

NEWSPAPER BIAS IN THE 1994
FLORIDA GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN:
AN ANALYSIS OF COVERAGE FROM
TWO FLORIDA DAILY NEWSPAPERS

by

Gregory Barnes

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The Schmidt College of Arts and Humanities
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Florida Atlantic University

Boca Raton, Florida

August 1997

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of Study.....	2
Need for Study.....	2
Summary and Preview.....	4
CHAPTER TWO	
OVERVIEW.....	6
Some Pertinent Issues.....	6
Public Reliance on Newspapers for Political Information..	6
Media Influence on Politics.....	8
Agenda Setting and Priming.....	9
Verbal Representations.....	13
Stereotyping.....	14
Slanting.....	16
Preferential Bias for Incumbents.....	18
Bias in Newspaper Headlines.....	19
Hypotheses.....	20
Operational Definition of Terms.....	20
CHAPTER THREE	
METHODOLOGY.....	22
Using Content Analysis.....	22
The Use of Positive and Negative Titles and Terms.....	22
The Use of Space.....	25
The Use of Candidates Names in Headlines.....	26
Time Covered.....	26
CHAPTER FOUR	
REPORT OF FINDINGS.....	27
Republican Primary Election.....	27
Part One - Titles and Terms.....	27
Part Two - Total Column Inches.....	40
Part Three - Headlines.....	41
General Election.....	42
Part One - Titles and Terms.....	42
Part Two - Total Column Inches.....	52
Part Three - Headlines.....	53

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....54

- Republican Primary
 - Hypothesis One.....54
 - Hypothesis Two.....57
 - Hypothesis Three.....58
- General Election
 - Hypothesis One.....59
 - Hypothesis Two.....60
 - Hypothesis Three.....61
- Conclusions.....62
- Suggestions for Further Study.....63

ABSTRACT

Author: Gregory Barnes

Title: Newspaper Bias in the 1994 Florida Gubernatorial Campaign:
An Analysis of Coverage from Two Florida Daily Newspapers.

Institution: Florida Atlantic University

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Voncile M. Smith

Degree: Master of Arts

Year: 1997

This study examined 1994 gubernatorial election coverage by two Florida daily newspapers, The Miami Herald and The Sun-Sentinel, to determine if their coverage was biased. The author conducted content analyses of the titles and terms both papers used to describe the candidates, the total column inches devoted to each candidate, and the number of times the candidate's name appeared in headlines. The results of the analyses were inconclusive for both elections, but in the Republican primary The Miami Herald appeared to show slight favoritism for Jeb Bush, a Miamian. The Sun-Sentinel provided relatively equal coverage for all four major candidates. In the general election both papers mentioned Lawton Chiles more frequently with more attention directed to his stand on issues possibly because of his incumbency.