

**New Reporting: Is New Always Better?**

A Critical Analysis of How Television and the Internet Have Changed Reporting

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## Abstract

This paper looked at how the election coverage has changed in the last century with the introduction of new mediums such as television and the Internet. The paper aimed to answer whether new platforms such as television or the Internet covering elections are good or not. In addition, it also sought to find how much television and the Internet are responsible for some of the often cited problems with the media such as focusing too much on trivial issues. There has been a fair amount of research focusing on television or the Internet's impact on election coverage, but there is little research that compares both mediums' impacts. Furthermore, there is even less research that takes into account the most recent election cycle. The research process for this paper included reviewing 125 articles from the following time periods, the 1920s, 1950-1990, the 1990s and the 2012 cycle. The synthesis included looking at 25 articles from each time period, except for the last time period, where the process looked at 50 articles. That was to account for 25 articles from traditional news sources such as the *New York Times* and 25 from new media sources such as *Buzzfeed*. The research process also included considering past scholar's arguments on whether the Internet and television have been a positive influence on election coverage. The paper weighed both arguments using evidence from articles and scholars and concludes that while election coverage has continued to deteriorate over the last century, it has not been as linear as some might suspect. As a result, the paper could not conclude that the Internet and television are definitively responsible for the problems in election coverage, even if both have contributed to some of those negative issues.

## Introduction

The rise of new media sources in the last century is one of the greatest developments in the history of journalism. For a long time, print journalism was the only form of reporting. During the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, traditional media outlets such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Chicago Tribune* were the only media covering elections. All of those sources used print to report stories. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, television developed as a media source. Throughout the rest of the 20<sup>th</sup> century television continued to develop as print media remained the dominant medium. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, traditional media outlets began to go online. During the 21<sup>st</sup> century, new media sources such as *Politico* and *Buzzfeed* have emerged. These sources have some key differences from traditional media outlets on how they cover elections. For example, a site like *Politico* is dedicated to only providing up to the minute political coverage and as a result has been able to go into more niche areas such as discussing what President Barack Obama is doing minute by minute. Traditional media used to just report stories every few hours. As these new media sources have emerged, traditional media sources have begun to report up to the minute news too. However, the traditional media outlets have had to focus on more areas since they report more than just politics. In addition, they have kept differences in their temperament. While a *Buzzfeed* article might have an article featuring the “top 10 goofy pictures of Obama”, an article like that will not show up in the *New York Times*.

My paper looked at how print media has changed with the introduction of new mediums for reporting such as the Internet and television, in regards to election stories specifically. I studied how the traditional media covered politics starting in the 1920s when print was the dominant medium, then the 1950s-1990 when television coverage came in. Furthermore, I

looked at when traditional news sources started going online in the 1990s. Additionally, I considered reporting in the 2012 election cycle with the emergence of the Internet as a major news component and the start of several new media sources.

I began the research process by looking at current perspectives of how the media has changed in the last 100 years in covering elections. Next I went through 125 articles. This synthesis consisted of looking at 25 articles from each time period, with the exception of the latest time period, where I looked at 50 articles. For that time period, I looked at 25 articles from traditional news sources such as the *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times* and 25 from new media sources such as *Buzzfeed* and *Daily Caller* to directly compare the two different mediums. I studied all 125 articles to look for trends in similarities and differences. This whole process sought to answer what effect new mediums have on print media's coverage of elections over the past 100 years. I went into this paper with the belief that new mediums such as television and the Internet have corrupted the news and resulted in worse coverage.

## **Arguments**

Many people have written about how new mediums have negatively impacted news coverage of elections. In addition, there are many examples from various articles. One area that has been impacted by the new mediums is the focus on the horse race aspect. The Internet and television's coverage of elections have forced the media as a whole to primarily cover issues such as which candidate is ahead or behind, instead of actual policy issues. In the 1920s, several articles seemed to delve more into the actual facts rather than who was ahead in the polls. One example of this is an article about the 1928 Democratic nominee for president, Ohio Governor James Cox. The article gave an in-depth look at Cox's record. It provided a detailed analysis about his vetoes, his speeches and what associates had to say about him ("Cox the Governor

Revealed...”, Jul. 25, 1920). Furthermore, the article had 28 quotes, which is far more quotes than in any article today. The article began by writing that: “but beneath this agreeable veneer there is an executive of parts, as may be seen from his official record during three terms in managing the third richest State in the Union.” The article followed up this statement with many facts and figures (“Cox the Governor Revealed...”, Jul. 25, 1920).

This article contrasts with some of the articles from other time periods. Looking at the 2012 election, the new media articles focused too much on electoral strategy. Both the new media articles and traditional media articles focused on the horse race aspect of the election. An example from traditional media is a *New York Times* article written by noted statistician Nate Silver. Silver gave an in-depth analysis of whether Obama had a good chance for re-election a year out from the election. The article did an analysis of the current polls, along with looking at other factors such as GDP growth, unemployment numbers and strength of GOP candidates (Silver, Nov. 11, 2011). Silver looked at different factors such as economic performance writing that, “frighteningly enough, the margin of error on an economic forecast made a year in advance is about plus or minus 4 percent of G.D.P. Advance forecasts of election results must account for this uncertainty, either by expanding their own margins of error to accommodate it or by making their predictions conditional upon different economic situations (we will pursue the latter approach),” (Silver, Nov. 11, 2011). While Silver did discuss the issue of the economy, the analysis lacks any discussion of why the economy is in poor shape nor what the candidates’ actual policies are. Another example was with *US News and World Report*, which had a story on how a study showed that former Massachusetts Governor and 2012 Republican Presidential Nominee Mitt Romney was quoted 50 percent more by the media than President Barack Obama. It also looked at whether this worked for or against Romney (Flock, Oct. 30, 2012). Again while

the article gave an in-depth analysis, it did not focus on the actual issues. Although articles such as these provide crucial information and are well researched, these types of articles should not dominate the coverage.

This trend continued in the 1990s. This time period had short articles that did not discuss the issues and also many articles that covered the election only as a game, but not the actual issues, much like the Nate Silver article. A *Wall Street Journal* article discussed how the midterm elections of 1990 left Congress largely the same saying, “voters left the makeup of Congress virtually intact in midterm elections yesterday, despite one or two shockers, but produced political upheaval in crucial gubernatorial races,” (David & Perry, Nov. 7, 1990). The article went on to say that changes in the gubernatorial elections could affect the House in later elections because the governors will help control redistricting (David & Perry, Nov. 7, 1990). The article did not discuss how the election might affect policy going forward on either the federal level or the state level. Another example of this was an article from the *Washington Post* that discussed how Democrats in New Hampshire were planning their own State of the Union to raise opposition to then President George H.W. Bush. The article featured how many prominent Democrats would participate and when it would occur (Balz & Stencel, Jan. 3, 1992). The article did not look into what policies the Democrats would actually raise. Furthermore, the article went into focusing on the horse race by writing “Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton requested \$831,000 in federal matching funds for his presidential campaign yesterday, substantially more than any other Democratic candidate,” (Balz & Stencel, Jan. 3, 1992). Again the article only focused on what candidate had the most money or is ahead, rather than what their policies were. Both of these articles seemed to contribute to the idea of politics being covered as a horse race.

When it came to the time period of 1950-1990, there were actually fewer articles focusing on issues, with only eight articles discussing the actual issues. One article that had extensive coverage of the issues was a *Los Angeles Times* article. The article discussed how then Massachusetts Senator John F. Kennedy was entering the race for president. The article covered Kennedy's background and the issues he was running on. The article specifically said, "Kennedy said the current budget for national defense is 'too low by a substantial percentage'," (Hartmann, Jan.3, 1960). The article also discussed the issue of his Catholic faith and how that could be a hurdle in the election (Hartmann, Jan. 3, 1960). Interestingly, two other publications also wrote about Kennedy's announcement, but were far less substantive. In contrast a *Washington Post* article just discussed how Kennedy was on the verge of announcing and included references from Kennedy's aides about the race (Lindsay, Jan. 1, 1960). The *New York Times* only had a brief article sharing Kennedy was ready to announce for President. It did not raise any issues, but did feature details about Kennedy's campaign office, "Mr. Kennedy has already set up a seven-room branch office in a downtown office building," ("Kennedy's Hat Ready", Jan. 2, 1960). Since the problems of the horse race coverage span all the way back to the 1950s, when television was being introduced, it suggests that the introduction of both television and the Internet likely had a negative impact on election coverage.

Looking further at the 1950-1990 time period, there seemed to be more articles focusing on the polling than any other time periods. In this time period, four articles focused on polling, while the other periods had only one article each discussing poll numbers. A *Washington Post* article discussed how then Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy led the Democratic primary in 1976, but polled behind President Gerald Ford. In addition, the article looked at the polling numbers of other candidates in the race, writing "among the college-educated, for example,

Muskie (Maine Senator Ed Muskie), Jackson (Washington Senator Henry Jackson), McGovern (South Dakota Senator George McGovern) and Mondale (Minnesota Senator Walter Mondale) in the aggregate receive 45 percent of that vote, compared with a combined Kennedy and Wallace total of 36 percent,” (Harris, Jan. 3, 1974). While the article gets technical and in-depth with statistics, it did not discuss any issues facing the race.

The belief that the media has increased the horserace coverage has a lot of support. Harvard University Professor of Government and Press Thomas Patterson argues that in the last century, the modern media have encouraged candidates to over promise and has acted more as a public relations agent for the candidates. Patterson asserts that the media should challenge the candidates on the issues (Patterson, 198, 1993). He points to examples of the media having an impact on the actual election process, such as with former President Jimmy Carter. The media propelled an unknown Georgia governor to the front of the Democratic pack by celebrating him as the dark horse candidate who would surprise (Patterson, 195, 1993). Patterson explains, “instead of making the traditional rounds among party leaders, Carter traveled around the country meeting with journalists. When the *New York Time’s* R.W. Apple wrote a front-page story about Carter’s bright prospects one Sunday in October, his outlook indeed brightened,” (Patterson, 193, 1993). Interestingly, Patterson does not so much blame the new mediums as he does blame changes in the primary system that took power away from the traditional parties and instead gave it to other groups, predominantly the media (Patterson, 194, 1993). In another article by Patterson, he argues that the media’s hold on what issues matter results in fewer issues being covered. Patterson asserts, “modern-day politics also exalts personality, increasing the likelihood that personal blunders and failings will loom large in a campaign. Though the 1972 presidential election, personal controversy did not receive even half as much news coverage as



did policy issues. Since 1972, it has received nearly equal time. (14) Even a short list indicates just how salient personal controversy has become: Gerald Ford's blundering statement on Eastern Europe, Jimmy Carter's "lust in my heart" Playboy interview, Geraldine Ferraro's tax returns, Gary Hart's affair with Donna Rice, Dan Quayle's assault on the fictional Murphy Brown, Bill Clinton's relationship with Gennifer Flowers, and Al Gore's Buddhist Temple appearance," (Patterson, 1, 2002). So when journalists control who and what matters, they are often going to go for miniscule stories that get the public interested, such as something embarrassing about the candidate.

University of California San Diego Communications Professor Daniel Hallin agrees to a certain degree that the media has delved less into the issues over the last century. He even did a study on the television news that found between 1968 and 1988, the average time for a sound bite decreased from 43 seconds to nine seconds (Hallin, 24, 1992). Hallin cites the media's focus on the "horse race" as reason for the decrease in sound bites, which has come with the more recent forms of media. Hallin did point out that it was a complicated situation saying, "this change is interpreted as part of a general shift in the style of television news toward a more mediated, journalist-centered form of journalism. Three factors help explain this change: (a) the evolution of television "know-how," (b) the weakening of political consensus and authority during the last 20 years, and (c) changes in the economics of the industry," (Hallin, 24, 1992). However, the fact that television news is providing shorter sound bites still likely means both candidates and actual issues receive less time too.

Beyond focusing on the horse race too much, the media has also placed too much emphasis on popular culture issues such as what the president had for breakfast. *Buzzfeed* has been a main purveyor. For example on the day of the election, *Buzzfeed* had an article about 10

things to watch on television instead of election coverage. The article was written as though watching the election coverage was a bad thing (Horan, Nov. 6, 2012). It listed an array of shows ranging from *The Cosby Show* to *WWE Smackdown* (Horan, Nov. 6, 2012). The author had this to say about *The Cosby Show*, “no matter how stressed out the election has you, when you watch ‘The Cosby Show’ it seems like everything is going to be all right,” (Shaw, Nov. 15, 2012). This quote shows the article was obviously intended for comedic effect, but it was amongst real political articles on the site and thus trivialized the election process. Another article that had a popular culture focus was about a popular German designer sketching a picture of Obama after he won re-election (Shaw, Nov. 15, 2012). The article only contained a few sentences and was dominated by a picture of the sketch and a picture of the artist with a cat and a quote of the artist saying, “I couldn’t do it before (the election); I’m superstitious,” (Shaw, Nov. 15, 2012). Once again this was a political article, but did not contain any discussion of real issues and was entertaining. While these articles are comedic, there is still some concern that someone could come to the site looking for information on the election and only see these articles. In addition, people could end up choosing these articles over election ones because they are more entertaining than issue based articles.

The focus on popular culture is a recent phenomenon that seems to have blossomed due to the Internet. The 1990s period had one article from the *Washington Post* that discussed how then President Bill Clinton was throwing a big new years party in South Carolina and how some celebrities attended. Even that article was slightly political because it discussed how Clinton was going to pursue the budget fight (Harris and O’Hanlon, Jan. 2, 1996). The article specifically said, “when he (referring to Clinton) and others gathered round the president in the wee hours, Clinton reportedly wished aloud that the Republicans would be willing to compromise,” (Harris

and O'Hanlon, Jan. 2, 1996). So despite being a cultural article, there was still a political focus. In the 1950s-1990s period, there was only one article again that focused on popular culture at all. An article from the *Los Angeles Times* discussed how Nixon was playing golf for the weekend and was very relaxed and candid. The article quoted Nixon as saying, "I enjoyed the weather, my companions and everything but my golf...you can just say I broke 100," ("Nixon Relaxes at Golf and Family Dinner", Jan. 3, 1960). However even that article also discussed Nixon's upcoming bid for president, so there was some real political focus ("Nixon Relaxes at Golf and Family Dinner", Jan. 3, 1960). The fact that the other time periods either had one or no articles with a popular culture focus likely means that the Internet has contributed to more political articles treating politicians like celebrities.

Another phenomenon the Internet has created is more partisan news outlets. The Internet has led to outlets such as *Salon* or *Daily Caller*, which push their own partisan agenda. There were several examples of these sources doing this in the most recent election. Many of *The Daily Beast's* articles that were supposed to be news articles were just liberal opinion columns. For example, one article began talking about how many CEOs preferred Obama's deficit ideas, but then went into a discussion about how Obama was better for reducing the deficit (Avlon, Oct. 28, 2012). One quote that shows how partisan the article was when the author wrote "the fact is, Mitt Romney simply does not have a comprehensive blend of belt-tightening and revenue-generating measures," (Avlon, Oct. 28, 2012). That is not a fact, but an opinion. A traditional article on the same issue would still raise how many CEOs like Obama's deficit plan, but they would also discuss CEOs who prefer Romney's deficit plan or just do not like Obama's. In addition, a traditional media article would have independent facts about both candidates' deficit plan. This article did none of that.

*Salon* and *Daily Caller*'s articles took a slightly different approach. Their articles had partisan attacks, but tried to pass them off as non-partisan articles. The conservative *Daily Caller* had an infamous article about a controversial speech that Obama gave when he was a Senator in 2007. The article was rolled out as an "exclusive tape" of then Senator Obama giving a controversial speech that had never been seen before (Carlson & Coglianesse, Oct. 10, 2012). The only problem was that the video had been covered a few times in 2008 (LoGiorato, Oct. 2, 2012). Much of the article actually did function as a traditional article in only describing the video. However, there was still some commentary, such as the line, "the mostly black audience shouts in agreement. The effect is closer to an Al Sharpton rally than a conventional campaign event," (Carlson & Coglianesse, Oct. 10, 2012). Furthermore, the article did not seek out commentary from the Obama campaign or anyone at the event. It would be fine to write an article about this video, but they should include the context and leave out any commentary. The liberal *Salon* had articles written in similar formats. One example is an article about the GOP planning an October surprise of unleashing attacks on Obama being weak on national security (Unger, Oct. 1, 2012). The article discussed how *Salon* has an inside source who said that Republican Strategist Karl Rove was coordinating with Republicans to unleash a huge attack and pointed to examples of it being rolled out already through statements by Romney, 2012 Republican Vice Presidential Nominee Congressman Paul Ryan and former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani (Unger, Oct. 1, 2012). The article was less partisan than the *Daily Caller* since it did not contain much personal commentary, but the overall tone of the article had the feel of paranoia against "evil GOP forces". The headline shows this with the title "GOP's October surprise?" (Unger, Oct. 1, 2012). "October Surprise" has a negative connotation of an underhanded trick, where this is really just a change in strategy. An example of the article

specifically overreacting is when the author wrote “he said they were jubilant about their new strategy and said they intended to portray Obama as a helpless, Jimmy Carter-like president and to equate the tragedy in Libya with President Carter’s failed attempt to rescue American hostages in Iran in 1980,” (Unger, Oct. 1, 2012). The author acts as if this is a low blow, but it’s really just an attack on policy. The Benghazi attacks made foreign policy a little more of an issue, so it should not be some big surprise that the GOP would employ this strategy. It’s possible, both the *Daily Caller* and *Salon* may have made big deals about these articles to build a reaction out of their largely partisan audiences, so they will continue reading their sites over other partisan sites.

Even beyond purely partisan news sources such as the *Daily Caller* or *Salon*, I found that some of the articles tried to spin the tone in certain direction, one example came from the *New York Times*. The article covered the results of the 2012 election. The headline said “Divided U.S. Gives Obama More Time.” The headline seemed to be an accurate display of the election, however the actual article took a more declarative tone. It focused on the opposition Obama faced and how he overcame it, but did not discuss any challenges he would face from a divided nation. Furthermore, the article ended with a quote from an Obama supporter saying “I feel like it’s a repudiation of everything the Republicans said in the campaign...” (Cooper and Kopicki, Nov. 7, 2012). While the article did not add that commentary, I still felt ending the article with that quote was steering readers into a certain direction. Some might look at this article and argue it was the *New York Times* showing its liberal bias. I do not necessarily think this was the case. I more think it was journalists feeling that there needed to be an absolute either way. They felt the need to declare Obama the definitive winner, despite the fact that his agenda is hampered by a Senate with fewer than 60 Democrats and a Republican majority in the House.

These articles are in contrast with articles from the 1990s, where reporters just gave the news straight and not actual opinions. Many articles simply discussed election events such as candidates announcing, but did not go in-depth beyond that such as their impact on the election or their views on the issues. A 1999 *New York Times* article discussed how former Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander was entering the race. It just quoted his opening statement and then Vice President Al Gore and Texas Governor George W. Bush's response ("Alexander Takes...", Jan. 8, 1999). An example of the straight reporting was the line "Mr. Alexander, 59, was Governor from 1979 to 1987. He was also president of the University of Tennessee and Secretary of Education under President George Bush, the Texas Governor's father." The article did not evaluate any of Alexander's political positions. So some could see it as a positive because it some straight reporting that allows people to make up their own mind, but it would be better to provide some of Alexander's positions.

In contrast, the 1950s-1990s did have a bias. The news appeared more opinionated than the 1990s articles. It was not a general liberal or conservative bias, instead many reporter took an aggressive stance towards what subject they were reporting on regardless of affiliation. For example, a 1968 article from the *Los Angeles Times* comments that the Democrat's long reign of control will soon end. The article laments that ineffective leadership in Congress has hurt the Democrats' agenda and is making them lose favor with voters. The author argued, "the golden age of the Democratic Party seems to have run its course. Happy days are here no more for the Democrats. There is now a deeply unhappy and deeply divided party," (Donovan, Jan. 7, 1968). Reading the article, it is not clear whether the author is a Democrat or Republican. However, the article does make declarative statements such as Democrats being ineffective. I do not see a problem with these journalists making declarative statements such as this because reporters

should not just blindly report everything without any analysis. As long as they are not reporting in a partisan manner such as the *Daily Caller* or *Daily Beast*, the journalists are not doing a disservice reporting this way.

These articles contrast starkly with the articles of the 1920s, where reporters did a format more similar to the 1990s time period of just reporting the story. For example, one article discussed how former Illinois Gov. Frank Lowden wanted to be on the Republican ticket with Coolidge. The article just gave a straight report of how the governor wanted to be on the ticket “Ex-Governor Frank Lowden of Illinois was urged upon President Coolidge today in several conferences held in New York for temporary Chairman of the Republican National Convention,” (“Lowden Sought to Run on Coolidge Ticket”, Apr. 23, 1924). The articles only discussed what other sources have said about the Lowden’s prospects. It did not give any analysis about whether Lowden would be a good pick for the ticket. Another article that followed this fashion was an article about Coolidge taking over party leadership. The article began with “President Coolidge, with his nomination by the Cleveland convention assured, has assumed actual leadership of the Republican Party,” (“Coolidge Assumes Party Leadership”, Apr. 30, 1924). Once again, the article did not speculate whether it would be good for the party. The 1920s articles were similar to the 1990s articles, where they just gave straight news, while the 1950-1990 and 2012 articles were similar. A reason for this could be that an introduction of a new medium causes reporters to be more critical, but eventually they go back to just reporting the news.

Noted election Scholar and University of Virginia Professor Larry Sabato agrees that the media has become overly vicious. He argues that the media does not focus on the issues and instead just attacks candidates (Sabato, 225, 2011). Sabato warns that this causes candidates to take the attacks personally and scares them from giving the media access, which takes away from

the whole election process for all Americans because voters see less of the candidates and make less informed decisions when voting. Sabato specifically writes that “not surprisingly, politicians react rather badly to the treatment they receive from the modern press. Convinced that the media have but one conspiratorial goal-to hurt or destroy them- the pols respond by restricting journalists’ access, except under highly controlled situations.” Sabato asserts that the quality of coverage decreases because politicians are so afraid of the media and do not want to give them the needed access (Sabato, 225, 2011). Sabato does not view this as a result of an ideological media; instead he blames all media sources focusing on the horse race mentality (Sabato, 238, 2011).

John Harwood, the head of *New York Times*’ political blog, takes Sabato’s argument about increased attacks on candidates and looks specifically at cable news and how television has led to an increase in partisanship. Harwood argues that the urge for ratings has caused an increase in partisanship in cable news (Harwood, 1, 2009). Harwood points out that there has been an increase of fragmentation in American politics where Americans only want to be surrounded by their own views, so cable networks have obliged and put on partisan politics. He argues that “press critics worry that the rise of media polarization threatens the foundation of credible, common information that American politics needs to thrive...if it complicates the choices facing leaders in Washington...it also decentralizes political communication,” (Harwood, 1, 2009). Many recognize the risk that this could lead to a decrease in credibility of the media (Harwood, 1, 2009). The arguments about increased partisanship and less focus on the issues raises good points. There seems to be more partisanship on television and Hallin’s evidence about the decline in length of sound bites of candidates is irrefutable.



Other scholars do not see anything wrong with partisan media. These scholars argue that partisan journalists will go places that “objective journalists” will not go. University of Alabama Professor William David Sloan and Samford University Professor Julie Hedgepeth Williams maintain that there is nothing wrong with partisanship and attacking the candidates (Sloan and Williams, 10, 1994). They point out that many in the media before the 1900s were expected to be partisan (Sloan and Williams, 10, 1994). Sloan and Williams argue that having a partisan media is what makes politicians accountable because it ensures that someone is attacking them (Sloan and Williams, 10, 1994).

Austin Bureau chief for Texas Watchdog Mark Lisher agrees and argues partisan pundits such as Keith Olbermann helped bring attention to issues that other journalists ignored (Lisher, 1, 2007). Lisher suggests that Olbermann used to make statements such as, “1,318 days since ‘mission accomplished’,” which kept a constant challenge to President George W. Bush’s policies in Iraq by pressing the fact that the mission was not over despite that declaration (Lisher, 1, 2007). Furthermore, Lisher asserts that Olbermann’s consistent challenges to Bush led to unprecedented coverage, writing that “frustration set in after ‘Countdown’ launched, but not for anything the producers had done. Olbermann's 2005 stories after Hurricane Katrina grew more pointed and accusatory. Finally, Olbermann approached his bosses and asked to deliver an editorial on the inaction of the Bush administration in the face of the catastrophe. The same smallish (around 1 million) audience caught the anchor delivering pure spleen, but word, along with the video clip of the "special comment" segment, spread. Olbermann was officially angry,” (Lisher, 1, 2007). So Olbermann’s angry critiques of Bush were unlike anything quite on the mainstream media because he directly attacked Bush and had no regard for staying non-partisan.

Northwestern University Communications Professor James Webster went as far as to look into the effects of fragmented stations such as MSNBC and Fox News, where they have different audiences (Webster, 378, 2005). He found that channels such as these have caused “the big three” networks of ABC, NBC and CBS to decrease (Webster, 378, 2005). However, the major networks still maintain influence over the cable news networks and are seen as more credible (Webster, 378, 2005). In addition, Webster found that while the audiences of cable news are small and have similar ideology, they make sure to seek out other channels, which balances their views (Webster, 378, 2005). These scholars raise good points. Having reporters go after politicians can be good. Many of the finest journalism pieces in history are the result of “muckraking”, which was very aggressive. However, a journalist has to make sure to get the full story. For example, someone could support gun control and write a story against the National Rifle Association (NRA), but they should still make sure all of their facts are straight and that they get the NRA’s side of the story. Many pundits do not do that.

Another issue that the Internet has contributed to is the decreased in length in the articles. Many people argue that Internet articles are shorter because the Internet has made people have shorter attention spans. This held up somewhat true with new media at least. Due to the blog format of many of the articles, the news articles were shorter than normal. The *Buzzfeed* article about an artist sketching Obama as a chef only contained 53 words (Shaw, Nov. 15, 2012). A Salon article that was aggregated from *CNN* and just added the author’s commentary was only 218 words long (Finocchiaro, Jan. 3, 2012). However, there were some new media articles that were extraordinarily long, the *Buzzfeed* article about programming to watch instead of election coverage was 3,045 words long (Horan, Nov. 6, 2012). Furthermore, even serious articles such as an article from *Buzzfeed* about Obama’s donors not giving as much was 2,052 words long

(Smith, June 4, 2012). I did not expect any articles would be this long. I thought they would all be no longer than two hundred words long. While there were a few articles that were over 1,000 words, many were still only around 200 words. The likely reason for the disparity in length is that when you write an article on the Internet, there is no real limit. When you write for a newspaper you have a specified amount that you have to fill, but you cannot go beyond that amount. An online could be 10,000 words and still have room to be on the page. Some of the longer articles suggest that the Internet could be a positive force for generating more content. Furthermore, some might argue this is a good thing and a sign that the Internet does not have negative effects. I ended up concluding length did not matter because if someone is just going to write thousands of words on the horse race rather than policy issues, then the article is not positively contributing to election coverage.

The traditional media articles from this decade followed the same trend. One of the articles was as long as over 2,000 words. The *New York Times* article describing how Obama was re-elected was over 2,017 words (Zeleney & Rutenburg, Nov. 6, 2012). In addition, there were a few articles over 1,000 words. At the same time, there were a few short articles such as an article that was literally just a picture of Obama on the night he won re-election (Newton, Nov. 6, 2012). Just as with new media, this was likely due to the fact that there is no limit to the amount of words you can put on the Internet.

For the period of 1950-1990, several of the articles seemed to be very short. One article discussed how President Jimmy Carter was canceling a campaign trip and literally just said he was canceling a trip because he was sick, it was around 100 words (“Carter Cancels Trip”, Jan. 5, 1976). Unlike the Internet articles, there was no particular reason for it to be short. However, reading the article, there was not much more to discuss besides Carter being sick, so it raises the

point that there are some articles that should be short. I believe shorter articles should be allowed as they do not dominate the coverage. However, in this time period none of the articles seemed to be over 1,000 words, so they were not as long than the other 75 articles from earlier.

Finally, in the 1920s, the articles were generally longer than the other time periods. There were six articles were over 1,000 words, longer than any of the other sections. These article were not particularly different than any of the other election articles. For example, one article discussed how Cox was silent on the issue of prohibition and then went in-depth about the different views on the issue and how either position could hurt Cox (“Cox Silent on...”, June 20, 1920). This raises the possibility that media was often long in the 1920s but got shorter with the rise of television and the Internet. Although the Internet allows for many long articles, both the Internet and television have contributed to the rise of shorter articles.

Beyond looking as specific factors in articles, many scholars have written on whether the development of the Internet as a whole is good for election coverage. The *Atlantic* technology columnist Nicholas Carr argues that the rise of the Internet has caused people to become less analytic. So as a result, people read less traditional media, such as books and newspapers (Carr, 1, 2008). Carr argues that he has experienced it writing that, “over the past few years I’ve had an uncomfortable sense that someone, or something, has been tinkering with my brain, remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory. My mind isn’t going—so far as I can tell—but it’s changing. I’m not thinking the way I used to think. I can feel it most strongly when I’m reading. Immersing myself in a book or a lengthy article used to be easy,” but now Carr has a lot of trouble reading a long book (Carr, 1, 2008). In addition, Carr argues that people only seek out media that is convenient to them, rather than multiple sources (Carr, 1 2008). The reason is that people can seek out individualized sources that cater to their own interests (Carr, 1 2008).

Finally, Carr also asserts that the use of the Internet has led to people to remember less information, that a blog post longer than three or four paragraphs is too difficult for people. (Carr, 1 2008). Concerning specific print media, Carr points to the example that the *New York Times* now has abstracts of the second and third page of every article, which allows people to only read part of the article and feel they understand it (Carr, 1 2008).

Many journalists share the beliefs of Carr. *Atlantic* political columnist Cyra Master did a study with journalists and found that many journalists remain concerned that the Internet will hurt the traditional news media in reporting (Master, 1, 2009). Several journalists in the study believe that the Internet has hurt the news media financially and prevented them from conducting independent news studies that seek out facts (Master, 1, 2009). Furthermore, journalists felt that the Internet blurs fact and opinion, such as a credible newspaper like *Washington Post* versus a blog like the *Daily Caller* or *The Daily Beast* (Master, 1, 2009). Additionally, sometimes non-credible blogs are taken as factual reporters (Master, 1, 2009). The journalists agreed with Carrs' sentiment that the Internet forces people to want shorter stories, as a result journalists have to write shorter stories in print media to keep up with the demands of the consumers (Master, 1, 2009). Some notable quotes from the article included, "news consumption depends on news production, and I don't see anything on the Internet that produces news—that is, detailed responsible empirical journalism—the way newspapers do (or did). It is typical of Americans to get more excited about consumption than about production" and "the Internet trains readers to consume news in ever-smaller bites. This is a disaster for newspapers and magazines," (Master, 1, 2009).

In response to the criticism of the Internet, Princeton University's Associate Professor of Politics and Public Affairs Markus Prior conducted a study to look at the direct impact of using

the Internet as a news source. The study looked at the effect of using cable television and the Internet for political knowledge. Prior also found that both the Internet and television created a negative effect. Furthermore, the study showed that while many people who were already politically active took advantage of all of the different news sites on the Internet and political cable channels, at the same time, people who were not politically active would instead just delve into even more entertainment sites and channels, increasing the knowledge gap. Prior concluded “yet, the evidence supports the pessimists’ scenario as well. Other people take advantage of greater choice and tune out of politics completely,” (Prior, 587, 2005). So any potential benefits of having more media choices are limited to those who are already seeking out many different mediums for news.

### **Positive Arguments for Internet Coverage**

Although my research confirmed many of my critiques surrounding the Internet, I still found some factors that changed my views on the matter. For example, I looked at whether there was an extensive use of pictures or infographics in any of the time periods. Predictably the new media had the greatest use of it. Three of *Buzzfeed’s* article had extensive use of pictures. Some of it was used for non-serious articles such as the one about 10 different shows to watch on election night, but they also did use it for a serious article. One article was about how victims of Hurricane Sandy were still following the election coverage despite not having any power. The article did not contain more than the description of the picture, but that was more than enough (Barton, Nov. 6, 2012). From the pictures you could see the devastation, but also the victims’ intent on following an important day in American history. Powerful images like this that can tell the story on their own serve as a good example of the positive benefit of the Internet covering news stories. The Internet has provided the way for articles in this format. Some of the other

publications took on this format, but some even went a step further and had video with their own commentary. An example was a *Salon* article making fun of Representative Michele Bachmann for claiming *CNN* anchor Soledad O'Brien asked a "gotcha" question. The article had a few hundred-word description and just the video. The article began by saying, "the national spotlight can at times be difficult for someone like Rep. Michele Bachmann to deal with. The Minnesota congresswoman prides herself on being a true social conservative — one who has stuck to her guns over the years, regardless of politics. When the media subsequently digs up impolitic remarks from years past, it can be hard to deal with," (Finnochiaro, 2012). While it was short, I think it's better to have the video showing the actual clip then just an explanation of it. The Internet is an active and engaging platform that allows for the mixture of different forms of media.

Many of the traditional media stories from the 2012 cycle had a similar focus. The *Washington Post* had an article about the election and just had twelve photos summing up the night such as Romney giving his victory speech and Obama giving his concession speech (Newton, Nov. 6, 2012). The pictures themselves gave a sound synopsis of the night. In addition, some serious articles used info-graphics. For example, a *Washington Post* article that described how the unemployment rate was crucial to Obama's re-election largely relied on a chart to explain the case (Cillizza, July 6, 2012). The infographic was easier to understand and far less dense than a series of paragraphs. Traditional media from the 1990s even used a little bit of infographics and pictures to make their point. One article from the *New York Times* that discussed how the economy is key to the re-election of Clinton, had a chart showing the GDP growth for past presidents (Passell, Jan. 2, 1996). Interestingly in the traditional media articles using infographic, there was a high amount of text too. Only one article from the 1990s had few

words and that was the article from the *Los Angeles Times* with a picture of Clinton and Gore debating and then just a quote from Dole that says "I thank you very much. ... Let me first give you a sports update. The Braves, one; the Cardinals, nothing, early on," ("Presidential Debate 1996...", Oct. 17, 1996). Despite the Dole article, the other articles mentioned suggest that news articles can generally use new graphics and pictures and still be substantive since they were able to still convey an important message across.

Looking at the issue of whether the Internet focuses too much on pop culture, although there were many partisan and pop culture focused new media articles, there were still many articles that focused on real issues. In the new media section, these articles largely came from *Politico* and *Buzzfeed*. For *Politico*, they had articles that focused on the race and actual issues. None of them had an overtly partisan tone. One example of their articles was about Romney attacking Obama on welfare reform. The article discussed both sides claims on whether Obama dismantled Clinton's welfare program and what the actual impacts were (Gibson, Aug. 7, 2012). The article gave a full context about the issue writing that, "Romney was referring to an executive action by Obama last month making changes to the requirements for states to get federal welfare funds, a move the White House argued gives states more flexibility and reduces paperwork while keeping incentives to help people find jobs. Republicans called foul, saying it will simply allow states to cut welfare checks to people who aren't working," (Gibson, Aug. 7, 2012). *Buzzfeed* had more serious articles than ones discussed previously; one of their articles was over 1,000 words long and discussed how Obama's donors were not giving as much as they did in 2008 (Smith, June 4, 2012). Even the more partisan sources had articles looking at real aspects of the race that were not biased. The *Daily Beast* had an informative piece looking at 10 women to follow in politics. The piece looked at both Republican and Democrat women and did



not attack Republicans or overtly praise Democrats (Murphy, June 10, 2012). An example was their description of Republican Congressional candidate and Saratoga Springs Mayor Mia Love, writing that, “it’s fitting that a newly drawn district would attract this particular candidate, who is a one-of-a-kind herself. The African-American Mormon is the mayor of Saratoga Springs, the Utah boomtown that claims an AAA bond rating, and is also a mom of three and a take-no-prisoners fitness instructor in her spare time. Those who know this daughter of Haitian immigrants say she’s even more than the sum of her parts, calling her ‘tenacious,’ ‘dynamic,’ and ‘a superstar’,” (Murphy, June 10, 2012). The article provided a nice description of a Republican, despite the fact that the *Daily Beast* is liberal.

Many scholars have defended the Internet’s coverage of news. University of Stanford visiting lecturer Howard Rheingold argues that while the Internet has some areas to criticize, it creates a lot of great opportunities to challenge authority. Rheingold maintains the Internet has allowed citizen journalists to catch stories other journalists missed, including big political scandals. He remarks that “Senator Trent Lott lost his position as majority leader of the U.S. Senate, George Allen lost his election to the Senate, and the CBS news anchor Dan Rather was forced to retire, all because of the way informed participants used email, blogs and other participatory media to organize,” (Rheingold, 19, 2012). Rheingold also sees the domination of Internet news as inevitable since 87 percent of people in the US between ages 12 and 17 use the Internet (Rheingold, 19, 2012). *Wall Street Journal* columnist and New York University Professor Clay Shirky argues that while the Internet has a lot of ridiculous news content, the Internet allows people to work together and interact with news sources like never before (Shirky, 1, 2010). Shirky maintains that the constant interaction allowed on the Internet actually makes people smarter. He points to several examples arguing “open source software, created without

managerial control of the workers or ownership of the product, has been critical to the spread of the Web. Searches for everything from supernovae to prime numbers now happen as giant, distributed efforts. Ushahidi, the Kenyan crisis mapping tool invented in 2008, now aggregates citizen reports about crises the world over,” (Shirky, 1, 2010). So in many different areas, including politics, the Internet allows for people to communicate and deliver information like never before.

Several studies claim that Internet news sources can be as good as traditional news, if not better. One study conducted by University of Texas Journalism Professor Thomas Johnson and John Hopkins University Professor Barbara Kaye found that people consider Internet news sources, such as blogs, as more credible than traditional media (Johnson and Kaye, 634, 2004). This was highlighted by the finding that “almost three-quarters of respondents view Weblogs as moderately to very credible and only 3.5% rate them not at all or not very credible,” (Johnson and Kaye, 634, 2004). The study discovered that an important reason for why users rely on blogs is because they provide more depth and more thoughtful analysis than is available in other media. As a result, users wanted to pay attention to media that they found more credible, so the Internet made people want to read news (Johnson and Kaye, 634, 2004).

Harvard Communications Professor Douglas Ahlers and Technology Consultant John Hessen do not think the Internet will negatively affect people reading the news and argue that while there was a decline in circulation of newspapers in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to television, the Internet will not necessarily have the same effect (Ahlers and Hessen, 2005, 61). Instead, people will become even more interested in the news. Ahlers and Hessen believe that, “the idea that the rise of the Internet spells the end of print and TV news stems from the popular sense of the Internet as a disruptive rather than a sustaining technology. As described by

Clayton Christensen of the Harvard Business School, sustaining technologies are those that change an industry through incremental improvements, while disruptive technology creates a new playing field, knocking down traditional barriers to entry and transforming an industry or market completely,” (Ahlers and Hessen, 2005, 67). So there is a lot of room for multiple forms of media to exist and the different platforms can often work together to get people more interested in news in general.

Looking more specifically at recent elections, there has been praise for Internet reporting on the election specifically. George Mason University’s School of Public Policy Associate Professor Jeremy Mayer argues that the 2004 election was a turning point for the Internet and news (Mayer, 305, 2004). Mayer maintains that the 2004 election allowed people to interact and analyze news for the first time on forums (Mayer, 305, 2004). He alludes to how bloggers uncovered Dan Rather’s mistakes and says this was the power of the interaction on the Internet. Mayer argues that “the Internet has also given citizens an independent means to challenge the media’s monopoly on facts” (Mayer, 305, 2004). Mayer goes onto say the 2004 election had many articles for the first time that contained videos and external links for people to look at, which increased the depth of articles on the Internet (Mayer, 305, 2004). While elections may be getting more nasty because of new platforms in the media, they have also allowed for more transparency and discussion.

Georgetown University Associate Professor of Communication, Culture and Technology Diana Owens agrees with Mayer’s assertions and found that the 2008 election increased the prominence of online media. Traditional media utilized online technology even further by posting all of their material online and using social network devices to increase interaction (Owens, 19, 2009). This served to bolster stories reported by the traditional media further. In

addition, niche campaign sources such as *Politico* and *The Huffington Post* came out as new media sources and gained over 4 million unique visitors (Owens, 19, 2009). These publications even began to get cited by the mainstream media. Owens writes that “independent political sites drew record numbers of visitors during the campaign. Public awareness increased as the sites stepped up their advertising campaigns, received mainstream media coverage, and were linked by users,” (Owens, 19, 2009). Finally, the Internet gave rise to citizen journalism even more in 2008. When candidates such as Ron Paul and Mike Gravel did not receive a lot of mainstream attention, small sites would interview them and post the interviews online (Owens, 19, 2009 via Steffensmeier & Schier 2009). Furthermore, mainstream media sources such as CNN enlisted citizen journalists to share their content with them by allowing people to email in tips and videos. As a result someone emailed in a video of then Senator Barack Obama referring to Midwestern voters as “bitter clingers” who “cling” to religion, guns and anti-trade sentiment (Owens, 19, 2009). So many in this school of thought believe that new media can help clean up the mistakes that the traditional media made.

There is no doubt the Internet has had a serious impact on the recent election. There will be people who write about the media improving election coverage in the 2012 election. While the media has the capability to increase more depth and involvement in the media, there is a question of whether that is all good. As mentioned earlier, there is still the problem of people reporting faulty stories and opinionated news being taken as unbiased news. In addition, I do not feel these scholars discuss the impact of the Internet directly enough on the print media.

Some in the news industry reject both sentiments that the Internet has made the media infinitely better or worse. Instead, they argue that the Internet is not drastically changing the traditional news media. Harvard University Psychology Professor Steven Pinker has looked at

claims that technology is corrupting how people pay attention to the news and found that instead there has been little effect on the news and how people look at the news, at best it has just helped people organize facts better. Pinker points out that “these days scientists are never far from their e-mail, rarely touch paper and cannot lecture without PowerPoint. If electronic media were hazardous to intelligence, the quality of science would be plummeting. Yet discoveries are multiplying like fruit flies, and progress is dizzying. Other activities in the life of the mind, like philosophy, history and cultural criticism, are likewise flourishing, as anyone who has lost a morning of work to the Web site Arts & Letters Daily can attest,” (Pinker, 1, 2010).

Furthermore, a study from the Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism found that blogs were typically just recycling stories from the traditional media (“New Media, Old Media”, 1, 2010). In fact the study showed that 99 percent of stories on the blogs they studied were from major news organizations and that just four news organizations, the *BBC*, *CNN*, *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, accounted for 80 percent of the links on the blog (“New Media, Old Media”, 1, 2010).

Michigan State University Communications Professors Carrie La Ferle and Steven Edwards and University of Illinois Communications Professor Wei-Na Lee did a study that took on the idea that teens rapid use of Internet will inevitably doom other media, but found instead that teens use the Internet to fulfill other needs and will still use other mediums for news (LaFerle, Edwards & Lee, 5, 2000). Another study found similar results and argued that people use the different areas of the Internet to meet their needs just as people use areas of other mediums like television channels or sections in the newspaper. Ferle and Edwards specifically wrote that “data from 684 individuals demonstrate that the Internet is a multidimensional

technology used in a manner similar to other, more traditional media” (Flanagin & Metzner, 175, 2001).

A recent study conducted by University of Illinois Communications Professors Scott Althaus and David Tewksbury looked at the possibility of the Internet replacing traditional mediums such as the Internet and television. The study found that people who read newspapers would also read news sites, but television had no impact on using the Internet (Althaus and Tewksbury, 21, 2000). So the Internet did not replace the newspaper for users, but rather it served as a supplement to the newspaper. Althaus and Tewksbury wrote that “our data suggest that while the Web supplements traditional news media, it may be in direct competition with entertainment programming on television. So the Internet ultimately only affects entertainment not television (Althaus and Tewksbury, 21, 2000). For those who used television, there was no correlation in increase or decrease in Internet use, ruling out the chance that Internet took away from television news at all (Althaus and Tewksbury, 21, 2000). In contrast, there was a study conducted by Ohio University Communications Professors Guido H. Stempel III and Joseph P. Bent with Scripps Howard News Service Reporter Thomas Hargrove that found the Internet was increasing as a source of news, while people were using other mediums less. However, the study looked directly at the effects of both Internet users and non-Internet users who had watched local news mediums, the study found that there was no significant difference in their views of media, concluding that there must be another cause in the decline of traditional mediums (Stempel, Hargrove & Bernt, 71, 2000).

Although these scholars have a lot of credible evidence behind their argument, it is still hard to argue that the Internet has not had a major impact on traditional media. All forms of media have been required to have some type of online presence and newspaper circulation is

rapidly decreasing while Internet use continues to increase. Whether that is a good thing or a bad thing is another question, but there has been some effect.

## **Conclusion**

*Did the results meet the hypothesis?*

Overall, the results of the research did not meet my hypothesis for a few reasons. I expected the first time period to be far more substantive and longer than any of the other time periods. Furthermore, I believed that the later time period, the less substantive the article would be. Instead there was not much consistency. For example, there were more articles under 500 words in the time period of 1950 to 1990, than the articles from the 1990s, showing that the decline in article length is not completely consistent. However, at the same time the hypothesis was not completely disproven. The most recent Internet articles did have the shortest articles and had the most popular culture articles. So while some of my hypothesis was proven, I expected it to be more clear-cut one way.

To look at content first. I expected the articles from the 1920s to be in-depth and the articles from publications such as *Buzzfeed* to be very short. However, there was no real trend for or against this. During the 1920s there were articles that went in-depth such as an article discussing Cox's record in-depth ("Cox the Governor Revealed...", Jul. 25, 1920). However, there were also many articles that only focused on the horse race aspect of the election, such as an article about Coolidge making sure he had enough delegates ("Coolidge Men See...", Feb. 8, 1924). Furthermore, as mentioned earlier the articles from the 1920s focused the least bit on the issues, with only five articles focusing on it. At the same time, recent Internet articles had seven articles that discussed the actual issues, such as an article about CEOs supporting Obama over Romney (Avlon, Oct. 28, 2012). Again this would not support the notion that the Internet has

made election coverage worse, but it would not support the notion that it has made it better. The other time periods did not show much differentiation, only six traditional articles from this time period focused on the issues in-depth, the 1990s was the highest with 11 articles and the 1950s to the 1990s had six articles. There is not a huge differentiation amongst the time periods in articles, so this would suggest this constantly been a problem amongst articles throughout history.

The main cause for this was the focus on horse race, such as what candidate is ahead and how a campaign development will affect a candidate. Some might consider this a recent problem, but it has existed for about decades. One of *Buzzfeed's* most in-depth articles was just about how 2008 Obama donors were not giving as much to him in 2012 (Smith, June 4, 2012). While this was an interesting article and has some value, I still feel that it would be better if they devoted their in-depth coverage to more sophisticated issues. However, this was not a problem limited to the new media articles. The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* had articles from this time period very focused on the horse race, with people such as Chris Cilizza and Nate Silver dedicating all of their content to horse race coverage. In the 1950s to 1990 and 1990s time periods, there was no major difference. A trend during those two time periods, was not only having articles focused on election issues, but having articles that did not go in-depth about anything, such as an article about Alexander announcing for President (“Alexander Says he...”, Jan. 8, 1999). The article simply described Alexander getting into the race. It did not describe how he would impact something politically nor did it discuss what actual issues Alexander would run on. The 1920s were the worse for horse race analysis in many ways. They had many articles focusing on election issues such as an article about how Coolidge was going to largely campaign by radio (“Coolidge Plans...”, Jul. 18, 1924). This may have been because with no television or Internet, the newspapers had to focus on areas that blogs and cable news networks



now focus on. Regardless, all of this shows a constant focus on the horse race aspect of politics, rather than real issues.

Another issue that did not completely meet my expectations was length. As mentioned before, I expected that articles would have gradually gotten shorter throughout the decades. However, generally the lengths were all over the place. While the 1920s had some long articles, such as the detailed analysis of Cox's record, that time period also had some short articles. The 1920s did have the longest articles, with 19 articles over 500 words and six over 1,000 words. In comparison, there were 19 articles under 500 words in the period of 1950 to 1990. In this period, some articles were even as short as 100 words, such as the article about Carter canceling a trip ("Carter Cancels Trip", Jan. 5, 1976). This was a huge contrast with the 1990s, which had 21 articles over 500 words and four over 1,000 words. The traditional media articles 2012 cycle also had varying results. Some articles were as short as 53 words. Overall 16 articles were over 500 words and some were as long as 3,045. These figures negate any possibility that the Internet has made articles shorter. In order to argue that, the articles would constantly need to be shorter than 500 words, such as 20 of them. This point raises the question of why the articles from the 1950 to 1990 were so much shorter? It is possible television caused the articles to get shorter in order to compete with Americans' attention, since television news reports stories in short sound bites.

Another area that the Internet did not have a negative impact on was the amount and type of sources. Generally all of the articles had anywhere from zero quotes to 15 quotes. The exception was the 1920s, which had an article with as many as 28 quotes ("Cox the Governor Revealed...", Jul. 25, 1920). However, that article was an outlier. I expected that the recent articles would not have many quotes, since some articles were not professional and others were written in a partisan voice. Furthermore, there was not a huge difference in the types of quotes.

All of the articles relied on experts, politicians, statistics and campaign officials. The one difference was the 50 articles from the last election had many more quotes from regular people who were either swing voters or campaign supporters. It's a judgment call whether this is good or not. I generally think it is because it allows people to hear the concerns and ideas of fellow citizens. However, some might argue that it is not good because these articles are taking away from experts and just serving as filler. Either way, this area does not show a clear deterioration of election coverage due to the Internet or television.

There were two areas where the results did meet my expectations. One of the areas was what the subject of the article was, such as whether the article focused more on popular culture or policy. Predictably, the recent new media articles had the most focus on popular culture issues. However, it was not a huge factor. Only three of the articles from the 2012 actually focused on popular culture. This shows that there is not as much of a threat of popular culture articles becoming dominant in politics. However, I still do feel that there are enough of those articles to trivialize the electoral process to a certain degree.

The other area that met my expectations was the extensive use of graphic media. All of the 50 most recent articles had pictures. There were a few articles that had just 50 or so words and then a picture or video. However, these were not necessarily bad. One article had a picture of people without power as a result of Hurricane Sandy watching the election returns (Barton, Nov. 6, 2012). As mentioned before, it was a powerful and effective way of making readers understand the hardship of people affected by Sandy. Some of the recent traditional media articles using infographics, such as showing why the unemployment rate has an effect on the election results (Newton, Nov. 6, 2012). The use of infographics helped convey a complicated message. A few articles from the 1990s did include articles such as these, but only two. So this is

the one area where the Internet had a clear effect. However, it seems debatable whether it is truly negative.

Based on my research there are a lot of claims that the media has not focused on the key issues. This originated with Patterson's claim that the media has focused too much on the horse race. I came in with the idea that Patterson is right and that mediums such as television and Internet have created many of the problems that Patterson has written about. Furthermore, I had the idea that the Internet and television has created an obsession with politicians being celebrities. My research did not back up one of my assertions, while it showed an obsession with the horse race aspect of the Presidential race, my research did not show the idea that the Internet and television created problems. Furthermore, my research did not show overwhelming evidence of the popular culture obsession in election news. So overall, we're stuck with the problem of the media's obsession with the horse race, but no real solution. The likely problem is that no matter what medium, the media will always be focused on it because of the journalistic culture and the desire to sell papers (or gain television viewers and website visitors). This will continue to negatively impact America. As Sabato and Patterson said, the media is devoid of real issues and is only making people skeptical of politicians. The Internet and television are neither the sole solution nor the problem. It will be important continue to monitor the Internet to see what positive and negative effects it can have in the future.

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