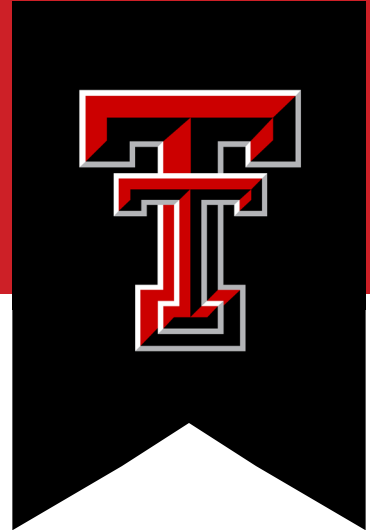


A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF REAUTHORIZING SNAP IN THE 2018 FARM BILL

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PURPOSE AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- The purpose of this study was to research the newspaper coverage reporting on the 2018 Farm Bill to analyze how the media reported on the process in Rep. Michael Conaway's home district.
- The media's role in reporting on congressional actions is vital for the public because the events are rarely witnessed firsthand (Denton & Woodward, 1998).

RO: Describe the potential level of bias in newspaper articles published about SNAP in the 2018 Farm Bill in Rep. Conaway's home district, using the Hayakawa-Lowry coding instrument.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Framing refers to the patterns of interpretation which are prevalent in media coverage and in people's mind certain aspects of reality while ignoring others (Donsbach & Traugott, 2012).
- Framing theory focuses on the media's attention to certain events or topics and places them within a field of meaning (Davie, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

- A content analysis was performed on newspaper articles in the four of the largest newspapers in Conaway's home district from February 25, 2015 to December 20, 2018.
- The researcher first scanned the articles to determine the overall frame or theme.
- The researcher conducted an analysis for bias using the Hayakawa-Lowry media bias coding system.
- This system analyzes three types of sentences: reports, inferences, and judgements.

FINDINGS

The research sample yielded 53 articles. A majority were published in 2018.

| Newspaper | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | Total |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Midland Telegram-Reporter | 0 | 1 | 1 | 29 | 31 |
| San Angelo Standard-Times | 0 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 12 |
| Odessa American | 0 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 7 |
| Brownwood Bulletin | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Total | 0 | 4 | 6 | 43 | 53 |

The most frequent primary frame used was the explanation of the issue.

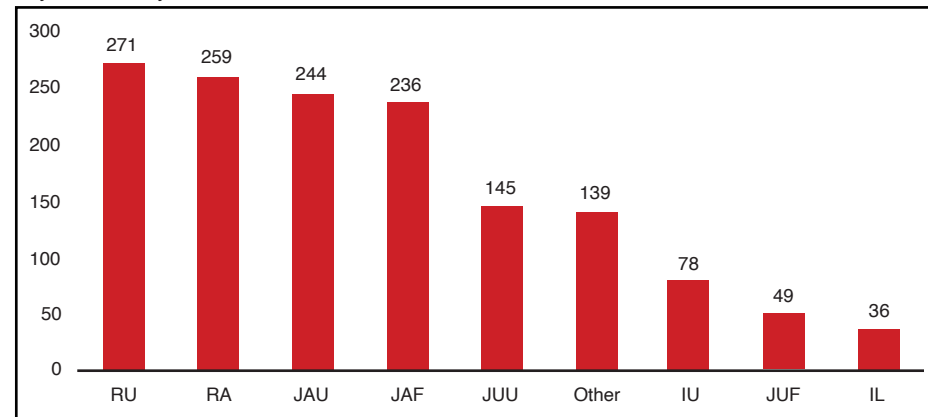
| Primary Frame | Total |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Explanation of the Issue | 17 |
| Farm Program Focus | 16 |
| Work Requirements | 10 |
| Cutting Funding for SNAP | 8 |
| Welfare Reform/Reinvestment in SNAP | 2 |
| Other | 0 |
| Total | 53 |

The most frequent secondary frame used was work requirements.

| Secondary Frames | Total |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Work Requirements | 18 |
| Farm Program Focus | 11 |
| Other | 9 |
| Explanation of the Issue | 8 |
| Cutting Funding for SNAP | 4 |
| Welfare Reform/Reinvestment in SNAP | 3 |
| Total | 53 |

The 53 articles contained a total of 1,455 sentences. Of these, 530 sentences were report attributed sentences (17.8%) and report unattributed sentences (18.6%).

Hayakawa-Lowry Distribution of Coded Articles



RU: Report Unattributed, RA: Report Attributed, JAU: Judgement Attributed Unfavorable, JAF: Judgement Attributed Favorable, JUJ: Judgement Unattributed Unfavorable, Other, IU: Inference Unlabeled, JUF: Judgement Unattributed Favorable, IL: Inference Labeled

- The most frequent tone of the sample was negative with (43.3%, 23).
- There were 15 articles with a positive tone and 15 articles with a neutral tone.
- The media placed an importance on SNAP and the farm bill significantly more when it was up for expiration.
- Very few of the other components of the farm bill were covered in the news media.
- In the article sample, 48 of the 53 articles discussed the work section of the bill.
- Journalists may have focused on main points so their audience could easily identify these frames rather than the various other aspects of SNAP and the Nutrition Title.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- This study was a baseline research for future studies on the legislative process and media coverage in reauthorizing SNAP in the farm bill.
- Agricultural communicators will be able to more effectively develop messages to promote reforms to the farm bill that improve nutrition and agricultural initiatives to best serve producers and consumers.
- This study provides background for other studies analyzing the legislative process and the media's coverage of the process.
- Understanding how political factors outside of the Committee shape legislation may lead to improved messaging for Congressional initiatives.