who also happened to be from Idaho Falls. "If it had been me, I would have rushed a story on any of Brady's primary opponents into print, especially one from my circulation area, to avoid the very appearance of favoritism" (Warnick, 2002C, A5).

However, Warnick was also quick to note when the paper was doing its job. In one column, Warnick reported that there was no evidence that the paper was covering one of its own. “If anything, the P-R has erred on the side of caution so far by printing only the necessities and basics about this race, unlike its customary coverage in many other spheres of public interest” (Warnick, 2002D, A6). Later on, he noted that the editorial pages seemed to be favoring the Democratic sympathizers, but it was not based on any actions on the *Post Register* side. Rather, it was mainly due to the lack of action from Republican supporters, specifically when it came to rebutting criticisms voiced by editorial writers and in letters to the editor (Warnick, 2002E).

But Warnick didn't let the *Post Register* get away without shouldering some of the responsibility. A major staple of the paper's editorial page are columns written by its reader advisory board, a group of outside observers recruited to balance the views of the editorial staff with their own opinions. Warnick noted that members of the board who sympathized with Brady and other Democrats were the ones voicing the majority of opinions. “If Republicans don't like seeing their state standard-bearer and legislators continually criticized, they need to join the dialog on these pages and put their opinions and ideas out there for us to examine and discuss. There are two sides to issues - even in Idaho” (Warnick, 2002E, A6). Warnick's comments seemed to strike a cord with readers because several letters to the editor either supporting or rebutting the article appeared in subsequent issues. Additionally, Warnick's observations led the editorial staff to recruiting a conservative voice willing to rebut opposing claims, thus removing the paper from any unintentional bias.

In a column a few weeks before the race, Warnick's independence was particularly apparent in a column critiquing a piece by opinion editor Marty Trillhaase. Trillhaase had criticized Kempthorne's decision to give \$2.5 million to Melaleuca, a predominant company in Idaho that produces and markets health-related products.

You'd think a headline like that would give Kempthorne just what he needs - upward momentum four weeks before an election tied to a faltering economy. So, why has it generated a backlash? Here's what people are asking us: Kempthorne cut education. Where did he find a spare \$2.5 million for Melaleuca? (Trillhaase, 2002C, A6)

Warnick fired back at Trillhaase, questioning his vagueness, specifically in outlining what he meant by "backlash" and by "people are asking us." He concluded that if there was a backlash, it was on a small scale, and Trillhaase was just overselling his story (Warnick, 2002H).

While he was the paper's media critic, Warnick also saw his share of criticism. Reader John Carey was particularly critical of Warnick and voiced his objections in a letter to the editor.

All of (Warnick's) effort gives this reader a negative view, and reminds me of words Shakespeare used once - something about "much to do about nothing." . . . (Warnick's) comments remain confusing . . . Stop wasting space on analyzing your positions and just tell us who you are and report the news the best way you know. The readers will know fair reporting, and they will know whether Brady is their choice of candidates once his

agenda is heard. Good, unbiased and reliable reporting overcomes oversight any day. (Carey, 2002, A5)

That's not to say that readers refused to utilize Warnick's responsibility as an independent investigator. In one of his columns early on in the race, Warnick responded to one inquiry – by the vice-chair of the county's Republican group - surrounding the paper's delay on reporting a state report released by Kempthorne. The summary was released to the media on March 21 but didn't appear in the *Post Register* until April 11. "With Mr. Brady running on the opposite side, this certainly does not fly with me," said Knut K. Meyerin (Warnick, 2002B, A5). In response, opinion editor Marty Trillhaase countered that the newsroom only has one fax machine, and with the number of faxes coming in on a daily basis, it likely got misplaced. Additionally, Trillhaase said the summary was a "general distribution press release" that was mass mailed to Idaho media. Usually, the governor's staff followed up by telephone when pieces important to them are not published, and that did not happen in this case. Trillhaase pointed out that "had I received it on March 21, I might not have run it [then]" because of the volume of such pieces he gets (Warnick, 2002B, A5).

Right after the election, Warnick concluded that the paper maintained its distinct independence from Brady's influence, treating each candidate accurately and honestly.

If the *Post Register* had a grand scheme or small plan, surely it would manifest itself here in these showcase articles. After measuring, reading and re-reading, and then sitting back to look at my color-coding, I judge these articles to be fair to both candidates - and well-written, insightful journalism to boot." (Warnick, 2002I, C2)

These types of sentiments were again expressed in Warnick's last report, published the weekend after the election.

As I step back one last time to look through dozens of articles from the past eight months filling a stack of file folders on my desk, I can honestly come to just one conclusion: The *Post Register* has done an excellent job navigating through the awkward situation it was placed in with the sudden candidacy of Jerry Brady. This newspaper's coverage of the race between its former and future boss and Gov. Dirk Kempthorne has been admirably professional, restrained and even-handed. I congratulate all those involved with pulling this off so well. (Warnick, 2002J, B2)

Clarification. The Brady tag line, "who is on paid leave as the *Post Register's* publisher," appeared with nearly every story. The main exception was with letters to the editor and the occasional column. There were variations on the clarification. In some stories, it appeared with the first reference to Brady. Other times, it came with the second or third reference. The editorial staff even attached the tagline to Associated Press stories about Brady and the campaign that appeared in the paper. It became such a common place that Warnick in his columns often referred to it as Brady's middle name.

But while the paper went to great lengths to make sure the clarification ran with every story, by the latter end of the campaign, the practice appeared to be an eyesore for some readers, which Warnick noted in one of his columns.

To George E. Miley of Salmon, who is wearying of candidate Brady's new middle name, "who is on paid leave . . ." I agree with you, George.

By now I think the *Post Register* has shown itself sufficiently independent of its boss and has not favored or over-covered his campaign. It's about time for Brady to be granted his own identity as a candidate and lose the middle name. (Warnick, 2002F, A6)

Meeting with Readers. The newspaper didn't just rely on letters to the editor for feedback. *Post Register* staff hosted a handful of meetings where readers were given the chance to voice their opinions and concerns related to the paper's coverage of the race. Warnick elaborated on one of those meetings in a column. Most in attendance seemed to agree that the *Post Register* had, as one group member stated it, "bent over backwards to be reasonable" in its news coverage of the race. Another panelist commended the paper for "not artificially creating news or pushing an agenda when they [the candidates] weren't campaigning here" (Warnick, 2002G, C2). In contrast, another reader pointedly stated that even if the *Post Register's* news coverage was unbiased, the opinion page's "liberal" slant, the reader thought, colored many readers' view of the overall product, and so readers were hesitant to give the paper due credit for its efforts (Warnick, 2002G, C2). Other readers presented story ideas they felt the paper should pursue, such as Kempthorne's public record. One reader felt the paper should assemble comparable material for Brady, using editorials he penned through the years. That way, voters could see his position on particular issues and Brady could clarify the changes, if any (Warnick, 2002G, C2). Warnick mentioned that managing editor Dean Miller took extensive notes at the meeting, which provided the staff as well as himself with added insight.

There were other, smaller examples of the *Post Register's* openness with readers. The paper made available copies of Warnick's contract as media critic so the public could see for themselves the expectation. The offer to examine the contract was made in more than one story, which provided a reassurance to readers that there was nothing secretive about the partnership. As another step toward openness, contact information for Corey Taule - the reporter assigned to cover the campaign – Miller, Warnick, and assistant managing editor Margaret Wimborne were published at the end of several stories.

In the end, the findings of this case study reveal that Brady did distance himself, both physically and editorially, from the *Post Register*. The paper's ombudsman critiqued the coverage of the election and responded to reader inquires and complaints. Nearly every story ran with a clarification and the paper stuck to its promise to host reader meetings.

Content Analysis

Twenty-five articles were coded in this analysis, selected from newspapers published between March 7, 2002, and November 6, 2002. The articles used in the content analysis were chosen because they were written by *Post Register* staff, focused on an aspect of the race, on the candidates, or on an issue important to the race, like education and the economy. It is worth noting that the *Post Register* did run campaign-related stories written by Associates Press staff members, but they were not included in the analysis because they weren't generated by the paper itself.

The type of story was one aspect of the content analysis. The stories were coded as a campaign news story, an issue based story, a candidate profile, or other. The

categories were not mutually exclusive and stories could fit into more than one. Of the 25 stories coded, 18 were campaign news stories, 8 were issue-based stories, 3 were candidate profiles and 3 were other stories. The other stories consisted of columns written by reporters. (See Table 1).

Table 1

<i>Type of Stories</i>		
Type of Story	Number of Stories	Percentage
Campaign News Story	18	72
Issue Story	8	32
Campaign Profile	3	12
Other Type of Story	3	12

Data from the analysis was inputted into SPSS, but the small number of articles made it difficult to conduct a significant number of tests. However, frequency tests and means procedures were run on the variables and what follows is a brief description of the outcome for each component of objectivity.

Detachment. The analysis measured the paper's detachment from Brady by recording the number of times each article cites favorable and unfavorable attributes of each candidate. The results found that eight articles included favorable attributes of Kempthorne, while seven articles included favorable attributes of Brady (See Table 2). On average, favorable attributes of Kempthorne were cited more times in stories (.92

times) than favorable attributes of Brady (.68 times). There was a larger discrepancy in the number of articles citing unfavorable attributes. Eighteen articles had some form of unfavorable attribute attached to Kempthorne, compared to 8 articles with unfavorable attributes of Brady. Accordingly, Kempthorne’s unfavorable attributes were cited more (1.48 times) on average than Brady’s unfavorable attributes (1.04 times) (See Table 3).

Table 2

Number of Stories Featuring Favorable/Unfavorable Attributes of Each Candidate

Attributes	Kempthorne	Brady
Unfavorable	18	8
Favorable	8	7

Table 3

Number of Times an Article Cites Favorable/Unfavorable Attributes of Each Candidate

Attributes	Total Number of Stories	Mean	Std. Deviation
Unfavorable Attributes of Kempthorne	25	1.48	1.851
Unfavorable Attributes of Brady	25	1.04	2.208
Favorable Attributes of Kempthorne	25	.92	2.482
Favorable Attributes of Kempthorne	25	.68	1.676

Inverted Pyramid. This variable was measured by examining the lead of each article, looking for the five Ws (Who, What, Where, When, and Why), as taught in basic journalism classes. Additionally, each article was coded based on whether they were organized in traditional inverted pyramid style, where information is organized based on its importance to the story, with the most pertinent information at the top. Twenty stories used Who in the lead, 19 stories used What, 15 stories used When, 9 stories used Where, and 7 stories used Why. There were two stories that did not use any of these elements. One was a reporter’s column, written in a more conversational style, and the other was an issue-based story on the state’s economic woes, which used a delayed lead. (See Table 4).

Table 4

Number of Stories Using Five Ws, Inverted Pyramid Style

Elements	Number of Stories	Percentage
Who	20	80
What	19	76
When	15	60
Where	9	36
Why	7	28
None of the elements present	2	8
Used Inverted Pyramid Style	15	60
Did Not Use Inverted Pyramid Style	10	40

Concerning the second part of the inverted pyramid category, where articles were coded based on whether they followed inverted pyramid style, the results showed that only 15 articles, or 60 percent, followed this style (See Table 4). These stories were often the more “timely” pieces, like each candidate announcing their bid for governor, Brady accusing Kempthorne of misusing funds, and the campaign results. Stories not following inverted pyramid were often more issue based or human interest, like the state education crunch or the candidate profiles. Often, these stories were more in-depth, focused more on telling a story than presenting facts.

Facticity. Facticity was measured by counting the number of sources in each story, identifying the types of sources used, and the number of times each source is referenced. Each story coded had at least one source. Nearly 70 percent of the articles, or 17 articles, cited 5 or more sources (See Table 5). A discrepancy arose in the number of sources in each of the candidate profiles. While Kempthorne’s profile was 8 paragraphs longer (80 paragraphs compared to 72 paragraphs), there were only 9 sources cited compared to 15 sources in Brady’s profile.

Table 5

Number of Cited Sources in Each Story

<u>Number of Sources</u>	<u>Number of Stories</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1 to 3	5	20
4 to 6	14	56
7 or more	6	24

However, each story carried a variety of source types, including Republicans, Democrats, and elected sources. These three types of sources were cited the most. Republican sources appeared in 18 stories, while Democratic and elected sources appeared in 16 stories each (See Table 6).

Table 6

Number of Stories With Particular Source Types

Source Type	Number of Stories Citing this Source	Percentage
Republican	18	72
Democrat	16	64
Elected Official	16	64
Interest Group	4	16
Expert	4	16
Citizen/Voter	7	28
Campaign Member	5	20
Other source	6	24

On average, elected sources were cited the most in stories (6.6 times). They were cited more than Republicans (5.24 times) and Democrats (3.64 times) (See Table 7). As has been done previously, it is worth noting that these categories were not mutually exclusive. For instance, Kempthorne could be considered a Republican source as well as an elected source.

Table 7

Number of Times Source Types are Referenced in Stories

Source Type	Total Number of Stories	Mean	Std. Deviation
Republican	25	5.24	5.761
Democrat	25	3.64	4.241
Elected Official	25	6.60	8.287
Interest Group	25	.64	1.680
Expert	25	.44	1.158
Citizens/Voter	25	2.16	5.505
Campaign Member	25	.72	1.792
Other Source	25	.68	1.930

Balance. Several factors were considered in measuring balance, including whether a story referenced both candidates, the number of paragraphs mentioning each candidate, and whether a photo ran with the story. In 23 stories, both candidates were referenced at least once. One article that did not mention both candidates was a reporter-produced column about the challenges the Democratic Party was facing in the upcoming election. Brady, of course, was the cited candidate in that story. The other piece focused on the GOP bus tour that made a stop in Idaho Falls and hosted a carnival at a local school. In this instance, Kempthorne was the cited candidate. On average, Kempthorne was cited in more paragraphs (9.12 paragraphs per story) than Brady (8.72 paragraphs) (See Table 8).

Table 8

Number of Paragraphs Mentioning Candidates

Candidate	Total Number of Stories	Mean	Std. Deviation
Kempthorne	25	9.12	12.534
Brady	25	8.72	12.928

The presence of a photo was also considered when measuring balance. Thirteen stories had a picture. All but two of the pictures featured either Brady or Kempthorne. A profile on Brady’s Democratic challenger in the primary election included a picture, but just of Brady’s opponent. The other exception was a story about campaign signs in local neighborhoods. The photo included with the story featured lawns full of campaign signs for each candidate, but did not feature the candidates themselves. Overall, there were more photos of Brady (7) than of Kempthorne (4) (See Table 9).

Table 9

Number of Photographs Featuring Candidates

Candidate	Number of Photos Featuring Candidates	Percentage
Kempthorne	4	16
Brady	7	28

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Earlier, this study asked whether the *Idaho Falls Post Register* followed its plan to maintain independence from Brady. The findings of the case study suggest that the newspaper did indeed stick to its plan. First, candidate Brady moved out of his office, turned in his keys, and stayed out of the newsroom. With the exception of Post Company board meetings, he was not involved in the newspaper's operations. Additionally, his name was taken off the masthead and off of the company's voice messaging system.

Second, he stopped writing and editing material for the paper's opinion piece. This conclusion came through an interview with managing editor Dean Miller and an examination of editorial pages during the campaign. As mentioned before, material on the editorial page did take stabs at Brady and his performance as a candidate, one indication that it was free from his influence.

Third, nearly every story ran with a tagline, clarifying Brady's relationship with the newspaper. There were exceptions, including columns and letters to the editor. On rare occasions, the tagline was not included in a story, but it was not commonplace and came in stories toward the end of the campaign, when the paper felt confident that readers were aware of Brady's relationship.

Fourth, Lee Warnick, the paper's media critic, did appear to follow his responsibilities, as outlined in his contract. He provided regular assessments of the race, which were published on a monthly basis at the beginning of the campaign and a bi-weekly and weekly basis toward the end of the race. In his columns, he provided both

positive and negative feedback on locally generated material. He also made an effort to investigate any complains or inquires from readers, which he touch upon in his columns.

However, while Warnick met the requirements established by the newspaper, Miller admitted he had some reservations about using Warnick. First, Miller said a few readers raised concerns that newspaper staff picked the critic rather than giving that responsibility to an independent source. Miller also felt the paper could have benefited from a more picky media critic. Miller said he felt Warnick was too soft in his critique of the coverage and if faced with the same situation again, he would have an independent committee select the ombudsman (Miller, personal communication, November 24, 2004).

Finally, the *Post Register* hosted a number of meetings in Idaho Falls, looking for input from readers as to their performance. As mentioned before, Warnick touched on one of these meetings in a column. The editorial staff made sure they took notes and any pertinent feedback was implemented into the paper's coverage.

The second question explored by this study was whether the *Post Register* was objective in its coverage of the race. Overall, the findings produced by a content analysis suggest that the newspaper was objective in its coverage. That is not to say that the candidates received equal treatment in relation to each component of objectivity. However, many of the discrepancies canceled each other out. For example, the newspaper cited negative attributes of Kempthorne more often than Brady. But they also cited more favorable attributes of the governor than of Brady. One reason for this could be due to the fact that Kempthorne was the incumbent. In many instances, incumbents are more vulnerable to both negative and positive portrayals because their performance is often scrutinized during a race. Supporters often point to the incumbent's

accomplishments. At the same time, opponents use negative portrayals of the incumbent to convince the public that a change needs to be made. In the race between Brady and Kempthorne, there were several occasions where Brady or other Democrats blamed Kempthorne for the state's struggling economy, often citing his failure to balance a budget. Supporters stood by Kempthorne, emphasizing his abilities as a leader to steer the state through a tough economic slump.

Inverted pyramid was the component used the least in the *Post Register's* coverage. However, the presence or lack of the inverted pyramid style was based more on the types of stories, not necessarily the intent to feature Brady over Kempthorne or vice versa.

From a facticity perspective, each story had its share of sources, ranging from regular citizens to political hardballs. Obviously, in stories focused on the Republican candidate (Kempthorne) or his party, there were more Republican sources and in stories about the Democratic challenger (Brady) or his party, there were more Democratic sources. Occasionally, stories only mentioned one or two sources, but these were often columns or stories based on non-human sources, such as the report on campaign spending. The findings reveal that Republican sources were cited in more stories and cited more often than Democratic sources.

Finally, the paper was partially balanced in its coverage of the race. In some aspects, this was probably the component the staff worried most about. For instance, both candidates were at least referenced, if not quoted, in nearly every story. In stories focused specifically on campaign issues, equal weight was given to both candidates. When Brady announced his platform for improving the state's economy, which included taking shots at Kempthorne's failures, the governor's response was published as part of the story. In

another instance, when the paper ran a story about the state's budget woes, the paper outlined each candidate's plan for change.

There were, however, some noticeable differences in the number of photos a candidate appeared in, another aspect taken into consideration when measuring balance. The findings showed that Brady was featured in nearly twice as many photos as Kempthorne. There could be several explanations for why this was the case. This may likely be due to the focus of the particular story. For example, one story with a photo of Brady reported on the opening of a new headquarters for the local Democratic Party. Brady was there as part of the opening ceremonies and became part of the photo. Another story included just a photo of Brady because it focused on what Democratic Party members felt Brady needed to do to gain notoriety among voters. While there probably was a reason why each photo ran with each story, the fact that there were more photos of Brady than Kempthorne could raise suspicions among the readers.

In short, the findings showed that there were not considerable indications that the *Post Register* was anything but objective in its coverage. Admittedly, coverage of each candidate was not 100 percent identical, but the differences were sporadic and inconsequential. If anything, the coverage seemed to favor Kempthorne, suggesting that the staff was so concerned about appearing to favor Brady, that they actually were more favorable to Kempthorne. Such an observation matches up with the some of the feedback given after the race to political reporter Corey Taule, who was responsible for covering the campaign for the paper and wrote many of the stories. "I heard from both Republicans and Democrats that we hammered Brady," he said. (Corey Taule, personal communication, June 29, 2005). However, Taule maintained that he covered the

campaign the same way he covered other governor's races. "I didn't approach it any differently. I called (Brady) and asked him the questions I would ask anyone else," he said. "I was just doing what I do" At the same time, Taule admits there was a heightened sense of alertness with this race than with others because Brady was running. "I realized that there was going to be more scrutiny and everyone was going to read every single word," he said. (Taule, personal communication, June 29, 2005)

After studying both the newspaper's plan and its coverage of the governor's race, it is worth exploring the relationship between the two. The results of this study lead the author to suggest that it was because the *Post Register* staff adopted a plan, and stuck to it, that they were able to remain objective in their reporting. This relationship was fueled by the paper's desire to uphold its mission – the reader's well-being comes first.

An examination of the newspaper's plan reveals that this belief was a factor in the way the *Post Register* approached its coverage of the 2002 race. For instance, the newspaper's decision to hire an ombudsman, Lee Warnick, and host reader meetings both suggest that the editorial staff desired to maintain openness and trust with their readers. The extra costs and time tied to such actions was by no means a short-term gain for the staff, but it helped them out in the end. From the newspaper's perspective, Warnick's comments and feedback kept them on task. If they strayed from their fair and balanced coverage, Warnick would let the staff and public know in his columns, forcing them to correct the problem.

Additionally, the reader meetings gave staff members a chance to hear from their target audience – the people they are most worried about pleasing. If the readers had some issues with the paper's performance, the meeting gave editors a chance to hear

about these concerns and then correct them. In turn, the paper would succeed in maintain sense of credibility and independence, particularly in the eyes of its readers.

From the perspective of the readership, having an available ombudsman gave readers a channel of which their comments and concerns could be taken into consideration. There was no worry that the feedback would fall on deaf ears, because Warnick was independent from the rest of the newspaper staff. Also, the reader meetings made it possible for them to meet the staff, face-to-face, where they could clear up any concerns. Such options made it easier for readers to trust that their concerns mattered and that the paper truly had their well being in mind. .

Now that this study has answered the preceding research questions, it would be appropriate to revisit the discussion on the different viewpoints guiding journalists as they incorporate objectivity in reporting. Specifically, it would be beneficial to explore which viewpoint the *Post Register* adopted in its coverage of the election.

In his column to readers at the beginning of the race, Miller assured readers that they would not see many differences between their 2002 coverage and the coverage from 1998, the last gubernatorial race.

In 1998, we studied all the nonpartisan polls we could find and identified the issues that citizens cared about. We focused our coverage on those concerns. Candidates hated it because we ignored the so-called "wedge issues" that make for slick TV ads and grabby sound bites. . . .The governor candidates also hated it that we devoted more energy to local races than statewide races. To us, it's simple. County commissioners and mayors affect your life more than the governor does. Candidate Brady will

have to live with those same rules this year, because we're covering this election season much like 1998. (Miller, 2002, A1)

If the paper did tackle coverage of the 2002 race as it did in 1998, it appears the paper was taking a public journalism approach to objectivity. As mentioned before, advocates believe public journalism is not aimed at solving problems; it is aimed at reengaging citizens in solving problems. However, its goal is not to better connect journalists with their communities, but to better connect the people in communities with one another.

That being said, the *Post Register* was using the process of public journalism without trying to achieve the end goal – connecting communities with one another. The paper chose to hire ombudsman, the staff hosted reader meetings, and they invited any interested individuals to the daily editorial meeting. These were all steps that a public journalist would take. However, the paper took these measures in an effort to ensure they were performing well. In other words, the editorial staff was more concerned with keeping readers during the election rather than helping the readers connect with the election issues. The *Post Register's* approach to public journalism appears to agree with Merritt's assertion that many newspaper editors attempt public journalism without understanding its underlying philosophy.

So in the end, the *Post Register* was not rooted in one specific viewpoint. Basically, the editorial staff chose to use public journalism tactics as tools toward maintaining a perceived independence, or autonomy. But in the process, they most heartily embraced the communitarian belief. In other words, if the readers are happy, we must be doing a good job.

Managing editor Dean Miller has stood by the paper's approach to covering the race. He said the experience confirmed an important truth in his mind. The paper's mission statement – thinking about the good of the community, about the long-term good rather than the short-term gain – was the correct approach to covering the race (Miller, personal communication, November 24,2004).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the *Idaho Falls Post Register's* coverage of the 2002 Idaho gubernatorial race between Republican incumbent Dirk Kempthorne and publisher/owner Jerry Brady, the Democratic challenger. It used a case study approach to explore whether the paper followed its coverage plan as outlined to its readers. The case study included a content analysis of campaign-related articles in determining whether the newspaper was objective in its coverage, based on Mindich's five components of objectivity: detachment, nonpartisanship, inverted pyramid, facticity, and balance.

The findings revealed that the *Post Register* staff did stick to their coverage plan, a move that also helped the paper remain objective in its coverage. Particular aspects of the plan, including hiring an ombudsman and hosting reader meetings, actually served as safeguards that kept the *Post Register* objective.

One interesting aspect worth revisiting is the limited number of articles about the race that actually came from the *Post Register* staff. From March to November 2002, the paper published just 25 articles written by its own staff, not including editorials or other material on the editorial pages. The remaining articles published by the paper came from other sources, including the Associated Press. This leads the author to suggest that the *Post Register* staff was so concerned about pleasing its readers and maintaining an appearance of objectivity, that they failed to adequately cover the state's most important political race. Managing editor Dean Miller recognized the paper's lack in coverage and

said that if he could do it all over again, the paper would have provided more coverage (Miller, personal communication, November 24, 2004).

Looking back at the experience, Miller is quick to admit this was one challenge he did not want to deal with as an editor.

It was a really uncomfortable place for a newspaper editor to be, particularly in this community which is very conservative and which has always complained that the editorial page is not conservative. Suddenly, everything was suspect. Everything was scrutinized. People who should have trusted were distrustful and that was really awkward. (D. Miller, personal communication, November 24, 2004)

Concern for the readers and their opinions was more of a concern for people like Miller, who had to answer to reader complaints and was responsible for the editorial and news content of the paper. But for reporters like Corey Taule, the focus was more on getting the job done and doing it right, even if it upset the readers, editors, or the publisher-turned candidate. “My job is to go sniff out the truth. Whether it’s good for Brady or not, I don’t care,” he said. “I’d rather lose my job than give up my integrity” (Taule, personal communication, June 29, 2005).

It is worth noting that Miller and the *Post Register* staff will get a second opportunity to cover the boss. In March 2005, Brady formally announced his intent to run for governor in 2006. In a column published the day after Brady’s announcement, Miller told readers that the staff planned to make some minor changes this time around. True to earlier comments, Miller said the paper planned to increase its coverage and use an

independently selected ombudsman. However, he assured readers they would not see any drastic changes from the paper's coverage in 2002.

We've been through it once before and are confident in our ability to ensure independence and fairness. That's because last time, readers told us they got the facts and analysis they needed to make their choice. That's our job: equipping people with the information they need to live the U.S. Constitution's dream of self-governance. (Miller, 2005, A1)

Study Limitations

There were a few limitations in this study, specifically in relation to the content analysis. Over the course of the campaign, the newspaper only published 25 stories that met the criteria for this study. The remainder of the coverage was generated from the Associated Press. In fact, there were just as many, if not more AP stories. As a result, the author was limited in the number of statistical tests he could perform on the data. Also, because the race occurred before this study, portions of the case study were dependent upon the confirmation of *Post Register* staff. For instance, the only way to determine whether Brady really moved out of his office, stopped editing editorials, etc. was to ask the staff. Though unlikely, the staff could have provided false information, misleading the results of the study.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study only focused on a small aspect of an issue that is worthy of further research and discussion. In relation to the case study, it would be interesting to compare

the Post Register's coverage plan with plans used by other newspapers that may have faced similar situations. What were the differences? What were the similarities? This type of study could help establish certain considerations that need to be addressed by newspapers when covering one of their own.

In considering the content analysis aspect of this study, it would be worth conducting a similar analysis on the coverage of the same race by another Idaho newspaper of similar size. The results could be used to compare the *Post Register's* coverage of the race with coverage provided by the other newspaper. Such a comparison would provide further insight to how the paper performed and would reveal indications of bias coverage on the part of the *Post Register*. It would also be beneficial to study the paper's coverage of the governor's race in 1998 in comparison to the 2002 race. Also, as Brady has announced his plans to run again in 2006, comparing the *Post Register's* coverage of his second run versus his first run could add some insight.

Expanding the scope of this study would also provide aspects worthy of further study. Specifically, conducting a similar analysis of newspapers covering their own running for other offices, such as president, legislator, etc., would provide some interesting findings. Also, exploring the philosophies of these journalists turned politicians could provide more understanding and discussion as to the line between journalism and politics.

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APPENDIX A

Coding scheme for Thesis

Article Headline _____ Article Number _____

Length(# of paragraphs) _____ Page Number _____ Publication Date _____

1. Article type (Check all that apply. A campaign news story would be an article that focuses on events such as fundraisers, campaign visits/stops, rallies, opinion polls, and other items dealing with the campaign overall. Candidate profiles focus specifically on the candidates and include information related to their character, personal and public lives, etc. In an issue story, the majority of the text deals with a candidate's views/opinions on election issues, i.e. taxes, education, etc.)

____ Campaign news story ____ Issue story
____ Candidate profile ____ Other _____

Detachment

2. ____ **Number of times the story cites favorable attributes of Kempthorne** (Stories involving Kempthorne are considered favorable if they associate attributes of success to his campaign. These attributes include winning, gaining, being successful, skilled, being a hard worker, diligent or responsible, being tied to a favorable event, or being greeted by a favorable crowd reaction or approval.)

3. ____ **Number of times the story cites favorable attributes of Brady** (Stories involving Brady are considered favorable if they associate attributes of success to his campaign. These attributes include winning, gaining, being successful, skilled, being a hard worker, diligent or responsible, being tied to a favorable event or being greeted by a favorable crowd reaction or approval.)

4. ____ **Number of times the story cites unfavorable attributes of Kempthorne** (Unfavorable stories would be those using negative traits, such as losing, losing support, failing, being negligent, lazy, foolish, irresponsible, and Kempthorne being tied to an unfavorable event or being greeted by an unfavorable crowd or disapproval).

5. ____ **Number of times the story cites unfavorable attributes of Brady** (Unfavorable stories would be those using negative traits, such as losing, losing support, failing, being negligent, lazy, foolish, irresponsible, and Brady being tied to an unfavorable event of being greeted by an unfavorable crowd or disapproval).

Inverted Pyramid

6. Which of the five W's (Who, what, when, where and why) appear in the lead of the story? (Check all that apply. In this study, the lead is considered the first three paragraphs of the story.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Who | <input type="checkbox"/> Where |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What | <input type="checkbox"/> Why |
| <input type="checkbox"/> When | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the elements are present |

7. _____ Is the information in the article organized in order of importance, starting with the most important information and ending with the least important?

1. Yes 2. No

Facticity

8. _____ Number of cited sources in the story. (A cited source includes any human or nonhuman entity, such as an organization, study, or document, explicitly attached to any statement or fact in the story using words like "said," "stated," "according to," "claimed," etc. That includes both direct quotations and paraphrased, indirect statements. The candidates do count as sources.)

9. Which types of sources are cited in the story? (Check all that apply. In this study, elected sources include those who represent government entities, such as legislators, mayors, judges, education officials, etc. A cited source is attached to statement of fact in a story using words like "said," "stated," "according to," "claimed," etc. The candidates do count as sources. Other references to sources (i.e. he, she, governor, etc) count as a citation.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Republicans | <input type="checkbox"/> Democrats |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional source | <input type="checkbox"/> Interest group representative/member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expert | <input type="checkbox"/> Citizen/voter (regular, everyday person) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Campaign member | <input type="checkbox"/> No sources |
| Other source _____ (list source) | |

10. How many times are each of these types of sources cited? (Check all that apply. In this instance, count every time a source is cited, even if it is the same source. A cited source is attached to statement of fact in a story using words like "said," "stated," "according to," "claimed," etc.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Republicans | <input type="checkbox"/> Democrats |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional source | <input type="checkbox"/> Interest group representative/member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expert | <input type="checkbox"/> Citizen/voter (regular, everyday person) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Campaign member | <input type="checkbox"/> No sources |
| Other source _____ (list source) | |

Balance

11. ____ Does the article reference both candidates?

1. Yes 2. No

12. ____ Number of paragraphs that mention and/or cite Kempthorne.
(Each paragraph begins with an indent)

13. ____ Number of paragraphs that mention and/or cite Brady.
(Each paragraph begins with an indent)

14. ____ Is there at least one picture accompanying the story? (A picture would include a portrait/mug shot.)

1. Yes 2. No

15. ____ If there is a picture, does it include Brady?

1. Yes 2. No

16. ____ If there is a picture, does it include Kempthorne?

1. Yes 2. No