

Media Effects and State Ideology

Holly A. Caulder

hcaulder@unm.edu

Department of Political Science

1 University of New Mexico

Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001

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Abstract

It is widely accepted that individuals use the media to gain political knowledge and awareness. So, is it true that the political ideology of newspapers will align with the corresponding “redness” or “blueness” of State ideology? I predict that newspapers lean liberal or conservative in their reporting of regular articles, which corresponds to that State’s overall political ideology determined by the 2004 presidential election electoral votes. By completing a content analysis of 45 newspapers among 15 different States for mentions of eight think tanks (four conservative and four liberal), and then creating an operational measure of liberal ratios for each newspaper, I am able to find whether or not newspapers hold the same political bias as the State they report in. Overall, my results for this analysis provided that there was no significance between the liberal ratios and partisan ideology of States according to the Analysis of Variance test, providing a p-value of 0.83. While alternative media have continuously provided results for partisan bias like MSNBC and FOX News, this study highlights a win for newspaper journalism in regards to objectivity and further research is required involving alternative media like editorials within State newspapers.

Introduction

It is no doubt that the media are a primary source for individuals to receive information about events locally, nationally, and even internationally. Because the majority of the United States' population do not have time to go out, research, and find valuable evidence to become better-educated citizens for a more informed democracy, they rely on other sources such as journalists, broadcast media, and newspapers to gather this information. Media sources are essentially a primary intermediary between events that affect people's lives and public opinion, and are most certainly a crucial way individuals gain political knowledge (Graber 2009; Fraile 2011). In addition, Croteau and Hoynes (2014) point out that most people know about governmental officials and policies through the media rather than personal experience or research. People are largely dependent on the media not only for how they know about politics overall, but it can also affect how we relate to the political world including how people will vote. Therefore, it is imperative that we study how the media are used which can affect people's political opinions and actions.

This study outlines how the ideology of newspapers can be determined based off liberal or conservative think tank citations, and if the liberal ratio of their think tank citations may correlate with the State's redness or blueness. Groseclose and Milyo find an innovative way of measuring media outlets' ideological scores based on the amount of think-tank citations they make. They then compare this to the number of times Congress members reference the same think tanks within the house and senate floor speeches in order to estimate media bias (Groseclose and Milyo 2005). They said, "none of the existing measures can say, for example, whether the *New York Times* is more liberal than Senator Edward Kennedy or whether *Fox News* is more conservative than Senator Bill Frist. We provide such a measure" (Groseclose and Milyo, 2005). Because this unique measurement method is able to compare media ideology with

Congress members' ideology, I propose to implement some of the model's processes for the research purposes of finding whether or not a State's political ideology can be a result of the media bias within the State's newspapers.

To measure this, three different newspapers from five different States within a section are analyzed throughout separate cities (with the exception of several States including the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* in which I use two newspapers from the same city because of circulation purposes). The sections for the States include "liberal", "conservative", or "swing", making the total number of newspapers analyzed come out to 45 papers total over a six year period (2001-2006). The number of times they cite each think tank is measured, and this is then calculated into a liberal ratio. I find the liberal ratio by taking the raw positive mentions of liberal think tank counts and dividing that number by the total counts of think tank mentions within that paper.

The main difference within my measurement process is that I do not translate Congressional members' think tank mentions to match media think tank citations in order to assign them an ADA score for liberal bias. Instead, I rely on analyzing all State liberal ratio averages with an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test with the averages from liberal, swing, and conservative States from the 2004 presidential election. According to the variance test, the Chi² test for significance finds that there is no significant difference between the three sections of States as it comes out to a 0.83 p-value. Although this measurement fails to prove there is a media bias which could affect the State's overall political ideology for the 2004 election, I am able to find an operational method that has not been entirely implemented previously as think tank mentions are more directly used to determine the bias of a newspaper.

Review of the Literature

For more than 50 years, the advent of media sources including print and broadcast news has emerged as one of the most popular sources of gaining political knowledge (Iyengar 2011).

Political scientists and other scholars claim that the media are major sources that can affect public opinion, but there are many different arguments as to how it does so including the minimal and “not-so-minimal” effects of media. It is largely recognized that the media have become a major source for individuals to become politically knowledgeable. This is especially true since “for most Americans, the media are their only contact with the world of public affairs” (Iyengar 2011; Croteau and Hoynes 2014). Therefore, if it is not covered by the news or any other media source, then it most likely does not exist as a major issue to Americans on the broader scale. This has encouraged scholars to find out if media have any effects on the public in regards to what they believe as a collective, how they vote and why.

Media Effects

Minimal Effects: Up until the 1970s, it was heavily argued that media only had minimal effects on the U.S. population. Traditionally, communication scholars believed media effects could simply be thought of as individuals’ changes in the general public opinion. Thus, there was no other evidence of media’s influence as far as communication scholars were concerned.

Political scientists began to delve into the topic claiming that minimal effects actually meant that the media reinforced voters’ predisposed partisan beliefs, rather than altering them. The literature also included the immunity to political persuasion as a function of media’s minimal effects (Iyengar 2011; Arceneaux and Johnson 2013; Klapper 1960). In this sense, it was found that individuals were not really persuaded by the media largely in regards to their voting preferences, but they were only using it to reinforce their already held political beliefs (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944; Katz and Feldman 1962).

Therefore, it is further noted that minimal effects of media include the idea of persuasion in a sense that “Communication designed to persuade, in particular, functions more frequently as an agent of reinforcement than as an agent of change” (Arceneaux and Johnson 2013). This goes

along with the notion that many voters will make up their mind about who to vote for, or what policy to support before major campaigns or advertising promotions even occur. Furthermore, Klapper (1960) argues that media turns out not to be an important or necessary tool for influencing individual's behaviors. He was able to review much of the research that had been done in regards to potential effects of the media, including things like political issue opinions and portrayals of violence, but found that individuals will watch what they prefer to watch (Klapper 1960). As Arceneaux and Johnson (2013) state, "People choose what to watch, actively interpret the information they encounter, and have biased memories of the communication."

This also brings upon the notion of selective exposure. The term has been used for decades to identify the idea that individuals act on their preferences to watch or listen to certain media stations (Arceneaux, Johnson, and Murphy 2012). Not only do people choose to pay attention to certain media messages, but they effectively do so which blunts media effects (Hovland 1954; Klapper 1960; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948). This has also created several other theories of selectivity including: the attentive public, partisan polarization, and the issue public (Iyengar 2011). For the attentive public, individuals who are interested in politics will read or tune in to the news, while apolitical individuals will avoid all types of news for other forms of media like entertainment. The idea of partisan polarization claims that people will selectively pay attention to media messages that are in line with their already held partisan beliefs, while issue publics only tend to pay attention to information about specific subjects that interest or affect them directly (Iyengar 2011). These are important subsets of selective exposure because it provides researchers with reasons as to why various individuals choose to tune in or out of certain media messages and how they may be influenced by them.

However, it is noted that there are several flaws within the research that provides media effects to be minimal. One that researchers have pointed out is the mere definition of the term

“persuasion”, while a second flaw is how it was measured in the early 1900s. It is said that persuasion was being used to simply exemplify change in voter’s preferences (Iyengar 2011; Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder 1982). To measure this, studies had been testing to see if persuasion, or attitude change, was occurring through the use of surveys. The issue with using surveys is that they lack the “power to detect traces of influence, because it cannot assess causation” (Iyengar 2011). Even though much of the political communication studies were based on survey research, scholars began to see the beneficial findings of media effects through experimentation. Instead of surveying whether people have seen a campaign ad and then asking them if they intend to vote, researchers found that by selecting groups and asking them if they intend to vote after watching a negative, positive, or neutral campaign ad, they were more likely to see the direct effects of media (Iyengar 2011; Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, and Valentino 1994). It is important to note here, that many researchers have found more direct immediate effects. This means that even though individuals may say they intend to vote right after the experiment since the media message is fresh in their mind, it does not necessarily mean that they will have the same intentions a week or even a month later. Nonetheless, as researchers took more approaches they have been able to discover the not-so-minimal effects of the media.

Not-so-minimal Effects: Throughout the years, it was soon discovered that media may not just have minimal effects on individuals. After researchers began using experiments as a way to test the more substantial effects of the media, they were able to find that there are more subtle nuances that individuals can experience. Some of these subtle but substantial effects include media’s ability to influence publics through agenda setting, priming and framing. In the terms of agenda setting, media sources are able to cover certain issues and ignore others essentially giving the public information on what to think about. Due to the simple fact that most people get their political knowledge from news sources, and since the majority of the populace does not go out

and find the information themselves, they will only know what news sources provide them.

Cohen (1963) revealed this concept well as he said media might not be successful in “telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.”

McCombs and Shaw (1972) tested this effect by surveying voters in North Carolina to see if they could identify current presidential campaign issues. They also tracked the news within the local area and found that there was a strong correlation between individuals’ ranked issues and what was being covered by the news. Another example of agenda-setting was found by Iyengar and Kinder (1987) as they note broadcast news exposure has an immense effect on which issues people deem important, especially if it is broadcast and given priority over several days. However, if individuals are only exposed to an issue once, even though its frame is important, people may not necessarily be affected enough for it to influence their perceptions on how to deal with it.

For instance, if the bombings in Paris were only exposed to the U.S. once through a major news source like MSNBC, a small number of people may have become interested enough to search for more information about the issue aside from just obtaining information through the news source. However, since it was shown over several days, and even weeks, across all news stations and newspapers, many people became interested in the issue and even began to post photos of themselves with the Paris flag on social media to show their support. Although Facebook would not disclose the number of people who actually did this, NPR claims that it is assumed millions of users worldwide placed the flag over their profile pictures (Sanders and Mutnik 2015). Also, countries across the world even displayed colored lights in support of Paris. This is a classic example of agenda setting. Furthermore, in addition to the media setting the agenda with this event, they also effectively downplayed other issues like current presidential

campaigning and Planned Parenthood funding, which were primary news stories before the event, and returned to the scene towards the end of 2015 as the Paris attack diminished.

Therefore, by effectively setting the agenda, media news sources are also able to have the priming effect. Essentially, the idea of priming is an extension of agenda setting because once the public is given certain issues to think about, they can then decide on how to evaluate leaders based on how the leader deals with the issues, and even how to vote for certain candidates.

Ansolabehere, Behr, and Iyengar (1993) define priming as “the capacity of the media to isolate particular issues, events, or themes in the news as criteria for evaluating politicians.” For example, before the 2008 economic crisis, people were primarily concerned with immigration policy and the Iraq war so the presidential candidates had been campaigning with “solutions” to these issues. Then, once the economic crisis hit the nation, the president and Congress switched gears so they could maintain a good public image as people began to rate their performance in relation to how well the leaders were dealing with new the situation.

Another good example of priming is when there was a high level of support for the invasion of Iraq after 9/11. People placed a greater importance on President Bush’s ability to deal with terrorism than they did the economy as they previously had. Iyengar (2011) claims, “Terrorism and national security had replaced the economy as the yardstick for judging Bush’s performance.” There are many examples of the priming effect and one more that seems to be especially persuasive is the 1992 election between Bill Clinton and George H. W. Bush. During this time, it is said that George H. W. Bush had popularity ratings of up to 90 percent from his perceived success with the Gulf War in liberating Kuwait from Iraqi occupation (Iyengar 2011). However, the news began to cover other issues like the economy, which voters believed Clinton could handle much better than Bush. Since security issues were downplayed in the media during the election time, it is believed that Clinton won because of the support people thought he could

provide in regards to the economy. Iyengar (2011) even says, “Had the media played up military or security issues, of course, it’s likely that the tables would have been turned.”

Framing is slightly different from the previous media effects, in that it rests on the idea that people’s opinions can be altered depending on how specific aspects of an issue are highlighted or ignored. Iyengar (1991) also includes that not only can framing influence how individuals think about an issue, but it also implies that individuals try to have appropriate solutions for the issue. A prime example of this in the media is when they refer to policies by codenames such as “Obamacare” instead of the “Affordable Care Act”. Codenames can effectively place certain connotations with policies so that when individuals just hear about it, they will either think negatively or positively about the issue or policy without even knowing much else about it.

The Ku Klux Klan study done by Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley also shows this effect of framing. The study explored people’s perceptions of tolerance for KKK rallies depending on if it was framed as a free speech issue or a public safety issue. It was found that when the KKK rally ended up being framed as a free speech issue, people expressed more tolerance rather than those who viewed it as a public safety issue. Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997) said, “The present results show a clear effect of news frames on an entirely different kind of judgement: the willingness to extend civil liberties protections to ignoble and potentially dangerous groups.” This is interesting because it reveals that even though the researchers did not agree with the KKK rally themselves and they only used political science students in their study, they were able to provide results for framing which can actually be generalized.

It can be generalized to other situations because we already see this in other events. For instance, it is very similar to the issue of the Westboro Baptist Church members of Topeka, Kansas who protest at soldiers’ funerals. Since these are typically framed more towards free speech issues, they have been tolerated throughout the years to where the group has protested

over 600 funerals (Epstein and Walker 2013). In addition, the Gay rights movement can be attributed to much of how it was framed in the media. Before Stonewall in 1969, homosexuals were negatively covered in the media. One 1960s CBS report claimed, “The average homosexual, if there be such, is promiscuous. He is not interested in, nor capable of, a lasting relationship like that of a heterosexual marriage” (Holden 2010). This was commonly seen on television and newspaper sources before the 1970s and because it was framed in a negative light, it had the potential to influence individuals to think negatively of homosexuality. Similarly, after the Stonewall event, the media began to focus on other issues like how the police were treating homosexually-identified individuals and now more recently, there have been more positive or neutral frames of the issue as Gay marriage had been decided in a Supreme Court ruling.

These are both prime examples of how the media have framed issues. It is debatable as to whether or not the media influence the public first, or if it is public perception influences how the media cover issues. Even though evidence is not entirely clear, I would argue that the media do play a large part in confirming and slowly shaping individuals’ perceptions. Just from the previously mentioned issues, it seems as though studies need to take a broader perspective in their experimentation and tackle how the media has influenced public opinion over the decades. I believe this would reveal evidence towards the fact that the media do have a role in catering to people’s opinions, even if it just confirms individuals’ previous beliefs. But I believe that on a larger scale, media messages can give the mass public different issues to think about in a sense that they had not known about it before. Take the Watergate scandal as an example. Before information was given to the press about the issue, there was no other knowledge of it other than those directly involved. I would argue that people use the media as a venue to carry more important information that deals with the larger populace as a way to inform the public, and to simply get the messages out for individuals to think about. What they decide to do with the

information is a combination of the media and other sources like their religious and political ideologies, their families, and their friends.

This relates back to the early studies of media effects in a way that they may actually be minimal again. As Iyengar (2011) notes, there may be a new era of minimal effects, primarily because of the vast amount of media sources that individuals have to choose from. It is noted by Mullainathan and Shleifer (2005) that, “Competition forces newspapers to cater to the prejudices of their readers, and greater competition typically results in more aggressive catering to such prejudices as competitors strive to divide the market.” Therefore, not only are there more media sources to retrieve news and information, they are also more likely to become more partisan because they are trying to compete with one another to gain viewers. Bennet and Iyengar (2008) believe that this is a combination leading to the new era of minimal effects because audience members will be more likely to consume information that they already agree with creating the reinforcement effect again, even if they do not hold strong ideological beliefs.

Although, when regarding the concept of red and blue States, there has been previous research finding correlations between the redness and blueness of State in terms of media polarization. Mutz claims that media sources can possibly influence political perspectives of readers, viewers and listeners so that they actually gain similar political ideologies akin to the media station (Nivola and Brady 2006). Furthermore, Nivola and Brady 2006 cite a panel study done by David Barker, which found regular listeners developing a specific perspective on Rush Limbaugh’s targets. This essentially proposes that influence by the media does in fact occur and can polarize the public. This theory is similarly related to selective exposure explained above with Bennet and Iyengar, where individuals will tune in to the news media they prefer. However, Mutz agrees that this is most likely attributed to people reading conservative newspapers because

they are more widely spread within a conservative region, and vice versa for liberal media, rather than just selectively exposing oneself to certain media (Nivola and Brady 2006).

Thus, if media such as newspapers receive their information from sources that are already ideologically biased, this means that they could become biased themselves even if they are trying to be completely objective in their reporting. Croteau and Hoynes (2014) say that journalistic practices for objectivity usually aim in a partisan direction; the media tend to give those in power more visibility, while individuals or groups outside central power forces are largely disregarded. This means that media largely rely on “appropriate,” available, and somewhat authoritative foundations like government and corporate officials or even think tanks (Croteau and Hoynes, 2014). Rich and Weaver (2000) mention that think tanks can also receive higher media visibility for reasons such as “one-stop shopping” for facts and statistics which can increase journalists’ credibility, as well as because larger think tanks can have resources to publish and promote media that may have cited them, for their own comment solicitation and editorials. This is particularly one reason why think tanks are a good measure to analyze media bias.

Think Tanks

According to Merriam-Webster (2015) a think tank is 1) “an organization that consists of a group of people who think of new ideas on a particular subject or who give advice about what should be done;” 2) “an institute, corporation, or group organized for interdisciplinary research (as in technological and social problems).” Think tanks are used by other governmental organizations to influence politicians on policies, as well as by media outlets to have a greater effect on the public. To be more effective in pushing policy and being able to influence individual’s opinions, organizations like the media and Congress will reference think tanks in order to substantiate their claims and back different information with typically sound research statistics, methods, processes, and findings.

However, governmental actors and media officials are not the only ones who have an agenda. The think tanks themselves will form in order to complete the research needed to achieve their own goals. Rich and Weaver (2000) claim, “Media visibility has become an especially important priority for nongovernmental research organizations whose principal mission is to produce and promote their expertise among policymakers.” Thus, individuals who make up think tanks do in-fact attempt to influence how policies are made and implemented, and many will have a liberal- or conservative-leaning agenda (Dolny 2013).

For this reason, along with the fact that news sources cite think tanks to be more credible and provide information to the public, I have decided to use think tank mentions by the media as a measure for liberal bias. As it is widely accepted that the media can influence the public including how they can polarize States from one another. Hence, my research will provide a different operational measure tying the liberal ratio of newspapers and their State’s corresponding political ideology based off the 2004 presidential election together.

Data and Methods

In this study, I analyze whether or not overall State ideology is affected by the media’s corresponding liberal or conservative bias. Depending on the electoral votes for the 2004 presidential election, I hypothesize that these electoral votes are influenced by the bias within the media of that State. So, if newspapers are heavily conservative biased, then I predict that the State will have voted for the Republican candidate in the 2004 election and they will essentially be labeled as a “red” state. Similarly, if the media within a State is found to be majorly liberal then it is predicted that the State’s Electoral College member and overall public supporters will have voted for the Democratic Party candidate, labeling that State as “blue”.

In order to determine the bias of the media, there were essentially two parts to my research. The first was to find all of the think tank counts they cited and code them as raw scores. Once these were found, I found the liberal ratio (independent variable) of each newspaper by taking the total number of positive liberal think tank counts and divided that by the total number of counts they had for all conservative and liberal mentions. As the liberal ratios for each paper were determined, the second part was to find the average of these scores for each section of swing, liberal, and conservative States, thus giving me a total of three liberal ratio means to compare through an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test for significance using STATA. All of this is exemplified in Table 1 and Table 1a. of the Appendix.

In order to find the think tank mentions within newspapers, databases including LexisNexis and Infotrac were utilized. In each database, I was able to determine the specific newspapers I wanted to include in my analysis, the number of years that I was searching for specifically (2001-2006) and then complete searches within each one for the specific think tanks. I analyzed 45 different newspapers among the 15 States, which included 12,239 articles with think tank citations for the content analysis. This content analysis included positive and negative counts in order to find the positive liberal ratios, whereas Groseclose and Milyo's study just used overall counts for their analysis. I decided on specific newspapers by first finding States that were liberal, conservative or swing (dependent variable) before the 2004 election from <http://www.270towin.com/>, which provided an estimated partisan voting map. From these States outlined, I chose ones that spanned the country geographically and found five total States for each section. Then, I was able to find the three most prominent newspapers by circulation (CISION 2016) within those specific States in order to analyze them.

In addition, it is notable to mention here that there are several reasons as to why newspapers are analyzed within this research rather than broadcast media. Even though broadcast media have become vastly more prevalent with the digital age and newspaper readers and advertisers have gone down over the last several decades (OECD 2010), there are some notable differences between the production of these two forms of news media. First, a study by David Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit revealed that journalists working in the print news media like newspapers are much more likely to see that analysis of complex problems is greatly beneficial and important when providing information to the public, rather than journalists in the broadcast industry. Secondly, print journalists also have higher percentages for the importance of investigating governmental claims, and lower percentages for focusing on the importance of getting information to the public quickly than their broadcast journalist counterparts (Iyengar and Reeves 1997).

This means that not only do they value producing more accurately and broadly informed content, but they take more time to make sure their facts are correct before printing the newspaper. Weaver and Wilhoit explain this finding quite well when they say, “The least favorable ratings on informing the public are from television journalists, who mention small size of staff and limited resources” where the other journalists rate their organizations in informing the public highly (as seen in Iyengar and Reeves 1997). Lastly, in order to gather enough viable data, it is rather difficult for an unfunded undergraduate study to obtain all of the broadcast news stations full, daily transcripts from 45 different news sources within 15 different States. However, newspaper articles are easier to access through databases such as LexisNexis and Infotrac with university credentials. The entire list of newspapers and their liberal ratios are available in Table 2 of the dataset.

The independent variable within this research is the liberal ratio calculated by the total positive liberal think tank mentions divided by the total number of think tank citations made including both liberal and conservative mentions. This is the independent variable because the liberal ratio of the newspapers is supposed to help determine the overall liberalness (or conservativeness) of a State, the dependent variable. Therefore, the States' Electoral College counts are taken into consideration and can be found in Table 3. These are the votes for the 2004 presidential election cycle. However, to receive the swing States as part of my independent variable stated above, the States' ideologies were researched before the election took place and were provided in an expected outcome map, including the States that could vote either way (swing), Republican or Democratic for the presidential candidate.

The think tanks used to find the number of mentions within Congressional floor speeches and in the media include: the Brookings' Institute, Amnesty International, Sierra Club, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Heritage Foundation, Cato Institute, American Enterprise Institute, and the National Federation of Independent Businesses. The first four are liberal and the subsequent four are conservatively biased (Dolny 2013).

Results

Results include the findings that the average liberal ratios for newspapers within each section of liberal, conservative, and swing States are fundamentally similar. Liberal States provided an overall average of 0.48, conservative States had an average liberal ratio of 0.40, and the swing State average is 0.46. The Analysis of Variance test for all of these ratios hold that there is no statistical difference between them and therefore do not show a correlation to overall State ideology from the 2004 US election. As the p-value is supposed to be a 0.05 or lower to

hold significance, my values produced a p-value of 0.83. Thus, the correlation between newspaper bias and State ideology cannot be determined to hold true with this research.

If more think tanks were coded throughout the press' citations, this may have looked different. However, these results provide that the newspaper media is largely unbiased, which can be seen as a win for journalism. Levendusky (2013) found that, "issue after issue, cable news networks, most especially FOX News and MSNBC, present starkly different interpretations of the day's stories. While traditional news outlets [newspapers] still emphasize balance and objectivity, these partisan media outlets provide a more one-sided take on the day's events." Previous research showing media to influence the electorate mainly include studies on alternative media outlets, or broadcast media which produce and handle news stories differently than print newspapers. Similarly, as mentioned before, newspaper journalists are found to put more emphasis and importance on the dissemination of proper facts and analyses of these facts, while broadcast journalists are more likely to value the money and timeliness aspect of the news (Iyengar and Reeves 1997).

On another interesting note, Hamilton (2004) finds that conservative individuals tend to believe media is liberal, while liberals believe that media messages actually hold a conservative bias. Thus, this gives evidence from Pew Research Center surveys that individuals can decipher different meanings from the media and it is really up to the individual as to whether or not that media source is conservative or liberal. So, if newspapers throughout the States are all centrally biased, then it may not matter in the end as to how they affect individuals beliefs because they may tend to pick out the information that aligns with their previously held beliefs. For this research, however, it still stands that there can be no correlation in newspaper bias to State ideology because I find there is really no newspaper bias to begin with.

Conclusions

Overall, I find that the average liberal ratios for newspapers within each section (liberal, conservative, and swing States) were largely similar. Initially, this means that the newspaper reporting in these States do their best to be unbiased within their reporting by citing similar amounts of liberal and conservative think tanks. This is not all surprising as many journalists are taught to be unbiased reporters. In fact, Iyengar and Reeves (1997) point out that if journalists are not objective in their reporting, they risk losing their credibility and even popularity among readers, bosses, sources, and peers. They state that “Objectivity is both a cloak and a goal for journalists—most cannot make a living if they are not seen by sources, readers, viewers, and bosses as trying to be fair” (Iyengar and Reeves 1997).

There are some ways to reason that media are more liberal or biased than expected not measured in this study. One way to explain these results as being insignificant deals with the fact that alternative media are more biased, and this study implemented means that would eliminate all alternative media. Instead of major newspapers that are recognized as credible sources disseminating facts, people may gain their political bias based off the alternative media they read or view. Atton and Hamilton (2008) claim that alternative media sources actually “seek to challenge objectivity and impartiality from both an ethical and political standpoint.” In this way, alternative media and journalists “not only reject the idea of not getting involved in the story, they seek to play an active role in advancing their causes” (Croteau and Hoynes 2014). Therefore, media like niche market newspapers, blogs, articles, and broadcast shows like the *Daily Show* are much more likely to lean partisan influencing individuals who engage with that media. Similarly, editorials within newspapers are more likely to contain a political bias. So, if they were included in this research, my results may have looked quite different.

However, this can also be seen as an invalid way to measure media bias. Croteau and Hoynes (2014) say that news is essentially the product of a social process. Media officials such as journalists are the ones to decide what is newsworthy, who is important, as well as what views to include and what views to dismiss. They claim that absolutely none of these decisions can be entirely objective (Croteau and Hoynes 2014). They further claim, “The ideal of objectivity --separating values from facts--is ultimately unobtainable, although some would argue it is a valuable goal.” Nonetheless, this does not mean that media do their best to mitigate these biases and eliminate the statistical significance of these biases appearing in their regular daily articles.

Further Research and Implications

Further research with this study could include the counts of think tank mentions by all members of Congress, not just Senators. In the beginning of the study, I was essentially going to find the think tank mentions of senate floor speeches in order to help determine their liberal bias, then I would match that liberal ratio with those of the newspapers calculated, and assign the newspapers with the same ADA score as that Senator. This is more comparable to Groseclose and Milyo’s study, but for certain purposes, it was not suitable for this project.

So, if I included all Congressional floor speeches for House and Senate members as well as more think tanks overall in the analysis, I may have been more successful in doing this. I essentially did not have enough think tank citation counts, since many senators did not mention any of the think tanks I researched in the floor speeches. Therefore, if I were to include House members as well as the Senate members, and even broaden my research to include a larger number of liberal and conservative think tanks, I may have a better chance of being able to match the Congressional members’ ADA scores to the newspapers in order to assign them an ADA score that way.

In addition, further research in tying the media bias to the State's Electoral College votes could include finding out how the members of the Electoral College receive much of their information about the presidency, how these members are specifically chosen by Congress and what each members' previous biases may entail. This in itself would be intriguing to study in comparison with media bias and polarization.

Since my data did not prove newspaper media as having bias to begin with, the implications of my research lean towards the idea that newspaper journalism is comparable throughout the United States. As the averages of the liberal ratios stay within the middle spectrum of the 0-100 liberal scale (0 being conservative and 100 being liberal), it means that newspaper article publications do their best to reveal both sides of the story in order to provide objective perspectives. However, this does not include alternative media, which is typically found to be biased. Thus, it is not to say that all media can't be found to influence the public, but it is not likely that newspaper media do the influencing on people's political beliefs.

When implementing further research from this reasoning, one could include things such as editorials or opinion sections within newspapers to determine the different levels of their biases from the typical objective articles. Furthermore, one could even just do a content analysis with more think tanks, as Groseclose and Milyo searched for over 50, within just alternative media instead of combining the two. These differences may be much closer to the previous findings of media effects and biases within broadcast media sources. Then, these differences could be compared to the liberalness or conservativeness of the State to see if they correspond with one another.

Appendix

Table 1

| Summary of News Liberal Ratio | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------|
| State Group | State Ideology | Mean | Std. Dev. | Freq. |
| Liberal | 1 | 0.482667 | 0.304947 | 15 |
| Swing | 2 | 0.463333 | 0.407495 | 15 |
| Conservative | 3 | 0.404667 | 0.368275 | 15 |
| | Total | 0.450222 | 0.355953 | 45 |

Table 1a.

| Analysis of Variance | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------------|
| Source | ss | df | MS | F | Prob > F |
| Between Groups | 0.0494977 | 2 | 0.024749 | 0.19 | 0.8293 |
| Within Groups | 5.5254 | 42 | 0.131557 | | |
| Total | 5.5748977 | 44 | 0.126702 | | |

Table 2

| State | Paper | Liberal ratio |
|----------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| California | Los Angeles Times | 0.00 |
| | San Diego Union Tribune | 0.65 |
| | San Bernardino County Sun | 0.00 |
| | | |
| Illinois | Chicago Tribune | 0.00 |
| | Journal Star | 0.57 |
| | Daily Herald | 0.73 |
| New Mexico | Albuquerque Journal | 0.67 |
| | Santa Fe New Mexican | 0.84 |
| | Las Cruces Sun-News | 0.36 |
| New York | New York Post | 0.42 |
| | New York Times | 0.45 |
| | The Buffalo News | 0.49 |
| Minnesota | Star Tribune | 0.69 |
| | Saint Paul Pioneer Press | 0.37 |
| | Post-Bulletin | 1.00 |
| Texas | The Dallas Morning News | 0.00 |
| | Houston Chronicle | 0.00 |
| | Fort Worth Star Telegram | 0.00 |
| | | |
| Georgia | Atlanta Journal Constitution | 0.68 |
| | Augusta Chronicle | 0.40 |
| | Macon Telegraph | 0.00 |
| Utah | Salt Lake Tribune | 0.47 |
| | Standard Examiner | 1.00 |
| | Herald Journal News | 0.00 |
| Indiana | The Indianapolis Star | 0.79 |
| | Times | 0.83 |
| | South Bend Tribune | 0.28 |
| Missouri | Kansas City Daily Record | 0.18 |
| | St. Louis Post Dispatch | 0.56 |
| | Columbia Daily Tribune | 0.88 |
| North Carolina | Mecklenburg Times | 0.00 |
| | The News & Observer | 0.00 |
| | Winston-Salem Journal | 0.85 |
| Florida | Tampa Bay Times | 0.54 |

| | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|------|
| | Orlando Sentinel | 0.00 |
| | The Miami Herald | 0.00 |
| Wisconsin | Daily Reporter | 0.95 |
| | Post-Crescent | 1.00 |
| | Wisconsin State Journal | 0.82 |
| Pennsylvania | Philadelphia Inquirer | 0.49 |
| | Pittsburgh Post- Gazette | 0.13 |
| | York Daily Record | 1.00 |
| Colorado | The Denver Post | 0.67 |
| | The Gazette | 0.50 |
| | Daily Camera | 0.00 |

Table 3

| Liberal | | Electoral Vote 2004 | |
|---------------------|---|----------------------------|-------------------|
| State | Paper | George Bush | John Kerry |
| California | Los Angeles Times San Diego Union Tribune San Bernardino County Sun | 0 | 55 |
| Illinois | Chicago Tribune Journal Star Daily Herald | 0 | 21 |
| New Mexico | Albuquerque Journal Santa Fe New Mexican Las Cruces Sun-News | 5 | 0 |
| New York | New York Post New York Times The Buffalo News | 0 | 31 |
| Minnesota* | Star Tribune Saint Paul Pioneer Press Post-Bulletin | 0 | 9 |
| Conservative | | Electoral Vote 2004 | |
| State | Paper | George Bush | John Kerry |
| Texas | The Dallas Morning News Houston Chronicle Fort Worth Star Telegram | 34 | 0 |
| Georgia | Atlanta Journal Constitution Augusta Chronicle Macon Telegraph | 15 | 0 |
| Utah | Salt Lake Tribune Standard Examiner / The Reporter Herald Journal News | 5 | 0 |
| Indiana | The Indianapolis Star Times South Bend Tribune | 11 | 0 |
| Missouri | Kansas City Daily Record St. Louis Post Dispatch Columbia Daily Tribune | 11 | 0 |
| Swing | | Electoral Vote 2004 | |
| State | Paper | George Bush | John Kerry |
| North | Mecklenburg Times | 15 | 0 |

| | | | |
|--------------|--|----|----|
| Carolina | The News & Observer Winston-Salem Journal | | |
| Florida | Tampa Bay Times Orlando Sentinel The Miami Herald | 27 | 0 |
| Wisconsin | Daily Reporter Post-Crescent Wisconsin State Journal | 0 | 10 |
| Pennsylvania | Philadelphia Inquirer Pittsburgh Post- Gazette York Daily Record | 0 | 21 |
| Colorado | The Denver Post The Gazette Daily Camera | 9 | 0 |

*Minnesota has 10 votes total; one voted for John Edwards while the other 9 for Kerry.
Data obtained from <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/national.php?year=2004>

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