FRAMING ANALYSIS OF THE 2004 STUDENT GOVERNMENT ELECTION AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN A COLLEGE MEDIA SETTING

By

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Mass Communication

FRAMING ANALYSIS OF THE 2004 STUDENT GOVERNMENT ELECTION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN A COLLEGE MEDIA SETTING

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This study is a framing analysis of the 2004 Student Government presidential election at the University of Florida. The research examines data collected from the *Independent Florida Alligator* and the Access and Innovate political parties. A content analysis and in-depth interviews were used to determine what frames were used by the sources in question.

Based upon a relevant review of literature in framing analysis, the researcher then attempted to answer four research questions. First, what were the overall frames used in the campaign news coverage of the 2004 University of Florida’s Student Government election by the *Independent Florida Alligator*? Second, how similar or different were the frames among the *Alligator*’s news stories, political cartoons, and opinion editorials? Third, what were the overall frames used by the Access and Innovate campaigns? Fourth, how similar or different were the political parties’ campaign framing from each other in comparison to the news coverage frames of the *Alligator*?
The study finds a number of frames employed by both the *Alligator* newspaper and the political parties and determines that the strong internal frames of the Access Party were more easily adopted by the *Alligator* newspaper and may have had an impact upon both voter turnout and the election results.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Student Government at the University of Florida is a microcosm of real-life politics. The campaigns for Student Body President are very realistic in their depth and scope of involvement to running a small community’s campaign for local office. Spanning nearly 80 years, the campus-wide elections take place every spring to elect a new Student Government Executive Board to oversee the next academic year. The election of 2004 can be considered as one of the most controversial and groundbreaking turnout elections in the history of the University of Florida. The election, which began with three parties involved, Access, Innovate, and Keg, achieved the highest recorded voter turnout in Student Government history. With a record number of 10,579 votes cast and no party capturing a majority, the election was then forced into a run-off (Barwig, Mitchell, 2004a). Even more surprising to campus political watchers was the fact that the subsequent run-off election between Access and Innovate parties managed to garner an ever higher turnout rate than the initial election. Jamal Sowell, “told as a freshman that the Student Body presidency was out of his reach,” captured 6,852 votes out of the 11,586 cast in a surprise victory to become the 4th African-American student body president in the history of the University of Florida (Barwig, 2004c).

Student Government at the University of Florida has been historically described as a political training ground for real-world campaigns and elections. The campaigns themselves are often constructed with very professional aspects; budgets can range anywhere from a few thousand dollars to upwards of $20,000, campaign structures
comprised of dozens of executive staff to manage hundreds of volunteers, and even an
overseeing oligarchy executive board composed of just a few individuals. The
campaigns often design their own graphics for personalized logos, fliers, shirts, and other
campaign materials, all typically printed through specialized companies. Each of the
parties usually publishes a platform of issues to differentiate themselves from their
opponents while attempting to gain the support of the elusive “swing voter.”

As the only daily student newspaper at the University of Florida, the *Independent
Florida Alligator* (the *Alligator*) also has the distinction as being one of the largest
college newspapers in publication in the United States. The *Alligator* is the primary
source of information for the students at the University of Florida from which they may
draw media information about Student Government.

Originally founded in 1906, the *Alligator* was founded as The University News, an
independent student-owned newspaper. In 1912, the paper joined the University of
Florida administration and was renamed the “*Florida Alligator.*” Throughout the history
of the newspaper, it has been involved in Student Government campaigns and elections.
For a period of time, the editor of the *Alligator* was even selected through a Student
Government election in which the editor actually slated with a political party. In 1973,
however, the *Alligator* became independent of the University of Florida. It was then
renamed to the “*Independent Florida Alligator*” and vacated the offices adjacent to
Student Government in the Reitz Union.

In a limited student news media environment, the *Alligator*, with practically a
monopoly on coverage of student elections, undoubtedly wields enormous influence over
the content of Student Government related news coverage. The 2004 Student
Government election experienced a large amount of media coverage from the *Alligator* in comparison to elections in years past. With a record of 45 news stories published during the course of the semester, the *Alligator* granted a large amount of media attention to the student election in 2004. The gatekeeping influence of the *Alligator* and its ability to frame coverage as the only student newspaper is an important consideration in the analysis of the election of Jamal Sowell to the position of Student Body President in 2004.

**Purpose Of This Study**

The purpose of the current research is to conduct a framing analysis study to determine what frames were used in the campaign coverage by the *Alligator* and in campaign materials produced the two major political parties (Access and Innovate). The frames will be examined using qualitative content analyses. Framing, described as “the power of a communicating text” by Robert Entman (p. 51), is defined as, “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.” Publications such as fliers, platforms, and press releases from the Access and Innovate campaigns have been collected as well as the numerous articles, opinion editorials, and cartoons published by the *Alligator* in order to present a pool of information from which to conceptualize an analysis. The overall approach to this research will attempt to examine various frames by the Student Government campaigns and media articles in order to better understand framing and its relationship with political communication. Additionally, in-depth interviews with key media and campaign participants who had direct experience with 2004 election will be used to gather further insights.
Significance Of This Study

This study of student campaigns is unique: first, as of this writing, little research exists that examines a college media market publication and news coverage student government elections. Furthermore, the Alligator represents a major framer due to its size and exclusivity of coverage of student information dissemination at the University of Florida. By utilizing mass communication research on framing analysis as the study’s theoretical framework, a lens for examination can infer how the Alligator news coverage may have influenced the campaign. The first step will be to identify relevant literature on framing analysis in chapter 2. Chapter 3 will discuss the methods and materials collected for the conducting the content analysis. Also described will be a series of in-depth interviews conducted with relevant media and campaign participants to provide further insights regarding the framing themes. Chapter 4 will present the findings from the framing analysis, while chapter 5 will provide the conclusions, limitations and directions for future research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of relevant literature begins with a broad concept of framing theory. Each of the subsequent articles gradually narrows in focus. This narrowing of the research literature will be used to move from a general level of framing to the specific study of framing in political campaign coverage.

Robert Entman’s (1993) “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm” article discusses the characteristics of framing theory in mass communication and implores communication scholars to end framing as a “scattered conceptualization.” Entman begins by stating his beliefs that communication needs to “aspire to become a master discipline that synthesizes related theories and concepts and exposes them to the most rigorous, comprehensive statement and exploration” (p. 51). Entman offers the concept of framing as one such theory that should be unified in the field of mass communication study. Although framing is ubiquitous to many fields of study, he states that the “concept of framing consistently offers a way to describe the power of a communicating text” (p. 51). Too often in his opinion is framing defined casually; it should instead be unified and standardized in order to maximize its usefulness.

The concept of framing is understood by two main factors: selection and salience. According to Entman’s complete definition, to frame is to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). While Entman states that an individual sentence
may perform any of these functions, he is quick to point out that a frame does not necessarily contain all of the four functions. The so-called “selection” in the working definition has a number of variables contributing to the framing effect: the communicator, text, receiver, and culture. The selection of the information along these four primary locations may act as possible contributors to the frame. The first step, known as the communicators, may provide intentional or unintentional frames based upon their own beliefs, known as “schemata.” The text itself, he explains, may contain frames based upon “keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” (p. 52). The receiver of said information or text may then apply his or her own frames which may or may not fall within the frames conveyed by the communicator. Finally, the fourth variable Entman describes is that of the culture itself: “the stock of commonly invoked frames . . . exhibited in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping” (p. 53).

According to Entman, frames work by increasing the “salience” of some bit of information. He defines salience as, “making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences” (p.53). Entman agrees with the ideas put forth by Fiske and Taylor (1991) who state that this increase in salience will enhance the possibility that receivers will gather the information, discern meaning, process it, and potentially store it in memory. The salience of the information in question is itself driven by a number of different factors including placement, repetition, or association with cultural symbols. Indeed, each of these bits within the text itself may then depend on the
schemata of the receiver, which is described as “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals’ processing of information” (p. 53).

This complicated process of interaction between text and receiver, however, still does not guarantee influence with audience thinking. The concept of framing must also include that which is omitted as well as included. According to an experiment conducted by Kahneman and Tversky (1984) and cited by Entman, “receivers’ responses are clearly affected if they perceive and process information about one interpretation and possess little or incommensurable data about alternatives” (p. 54). Their experiment found that the frame will determine what sort of information receivers will notice as well as deduce “how they understand and remember a problem, as well as how they evaluate and choose to act upon it” (p. 54).

Entman also considers the importance of framing in political communication. He argues that framing, especially in political communication “force politicians to compete with each other as well as journalists over news frames” (p. 55). He believes that framing is a type of exertion of power that could easily help establish the identities of actors or interests in the political realm.

The importance of framing in political news, however, is not limited to the competition of those running for office. Entman discusses another important aspect in political framing: the power of news frames to exclude ideas and opinions falling outside the realm of acceptable discourse. Conflicting or extreme views that run contrary to political discussion may be altogether omitted, owing to the fact that they may not be considered newsworthy. The news frames may be self-reinforcing and exclude ideas within the minority.
Finally, Entman (1993) ends his article by discussing the benefits of a consistent concept of framing. He believes that a uniform understanding of framing would help “constitute framing as a research paradigm” (p. 56). Defined loosely, the research paradigm would serve as a “general theory that informs most scholarship on the operation and outcomes of any particular system of thought and action” (p. 56). A unified framing paradigm would then be useful in the study of other disciplines including public opinion and voting behavior, social psychology, or cultural studies, etc. He illustrates specifically that four major concerns would benefit from this unification, most notably audience autonomy, journalistic objectivity, content analysis, and normative democratic theory.

Through the unification of the ideas of framing, Entman argues that the study of mass communication may gain greater disciplinary status. He believes that through clarification, the powerful concept of framing can in turn be employed in other academic areas of study and may enhance their own understanding of conceptual ideas. His work builds upon a number of studies to clarify framing theory and reveal the methods with which it may be employed.

Scheufele’s article (1999), “Framing as a Theory of Media Effects,” agrees with Entman’s premise that framing is “a scattered conceptualization” (p.51) but argues that the theoretical concepts of framing and second-level agenda setting are different. Second level agenda setting refers to an object’s “attributes” in a media piece. Current academic debate literature notes that although framing and second-level agenda setting have similar properties, they are fundamentally different. Each examines how issues or other objects are depicted in the media, focuses upon aspects of themes or descriptions, and are more concerned with “ways of thinking rather than objects of thinking” (Kaid, 2004, p.264).
This so-called “second level,” however, concentrates more with the relationship between the media and audience ways of thinking about these “attributes,” instead of the various subjects themselves. While second-level agenda setting is more concerned with the media and audience ways of thinking, framing instead concentrate on “how the media cover and present various subjects” (Kaid, et. al, p.264). The current research, however, will not focus upon the 2004 Student Government election from this second-level agenda setting prospective of attributes but rather the qualitative themes of the campaign identified through analysis.

In his 1999 article, Scheufele examines framing as a construction of social reality, classifies media frames and individual frames as dependent or independent variables, and then develops his differentiation into a process model of framing. The idea of framing, argues Scheufele, is constructed by social reality. According to McQuail (1994), the development and study of mass communication effects may be marked by four distinct paradigm shifts since the 1900s. Scheufele defines the current stage as characterized by “social constructivism,” and combines aspects of the strong and limited effects of the media as traced through the earlier stages of mass communication development.

Scheufele argued strongly that in political communication, “framing has to be defined and operationalized on the basis of social constructivism” (p.74). He believes that two forces are actively involved in the transmission of ideas and information through frames: the media and the individual. His conceptualization of the two concepts of framing follows from Kinder and Sanders (1990), who suggest that “frames serve both as devices embedded in political discourse” as well as “internal structures of the mind”
He believes that each has the potential to serve as an independent or dependent variable and act in accord to develop his process model of framing.

Framing by the media serves in a number of capacities to both the receiver as well as the sender involved. For the journalist, the frame allows for one to identify and categorize information for the consumer and relay this information to the audience. While this conceptualization may include the intentions of the sender, Scheufele argues that motives may not necessarily be intentional. The media frame for the recipient is often necessary to “turn meaningless and nonrecognizable happenings into a discernible event” (p. 74). In a more detailed description, Entman stated that, “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem, definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52).

The method by which the individual gathers information may be organized into three distinct categories. The first, known as “active processing,” describes the individual who seeks additional sources of information beyond that of the initial source. This recipient may believe that the “mass-mediated information is incomplete, slanted, or in other ways colored by the intentions of the communicator” (p. 104). The next classification, known as “reflective integrators,” consider or discuss the information further with his or her peers in order to gain a further understanding of the data received. The final, described as “selective scanners,” are active participants and “seek only relevant information” (p.104). Each of these classifications, while unique, is not mutually exclusive, as individuals may serve in any of these capacities in their information reception.
The frame by the individual, described by Entman as “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals’ processing of information,” is lacking in clarification for political communication, argues Scheufele (p.107). He believes that “two frames of reference can be used to interpret and process information: global and long-term political views and short-term, issue-related frames of reference” (p.108). While global political views are personal and individual-based, they have a limited influence on the perception and interpretation of political problems. Scheufele concurs with Pan and Kosicki (1993) that for the individual, short term, issue-related frames have a much more important impact on “perceiving, organizing, and interpreting incoming information and on drawing inferences from that information” (p.109).

Scheufele develops his theory further by classifying media and individual frames from a dependent or independent point in the typology of framing. Through a brief analysis of a number of framing studies, he attempts to unify the apparent discordance of these independent and dependent frames of the media and the individual. In his “Process Model of Framing research” (p.112), Scheufele categorizes the potential inputs, processes, and outcomes for the media and the audience as a continuous process where “outcomes of certain processes serve as inputs for subsequent processes.” He discusses four main processes that he believes require further research: frame building, frame setting, individual-level effects of framing, and a link between individual frames and media frames.

Overall, Scheufele (1999) argues that framing differs from second level agenda-setting by stating that framing will help to modify the perception of the information received rather than merely increasing the issue salience. He believes that the “fractured
paradigm” described by Entman still exists and believes that more research is needed in order to “integrate previous findings into a consistent model and fill in the missing causal links to develop a complete model of framing in political communication” (p.117). This is important, as he believes that framing should not be seen as merely an input/output idea, but as a continuous model in mass communication.

Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki’s 1994 article entitled “Voters’ Reasoning Process and Media Influences During the Persian Gulf War” was published in Political Behavior. Their research analyzed a series of data gathered before, during, and after the Persian Gulf War in order to better understand, “how did members of the American public reason about the Gulf conflict and form their decisions whether to support their commander-in-chief’s handling of the Gulf crisis?” (p.118).

Pan and Kosicki’s research began during the period of October 1990 and early January 1991 before the initial on-set of American involvement in the Persian Gulf. It is during this time period that the researchers established that President George H.W. Bush’s approval ratings were diminishing prior to his 60% approval rating during early August 1990. Just a few months later in February, the approval ratings of the president shot to 87% following Bush’s decision to send troops in aid to Kuwait. Through this interesting turn of events, Pan and Kosicki set out to measure what effects caused this movement of public opinion.

In an attempt to answer the broad questions of their research, the authors first set out to establish just “how” voters reason. Guided by a treatise published by Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock (1991), it was established that “formulation of voters’ reasoning processes has three important features: population heterogeneity in policy reasoning
conditioned on political sophistication, use of various ‘cognitive heuristics,’ and a reasoning chain linking abstract principles and concrete opinions concerning specific issues” (p.118).

The “population heterogeneity” notion states that “people make up their minds by considering different factors and/or placing different weights on these factors” (p.118). One of the most important aspects according to the researchers is the individuals’ political sophistication. This so-called “sophistication level” is roughly based upon the years of formal schooling completed by the individual. Research conducted by the Sniderman et al study indicated that those with higher levels of education “take a more cognitive approach in their reasoning, as evidenced by greater strengths in the relationships between ideological orientation, principles, and concrete policy preferences (p.119).” Conversely, it was also shown that those with lower levels of education relied primarily on socially constructed groups in forming political and ideological opinions.

The use of cognitive heuristics is important in considering just how voters gather and process political information. It was determined that cognitive “shortcuts” are used in the processing of information and the subsequent preferences and opinions that follow. Pan and Kosicki cite one of the most dominant heuristics described by Sniderman et al.’s work, that of the “likeability heuristic.” The trait “refers to one’s affect toward a social group or the differences in one’s levels of affect towards two opposing candidates being a basis for one’s judgments of policies related to the social group or for one’s preference of a candidate” (p.119). It was stated that this heuristic is also most aptly used by those considered less politically sophisticated.
Finally, the “reasoning chain” described by Pan and Kosicki merely refers to the “reasoning process [of the voter which] parallels the logical procedure of moving from abstract and general to concrete and specific” (p.119). Pan and Kosicki “attempted to formulate a causal model of voters’ cognitive calculus in opinion formation” (p.119).

Establishing the theoretical reasoning process of the voter, Pan and Kosicki developed a number of hypotheses. For the sake of consistency with the research, only those have been selected which correspond to the subject at hand. Pan and Kosicki believe that the “homogenous portrayal [in the media] had a powerful impact on voters’ reasoning about the issues in some specific ways,” and that the powerful framing effect of the “euphoria and fictionalization of TV coverage of the war” would account for the fluxuation inherent in public opinion (p.120). Most importantly, however, their reformulated overall hypothesis was that, “the roles played by both ideological orientation and the likeability heuristic in voters’ reasoning process during the Gulf conflict are unique in that ideological orientation was not strongly related to increased support of Bush’s Gulf War policies and there was no difference in the effects of positive affect toward Bush and patriotic feelings on increased support of Bush’s Gulf War policies between high and low political sophistication groups” (p.125).

The methodology of Pan and Kosicki’s experiment includes primary data collection through the National Election Studies (NES) between 1990 and 1991 as well as additional data through Gallop Polling. A number of dependent variables were employed, primarily focusing on President Bush’s “job” approval in the Gulf, the approval of his administration’s decisions as well as opinion ratings of foreign policy
decisions. Each of the subsequent variables was then measured in the relative intensity of the respondents.

The analysis of the data collected through 1,385 respondents was then put through a number of mathematical analyses including logit regression and \( R^2 \) computation. The resulting computations revealed a significant correlation concerning the power of the framing effect of the media, most notably of television coverage. Overall, Pan and Kosicki found that there was also a lack of significant correlation between ideology and opinion and that “exposure to TV news was a much stronger predictor of the mediating variables in the reasoning chain model” (p.140). According to their analysis, “the effect of exposure to TV news… heightened patriotic feelings, increased positive feelings towards Bush, and raised the level of salience of protecting weaker nations against aggression and bringing a democratic form of government to other nations as goals of U.S. foreign policy” (p.142).

Overall, the study by Pan and Kosicki found a strong correlation with opinion and elite discourse that defined, presented, and signified the issue. Exposure to television coverage in particular produced the greatest concurrence with the media’s presentation and positive public opinion. During the onset of the Persian Gulf War, public opinion and media outputs were subsequently concurrent with strong approval of the Bush administration effort. Moving towards a post-war period, however, Bush’s approval ratings fell when the media began to become discordant with the output of the administration. The overall result of the research by Pan and Kosicki show a strong correlation with the framing output of the dominant media and widespread public opinion.
Paul D’Angelo’s (2002) article, entitled “News Framing as a Multiparadigmatic Research Program: A Response to Entman,” published in the *Journal of Communication*, takes an alternate look at Robert Entman’s article calling for framing to serve as a research paradigm. He disagrees strongly with Entman’s premise and argues that framing should instead be considered as a multiparadigmatic research program based in the Lakatosian principles.

D’Angelo begins by discussing Entman’s premise on the paradigm of framing. He critically evaluates Entman’s position and instead presents a “new metatheory of framing, focusing on the growing body of work on news framing” (p.871). He believes that “knowledge about framing has accumulated in a coordinated way because the study of framing operates as a Lakatosian research program” (p.871). Citing Lakatos (1974), D’Angelo states that Lakatos’s metatheory “claims that knowledge about a phenomenon grows within an environment, called a research program that both supports competition among different theories and provides criteria to evaluate individual theories in light of new data” (p.871). D’Angelo claims that while Lakatos’s metatheory limits the role of paradigms, he instead believes that three paradigms are required for the news framing program.

D’Angelo outlines four empirical goals that framing research encounters: “(a) to identify thematic units called frames, (b) to investigate the antecedent conditions that produce frames, (c) to examine how news frames activate, and interact with, an individual’s prior knowledge to affect interpretations, recall of information, decision making, and evaluations, and (d) to examine how news frames shape social-level processes such as public opinion and policy issue debates” (p.873). He believes,
however, that Entman’s article provides useful direction in describing the four locations of the communication process. Agreeing with much of Entman’s initial premise, D’Angelo states that news frames are “themes within news stories; that they shape various levels of reality, that they may interact with the cognitive and social behaviors that they have shaped, and that they may shape public dialogues about political issues” (p.873-4). D’Angelo continues further that these goals and conjectures within the paradigm diminish the scope with which his research program broadens.

Continuing with his discussion, D’Angelo then conjectures that Lakatos’s critique that “the existence of paradigms misrepresented the underlying rationality of scientific discovery” and that his subsequent limiting of their explanatory power was too conservative (p.874). He unifies the ideas of research programs and paradigms by building his new “metatheory,” derived from a sociological discipline. “In this arrangement,” he continues, “research programs and paradigms refer to different, yet interlocking, dimensions of scholarly activity” (p.874). This unity of theory and paradigm, he concludes, “allows knowledge about framing to accumulate” (p.874).

D’Angelo states that his three paradigms: cognitive, constructionist, and critical, are what compose the research program of framing. He believes that the “image of negotiation characterizes the cognitive paradigm, [the] co-optation characterizes the constructionist paradigm, and domination characterizes the critical paradigm” (p.875). The paradigms, applied to framing research, help provide “researchers with distinct images about the interactions between textual frames and framing effects” (p.875).

This multiparadigmatic view of the news framing research program generates new information on the idea of framing disagreeing with Entman’s position that “framing
scholarship diserves the communication discipline” (p.879). Referring to D’Angelo’s model of the news framing process (p.880), the process includes three processes: frame construction, framing effects, and frame definition. Indeed his frame construction flow adds to Scheufele’s framing processes of frame building and frame setting. D’Angelo agrees with Entman’s premise that framing is a “scattered conceptualization” but believes it lends itself to what Rosengren’s (1993) point that “knowledge grows by both confrontation and cooperation – precisely how a Lakatosian research program operates” (p.883).

D’Angelo concludes that his multiparadigmatic research program for framing enables researchers to “coordinate theories toward the end of elaborating and understanding complex communication processes” (p.883). Although his article disagrees much with the overall premise Entman’s research paradigm, he believes that Entman makes excellent contributions to the overall focus on the theory of framing as a whole. He believes that through the unification of paradigms into a research program, framing researchers will build further upon their theoretical knowledge of framing.

In the study of political communication and framing, one of the most important research questions is “how much and in what ways people receive political information from the mass media” (p.26). The question is asked in June Rhee’s 1997 study, entitled “Strategy and Issue Frames in Election Campaign Coverage: A Social Cognitive Account of Framing Effects.” The study offers a detailed experimental procedure on the question of political media framing.

Rhee begins by considering what constitutes “news framing” and conceptualizes the different structures and framing effects. Rhee refers to as a “discourse model,” or, a
mental model based on the state of interpretation. Characterizing the social cognitive account of framing based on three subprocesses of interpretation, these are: “reception of news texts, integration of knowledge, and construction of a discourse model” (p.28).

The first subprocess, referred to as “reception,” is based on van Dijk and Kintsch’s (1983) idea that “when received, information in a news text is transformed into propositional systems so that it can be processed in the form of concepts and their associations in the interpreter’s working memory” (p.28). This is then activated into the individuals’ long-term memory. According to Rhee, this is not believed to be a random process. A number of cognitive scientists believe that this narrative construction of news works as a model for future reference. According to Rhee, “the information in a news text is not likely to be used as a discrete unit of information… rather; news texts construct a narrative representation of a situation featuring well-motivated agents, dramatic actions, background events, and possible implications” (p.28).

The next step in this intake process is “integration,” which is described as “an elaborate process in which concepts, newly activated from the interpreter’s knowledge, are integrated with the textual information” (p.28). This information is then utilized with general social knowledge. This permanent store of knowledge within the reader is based upon certain thematic conventions, narrative styles, and social norms and values that are known to the receiver.

The last step, referred to by Rhee as “construction of a discourse model,” compiles the information into a “mental picture or representation of actors, actions, events, settings, and consequences about the situation” (p.29). Through the incoming stream of information, this “mental picture” is updated and altered depending on the changes that
occur. This discourse model is important, as it is built upon recognition patterns within the individual. According to Rhee, this news interpretation is “a recursive process within which a previous discourse model influences the ensuing process of the interaction between news texts and the interpreter’s knowledge” (Kintsch, 1988). This is important, as the discourse model is continually “modified rather than rejected and replaced altogether” (p.29). Citing Gamson (1992), Rhee states that, “unless a significant alternative frame is offered; it is hard to change an established line of interpretation” (p.29).

This complex process of reception, integration, and construction, is a “social cognitive account of framing [which] provides a set of theoretical premises about the way people understand news stories” (p.29). This account of framing is used to understand Rhee’s two main concepts of thematic frames: strategy versus issue framing.

The concepts of strategy and issue framing, though vague in title, are quite well-known to those engaged in political communication. The first and most obvious referred to by Rhee as “strategy coverage,” can be summarized as the typical “horse-race” notion of campaign coverage. This media frame, “focuses on candidate strategy, win-or-lose aspects of the campaign, and politicians’ selfish interest” (p.30). The alternate form of media framing discussed by Rhee is referred to by Jamieson and Cappella (1993) as “issue coverage.” This form is described as one that “emphasizes policy issues, problems, and solutions in campaign coverage” (p.30). These two basic forms of media coverage in political communication have within themselves a variety of features which constitute their potential frame.
Rhee cites Hartley (1982) in stating that, “the absence or presence of certain words will variably affect how a text makes up the act of communication” (p.30). Basically, the syntax and paradigmatic selections of the very words in the article can have an effect on the constructed meaning. Words with a stronger connotation or loaded words “may be more frequently used in strategy coverage than in issue coverage” (p.30).

Ellis (1992) asserts that the use of style and pragmatic choices in a text may be as rudimentary as syntax and lexical choices in constructing meaning. A story that becomes more event-oriented or person-centered in this context would serve function in “strategy coverage” rather than “issue coverage.” Rhee points out that this framing from the point of view of central political actors often makes campaign coverage more appealing to the audience.

Framing is also a factor when metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, and depictions are employed (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). The prevalent use of “game” and “war” metaphors serve as a very core component of strategy coverage (Jamieson, 1992 and Patterson, 1993). Rhee points out that the notion of the “campaign” itself to describe a candidate running for office is taken directly from military imagery.

Establishing the two distinctive frames, Rhee believes that these so-called “strategy” and “issue” frames “will have different consequences for people’s interpretations of campaigns” (p.32). Rhee hypothesizes that those who are exposed to strategy or issue oriented frames will then use their associated frame in their narrative and subsequently be more influenced by their given frame.

The hypotheses suggested by Rhee were tested over a period of time in seven sample cites. Each of the 276 subjects was given prepared election stimuli that were
carefully prepared to maximize a realistic effect. The main focus of the experiment tested whether or not the subjects would respond differently given textual and broadcast political materials that were skewed in either the strategy or issue-based media frame.

The data received was then tested based on key-word-in-context (KWIC) analyses as well as analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) tests to look for significant figures. The results of the ANCOVA test (p.40) were statistically significant but also produced an unexpected result when testing for an interaction between broadcast and print framing.

When the subjects were in fact given counter information from the other source (for instance, strategy-based frame through broadcast and issue-based frame through print), Rhee found that the overwhelming result established quite clearly that the effect of framing was solely significant in the print media when compared with broadcast media.

Rhee then adjusted for the “strong effect of the covariate . . . [but] the study revealed no comparable effects for the broadcast news materials” (p.41). Rhee also concluded that when subjects were given broadcast-only samples, the effect of the broadcast news was still not considered significant.

In discussion of his study, Rhee suggests that, “the framing process involves not only the ability of message properties to alter the interpreter’s understanding of a message, but also knowledge that the interpreter brings into the interpretive process” (p.42). The outcome of this framing however, will be based upon the message properties as well as the interpreter’s knowledge. While Rhee concluded that there were no comparable framing effects through the broadcast materials, Rhee offers two explanations as to this effect: he believes that the “way information is conveyed in broadcast news may be fundamentally different than the way it is presented in print
news” (p.43) and that his measurement tools might not have been sophisticated enough to
detect the possible effects from the broadcast media. He maintains, however, that these
points may be nothing more than ad hoc speculation.

Rhee’s study found that through print media, there was significant data to illustrate
the framing effects on interpretation and knowledge of the individual. His findings also
indicate that, “regardless of news frames, knowledgeable people were better able to take
the thoughts and ideas in the news materials and to integrate them into their
interpretation” (p.43).

The study in question is also significant for Rhee because it supports Price and
Tewksbury’s (1997) statement that “social interpretations reinforced and accumulated
through the framing process may “cultivate” a particular version of political realities and
set evaluative criteria that people use to judge the importance of political agendas” (p.44).
This is especially important in the possibility that strategy-based news frames continually
reinforce the idea of “mean and dirty politics-as-usual” for the individual.

Rhee concludes that his experiment found that not only was print media significant
in reinforcing strategy versus issue frames, but that the individual was also susceptible to
influence in his or her social cognitive account of the interpretation of political news.

Based upon the preceding review of relevant literature in framing analysis, the
researcher proposes the following exploratory research four research questions. First,
what were the overall frames used in the campaign news coverage of the 2004 University
of Florida’s Student Government election by the Independent Florida Alligator? Second,
how similar or different were the frames among the Alligator’s news stories, political
cartoons, and opinion editorials? Third, what were the overall frames used by the Access
and Innovate campaigns? Fourth, how similar or different were the political parties’ campaign framing in comparison to the news coverage frames of the Alligator?
The current study uses framing analysis to examine the University of Florida’s 2004 Student Government Presidential Election. The research employed Entman’s (1993) definition of framing; that is, “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). Working closely with this definition, the study’s qualitative content analysis focused upon two primary sources of sample materials: the Independent Florida Alligator’s news coverage and the two political campaigns’ materials. In addition to content analysis, the study will also incorporate reflections and insights via in-depth interviews with those who have first-hand information from the individual campaigns and/or campaign media coverage.

**Historical Roots Of The Independent Florida Alligator**

The first primary source of information, the Independent Florida Alligator, is an important fixture on the University of Florida campus. Founded in 1906 as The University News, it was later renamed the Florida Alligator in 1912 when it became associated with the University of Florida administration. Through the course of the first 50 years of its existence, the Alligator had a strong correlation with Student Government. The editor of the Florida Alligator was chosen in some form or fashion through Student Government elections up until the late 1960s. For a majority of this time, the editor-in-chief was selected either by direct election and association through a political party, or
through a committee overseen by the President of the Student Body and the President of Florida Blue Key. Over the course of these five decades, the details of this process would be modified from time to time, but the actual selection always correlated with the elections of Student Government. The offices of the *Florida Alligator* editorial staff were located close to Student Government, first in the basement of the old Florida Union and then across from the Student Government administrative offices in the J. Wayne Reitz Union from 1968 until 1973.

In the course of the 1970s however, the *Alligator* would go through a period of major reconstruction. During the spring of 1973, the editorial board and General Manager decided that the *Alligator* newspaper would became completely independent of the University of Florida. The offices of the *Florida Alligator* were moved off campus to the current location located at 1105 W. University Avenue. This new independence marked a major turning point for the *Alligator* – it completely severed any ties with Student Government.

This newly “Independent” *Alligator* newspaper was important to the University of Florida for a number of reasons. Since 1963, the *Alligator* newspaper has served as the only daily newspaper covering the University of Florida campus. Furthermore, the full establishment of independence from the University of Florida in 1973 allowed for the student press to break away from Student Government – a relationship that had existed since its founding. Beginning in 2001, the *Independent Florida Alligator* has also had the privilege of being the primary source of student news on campus when the bi-weekly *Orange and Blue* newspaper, renamed the *Gator Times*, was removed completely from campus. Although other major news publications such as *USA Today* and the *New York*
Times are available on-campus, only the Alligator offers daily student news. Thus, if one were to seek out any major printed news information concerning student organizations and activities, the only option is in fact the Independent Florida Alligator.

The composition of the Independent Florida Alligator, or just “Alligator” as it is referred to on campus, is quite typical of a student publication. An all-student editorial board oversees aspects of the publication, determines layout of the issue, and publishes an extensive editorial page complete with daily columns, letters to the editor, and editorial cartoons. Although there are salaried professionals who assist with the business side of the newspaper, they have little to no input in many aspects of publication. This oversight by the editorial board grants the editors enormous control over the paper; from the headlines and placement of the articles down to what events or stories are covered, all are determined by this group of individuals.

Understanding UF’s Student Government Structure

Student Government, much like the Independent Florida Alligator, is a permanent fixture on the University of Florida’s campus. Although the two had been intricately intertwined throughout much of their history, the split in 1973 would allow for much differentiation between the two. Student Government at the University of Florida is a complicated affair; composed of three branches: Legislative, Judicial, and Executive. Containing a budget of roughly $11.4 million dollars, the Student Government system in place is very comprehensive.

Each of the main officials in Student Government, notably the Executive President, Vice-President, and Treasurer, along with all of the Legislative senators and Judicial Chancellor, are selected in periodical elections during the course of the academic year. The first election, held every fall semester, elects one-half of the senators to the
legislature. It typically has the lowest levels of participation, around 10-12% of the student body, and gathers very little media attention. The spring election, however, is a different matter entirely. The elections for executive office and their corresponding slates of candidates spend much more money and garner much more participation from the media and the student body (typically about 16-17%). This translates into a number of campaign rallies, debates, events, and a media storm attempting to garner student participation.

**Overview of Various Voting Blocks**

To provide further context for the 2004 Student Government election, it is necessary to describe the student body electorate. The voting turnout of the Student Government elections is defined by blocs of voters belonging to student organizations. The most well-known and considered influential of these blocs is the Greek fraternities and sororities within the Interfraternity and Panhellenic Councils. The Interfraternity and Panhellenic Councils (IFC/PC) are comprised of 39 Greek letter organizations on the University of Florida campus. With a total population of approximately 5,000 easily mobilized voters, it is often considered the dominant group in control of student government. In addition to the mostly white Greek councils, the blocs represented by the Black Student Union (BSU), Hispanic Student Association (HSA) and the Inter-Residence Hall Association (IHRA) are often considered major players within the Student Government campaigns. Each of these blocs typically work in tandem in alternating arrangements in order to battle for victory in these campaigns. In different years, they may or may not act as cohesive units in the campaign and may often split along factional lines. In these campaigns however, typically one will be defined as “the” Greek party with which most houses have aligned for the campaign. With a very high
success rate, nearly 18 out of the last 20 campaigns, the “Greek Party” usually claims victory.

The reason for this long streak of victory is formulaic: the Student Government campaigns are tightly run with the cycle continuing in the hands of a few who train their successors. In addition to the newly established “politicos” being hand selected, often times they hail from the same pattern of fraternities and sororities. This is not limited to the IFC/PC community, however. Many of the dominant factions within the other voting blocs typically matriculate in a similar pattern. These power players were usually the leaders in political “groups.” The “Group System,” as it was called throughout the past decades was comprised of four main groups, nicknamed “Pi Tau,” “Alpha-Delt,” “Sphi-Delt,” and “Super Group.” Each of these four groups had members from the IFC/PC and minority Greek systems with leaders chosen from within their ranks to represent them in Student Government and Florida Blue Key related decisions. While the names are comical in nature, these power groups were taken very seriously within the Student Government community. Each of these groups included factions within the dominant IFC/PC system as well as the successive minority communities involved in Student Government politics. These groups over the years battled outsiders to the system as well as each other in an attempt to re-establish control year after year to ensure that positions of power were equally divided into legacy positions as well as earned positions.

The Student Government election of 1996 was further thrown into disarray with a lawsuit between a presidential candidate and members of Florida Blue Key. Members of the organization doctored a factual police record of Charles Grapski which included two DUI charges and battery of a police officer to include child molestation charges. The
doctored record was then placed as the focus of a campaign flier and distributed in a small amount on campus. Because the students were members of Florida Blue Key and had used the materials of the organization to print the false flier, the organization was also charged in the lawsuit. The lawsuit concluded that Florida Blue Key was in fact heavily involved with Student Government and maintained that the organization established some amount of control over the system. This outcome encouraged successive members of the organization to distance themselves from Student Government and remove some of this influence that had existed for so many years.

After the lawsuit in the mid 1990s, the “Group System” was greatly weakened and brought to the brink of collapse. All of the organizations, from IFC/PC to BSU, HSA, and the like that once belonged to a particular group now found themselves in an environment of disarray. These fractionalized groups slowly began to work together and attempted to formulate once again in an attempt to keep the Student Government system together and ensure that these groups remained in power. Many of these groups now found themselves occupying “legacy” positions, leadership positions handed down to members within certain groups every year. These “legacy” positions are designed to maintain superiority in Student Government and ensure that a “chosen” candidate assumes dominance and is then placed in position as Student Body President.

Over the next couple of years, a clear “Greek majority” was usually found in some fashion. Constructed of a majority of Greek houses, the so-called “Greek Party” would continue to exert control year after year over Student Government campaigns and the placement into positions of authority.
The 2004 Student Government Presidential Election appears to have been a different and atypical campaign. Attention from the media and the student body was high with a subsequent run-off election voter participation reached 11,586 votes cast. This overall increase from the normal election equated to roughly 25% of the student population and was curious in the fact that a run-off election actually increased voter turnout rather than following the traditional model of decreasing.

The election included three political parties, Access, led by Jamal Sowell, Innovate, led by Scott Kennelly, and Keg, led by Travis Marsh. For consistency in the overall content analysis, only the Access and Innovate parties were consulted. Each of these two teams led a traditional campaign, complete with advertisements, platforms, and a full compliment of candidates. Keg was omitted because of the “joke” oriented campaign slogan of “win or lose, we booze” and the lack of legitimate campaign communications to analyze.

The Greek power monopoly would soon come to a crashing halt. The past dominance expected by the “Greek Party” in 2004, however, would prove not to be. In an attempt to further work as a cohesive unit, the 39 IFC/PC Greek organizations finally agreed to work in complete tandem under the Innovate Party banner. According to the *Alligator* newspaper article:

“Innovate is just considered the Greek party,” said Mike Maxim, President of Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity, an IFC chapter. “If you say you’re Greek, then you are pretty much going to vote Innovate – that’s my impression of things.” (Seawell, 2004a)

What seemed to be an arrogant mindset for the IFC/PC system however would quickly vanish with Access’s Jamal Sowell winning with a 2,000 vote margin over Innovate’s Scott Kennelly.
Gathering Sample Materials for Qualitative Content Analysis

In order to gather the sample of materials to conduct a framing analysis of the *Independent Florida Alligator*, a search was performed on the online archived versions of the newspaper. This collection of online editions of the *Alligator* included all of the pertinent news stories, opinion editorials, and cartoons in their entirety, unaltered from their print forms. The campaign period lasted from the beginning of the spring 2004 semester until the end of the run-off. These dates included the *Alligator* campaign coverage from January 7, 2004 to the March 5, 2004. The sample from the online search of the *Alligator* produced news stories (n=46), cartoons (n=5) and opinion editorials (n=8) (see Appendix A for the coding legend). Each of the pieces in the *Alligator* was examined to discover what types of frames were being used during the campaign period. Although cartoons are not typically subjected to framing analyses, these particular cartoons did include a great deal of textual information to make them viable for a framing analysis. The content analysis of the frames would then be used to determine the potential framing themes used by the student newspaper. This data would then be compared and contrasted with the sample of materials collected from the campaigns themselves.

Conducting a qualitative content analysis include a number of strengths and weaknesses in their design for framing analysis research. Due to the small number of total articles, cartoons, and opinion editorials (total n=60), coupled with a lack of alternate media sources, a qualitative content analysis was deemed as the most appropriate methodological choice. Due to the small n, a mathematical or quantitative content analysis would not serve the current study’s purposes of looking for greater understanding in terms of depth. According to Creswell, “quantitative research relies on a
higher number of cases,” so the qualitative study was indeed most appropriate to the situation. The use of a standardized coding legend (Appendix A) attempted to reduce any personal bias and compare the sample of news stories and campaign materials by using a more systematic and more objective approach to conduct the framing analysis.

**Analyzing Access and Innovate’s Campaign Communications**

In order to gather a better understanding of the two campaigns, an in-depth interview process was completed. The campaign executives in charge of political communication were contacted along with several of the major candidates, and field notes were taken of the interviews. Along with this data, political communication materials from the campaigns were gathered, including but not limited to: advertisements, promotional platforms, press releases, and various other campaign literature. Each of these forms of data was used to construct the frames produced by the campaigns themselves.

Each of the sets of data, gathered from the *Independent Florida Alligator* and the Access and Innovate parties, were compared following their analyses. The overall goal of the study seeks to answer the four research questions as presented at the end of the literature review section.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

The online archives of the *Independent Florida Alligator* student newspaper and the political communication materials of the Access and Innovate parties were examined to determine what frames were used to convey information about the University of Florida’s 2004 Student Government election. The news stories, cartoons, and opinion editorials from the *Alligator* were examined using qualitative content analysis. All aspects of the news stories were considered, including title, sources for quotes, selected quotes, pictures, and the like to analyze for a frame. Likewise, any accompanying information gathered from the editorial cartoons or the newspaper’s opinion editorials were examined in developing the media’s frame. The data for the two political parties (Access and Innovate) included qualitative content analysis of campaign printed materials concerning party agendas, advertisements, and platforms. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with relevant campaign members.

Once the extensive gathering of the sources was completed, each was then subsequently analyzed in order to determine what, if any, frames existed. Each of the frames or framing mechanisms was then ordered by source: *Alligator* news articles, cartoons, and opinion editorials, followed by the political communications of the Access and Innovate parties themselves. The total sample size of materials gathered the *Alligator* was n=59, which included news stories (n=46), cartoons (n=5) and opinion editorials (n=8). The total sample size of materials gathered from the Access political campaign was n=7, which included printed fliers, campaign platforms, ads, and various campaign
paraphernalia. The total sample size of materials gathered from the Innovate political campaigns was n=13, which included printed fliers, campaign platforms, ads, press releases, and various other forms of campaign communication.

Four research questions formed the parameter of inquiry in the current study. First, what were the overall frames used in the campaign news coverage of the 2004 University of Florida’s Student Government election by the Independent Florida Alligator? Second, how similar or different were the frames among the Alligator’s news stories, political cartoons, and opinion editorials? Third, what were the overall frames used by the Access and Innovate campaigns? Fourth, how similar or different were the political parties’ campaign framing in comparison to the news coverage frames of the Alligator and each other?

**Frames Used in the Alligator’s News Stories**

The Alligator covered the campaign vividly through the use of its news stories, and four distinct frames were illustrated throughout the campaign coverage. Many of the news stories built upon one another to develop the frame further. Overall, the Alligator created a “David” frame for the Access Party, a “Goliath” frame for the Innovate Party, an “Anti-Greek Involement” frame for the Innovate Party, and finally, a “Mr. UF” frame for Jamal Sowell.

**Alligator News Stories: “The David Frame”**

The first frame to be established by the Independent Florida Alligator framed not just the Access party but also presidential candidate Jamal Sowell. The frames wrought by the news stories in the Alligator, however, were sequential, and appeared to build upon themselves over the course of the campaign. This first frame, nicknamed “The David Frame,” refers to the biblical story of David and Goliath. Throughout the course
of the election, the Access Party would be characterized as being a David “underdog” ready to fight the Goliath “establishment.”

When the Access Party is first mentioned in the press, occurring on January 7, 2004, one of the key aspects of this new party is that it is referred to as completely “new . . . [but that it] would run on a record of excellence.” According to the headline, a “New SG party leaves Ignite,” Andre Samuels, the Access Party’s founder, states that, “A lot of people think of Ignite as the Greek party, and we want to include everybody.” According to the January 15th edition of the Alligator, Samuels, continues by stating “[he] wanted to build a party that would challenge the SG (Student Government) establishment. (Barwig, 2004g)

Following the release of the Access executive ticket, a fledgling party named “Student Alliance” states that “Student Government . . . has been run by the same faces for too long” and promptly joins forces with the Access Party.” (Barwig, Ackroyd) The parties are classified as “independent,” and the Alligator states that their goals are “insistence on SG becoming more accessible to the average student.” (Ackroyd, 2004k) The Alligator continues by quoting one of the members of Student Alliance describing Access as “[having] the necessary knowledge to break through the establishments,” justifying the merger stating, “if three independent parties would run, then the established party would probably win and maintain the status quo.”

The descriptions of the Access and Ignite parties describe one as abandoning another, leaving behind the dominant machine, struggling to break away from the establishment. According to the stories released and the subsequent descriptions, early in the campaign the Access Party will serve as the underdog in the campaign.
Once the campaign season begins to move forward, the *Alligator* further perpetuated the “David” frame by releasing a number of financial articles concerning the political parties. On February 3, 2004, information concerning the parties’ financial reports were released, noting that “Access raised $400 compared with Innovate’s $2,400 in contributions.” (Ackroyd, 2004h) The article then mentions that Sowell, by running a low-cost campaign, “hopes to break from the established norms of SG elections and set a precedent.” Through this use of monetary comparison, the *Alligator* reinforces the notion that the Access Party is indeed a “David” in competition with “Goliath.” Finally, during the final week leading up to the election, the *Alligator* published another article, this one entitled, “Spending during final week varies.” According to the information the *Alligator* received, Access spent $0 during the final week while the Innovate Party spent $1,480. Sowell is quoted as saying, “we tried . . . to buy everything in advance . . . ” and added that Access would use the final week to work only on campaigning to the students.

In the final stories covering the election and leading to an Access victory, the *Alligator* further portrays Access as the underdog. Following the night of the first election, the newspaper quotes Sowell as saying, “I didn’t have any frat houses behind me – nobody has done that in years . . . it was me against the world!” (Barwig, Mitchell, 2004a) On the final night of the run-off, resulting in an Access victory, the coverage followed much of the same pattern. The article published on Thursday, March 4th states, “After being told as a freshman that the Student Body presidency was out of his reach, Jamal Sowell proved his critics wrong.” Noting that Sowell, “won without the backing of his president or vice-president,” the *Alligator* appears to portray the victory as one against impossible odds (Barwig, 2004c).
Alligator News Stories: “The Goliath Frame”

One cannot have a “David” without a “Goliath.” The orange-clad Innovate Party, remnants from the supposed “other half” of the Ignite Party, made a perfect foil for the underdog Access Party. Through a series of articles, quotes, headlines, and references, the established and apparently dominant Innovate Party would be portrayed as the political machine to beat.

The first articles concerning the breakup of the Ignite Party portray the resulting “Innovate Party” as little more than a clever name change of a dominant group. Much like the “David” imagery and connotations mentioned above, Access is seen as leaving “an established system.” Ignite is compared to a political juggernaut, with the Alligator noting it was a “once dominant powerhouse” that had “unusual longevity” and “dominance” in the Student Senate, controlling all but one seat. In one article, dated January 15th, the Alligator quotes oppositional Sowell as saying, “the creation of Innovate really is just an Ignite name change” (Barwig, 2004g). Through these descriptions early in the campaign season, the Alligator establishes quickly that Innovate is in fact another political machine.

From this “establishment” point of view, the Alligator then follows suit with other articles to reinforce the “Goliath” frame. Much in the same way it reinforced the “David” frame in monetary spending, the Alligator is quick to establish the Innovate Party as the dominant fiscal spender. Each article compares how much more Innovate spent than Access. According to the Alligator, Innovate raised $2,400 during the first financial article and spent $1,480 and $1,100 during the last weeks of the campaign. According to the articles, it appears that the Innovate Party drastically outspent their counterparts. The headline proclaimed on March 2nd that, “Innovate outspends Access in week before
runoff.” The *Alligator* continues and comments that while “money . . . can’t buy votes . . . it can . . . buy vital student-exposure and glossy campaign fliers” (Downey 2004a).

The “Goliath” frame also extends to the presidential candidate, Scott Kennelly. Kennelly is portrayed as a successful politician. In his biographical article, the *Alligator* states,

> “Sitting in [the] Orange & Brew wearing his party’s adopted color, Innovate’s presidential candidate Scott Kennelly laughs, smiles, and gets serious at all the right times. He is well-spoken and sits tall and confident.” (Barwig 2004i)

The portrayal of Kennelly as a skilled politician is continued further in an article dated February 19th. Following the first presidential debate, the *Alligator* describes how Kennelly “takes a break from speaking to supporters and reporters” to respond to his competition who described him as “politiciany.” (Ackroyd 2004j) Kennelly, depicted as a smooth politician, is an ideal figurehead for the rich “Goliath” political machine whose victory seems assured.

*Alligator* News Stories: “The Anti-Greek Involvement Frame”

The Greek system, referring to the IFC and PC chapters, are well known for being heavily involved in Student Government, turning out high numbers of voters, and typically occupying various sides in a political campaign. Widely regarded in a negative light, the Greek community is likened to a “good ole boy system” where positions are promised away in conjunction with political support. This has given rise to the stereotype that “Greeks control” the Student Government system, and support from the Greek community is often widely believed to be an integral cog in the “political machine.”

In two integrally placed articles, the first entitled “Most Greeks favor Innovate” and “Innovate garners more Greek support,” published February 23rd and 24th respectively,
the *Alligator* brings great attention to IFC and PC support for Innovate. These two dates fall, ironically, on the Monday and Tuesday of election week. Both appeared on the front page of the print and online editions.

According to the articles, “Innovate is just considered the Greek party . . . if you say you are Greek, then you are pretty much going to vote Innovate – that’s my impression of things.” The first also adds that the IFC and PC chapters “have officially pledged support for the Innovate Party . . . but some IFC and Panhellenic members . . . emphasize individual voting decisions.” (Barwig, Mitchell 2004b)

The second article, “Innovate garners more Greek support,” run the very next day, again emphasizes the Greek numbers on party slates. According to the *Alligator*, “the selection of who will run on each party’s tickets plays a big part in Greek endorsements.” While the *Alligator* states that “roughly 14%” of the Student Body is Greek,” it reveals that “Innovate’s 21 known” Greek candidates constitute 49% of the slate while the Access senate slate is composed of only 9% Greeks.” Kennelly, however, “a Tau Epsilon Phi fraternity member, says Innovate’s candidates were chosen on qualifications, not because they were Greek.” The *Alligator* concludes that, “these [Greek] numbers translate into endorsements.”

The frame, which reinforces a negative stereotype, appears particularly harmful when timing and placement are considered. Although it may be considered newsworthy, the over-coverage of the issue appears to qualify very strongly as a frame of note.

**Alligator News Stories: “The Mr. UF Frame”**

Jamal Sowell himself also appears to be the focus of a unique frame from the media. Serving as the Student Body Treasurer, Sowell accumulates much media attention merely from his current position. His frame, titled the “Mr. UF Frame,” refers
to his positive coverage which results in his all-around image as the ideal presidential
candidate. Sowell’s coverage depicts him as one who is connected all over campus:
loved equally by students and administrators, and even able to connect with alumni and
city officials.

In one of the first instances of positive coverage, it is actually the omission of
coverage which lends to a positive impact. In an article dated January 27th entitled, “SG
funds pay for officer’s socials,” much of the reporting examines Student Government
Executive spending for the year. The Alligator also states that “two SG socials and a
breakfast [which have] totaled more than $1,000” for the current year. While current
President Jones and Vice-President Honey are questioned, no reference occurs to Sowell,
who, as treasurer would have to approve and sign off for said expenditures. Sowell is
omitted from the critical article, when ironically he would be the ideal person to
interview for discussion.

“I am not the traditional candidate . . . I am the candidate of the common people,”
states Sowell in his candidacy announcement. As “the only student who went to all the
board of governors meetings” for the previous year, Sowell’s announcement appears to
gain special attention on the cover of both the print and online versions of the Alligator.

His biographical material, however, illustrates the “Mr. UF” frame to an even
greater extent. According to the article “Sowell’s small world,” Sowell,

“Walk[s] from student organization to administration . . . exchanging jokes and
discussing issues with students and administrators . . . ‘Everyone already knows
me,’ Sowell said. Although Sowell is not Jewish, he has a better attendance record
at Jewish Student Union meetings than most members. He attends Hispanic
Student Association, Inter-Residence Hall Association, and Asian Student Union
meetings, goes to all Board of Governors meetings and is a regular at most
important UF-related events . . . [he] joined the Preview staff in Summer 2002 . . .
[And] is on a first-name basis with almost everyone in both the Institute of Black Culture and the Institute of Hispanic-Latino Cultures.”

The articles paint Sowell as a type of “big-man-on-campus” and reinforce a wonderfully positive image for the candidate.

The final article, depicting Sowell as a “Mr. UF” candidate, describes the various donations received through his multifaceted connections. The *Alligator* states that Sowell brought to the Access Party donations from, “Gainesville mayoral candidate C.B. Daniel, Alachua County Commissioner Cynthia Chestnut, former UF Alumni Association President David Mica, and Association of Black Alumni President Clarence Brown.” (Ackroyd, 2004f) Sowell comments that he was “able to attain the support of influential city and county leaders by forming a longstanding relationship with them as treasurer.

Sowell, depicted as “every man’s Gator,” is truly the embodiment of a “Mr. UF.” Able to discuss issues with students, administration, alumni, and city officials, illustrate his ubiquitous capabilities to reach out to each and every person connected to the University of Florida.

**Frames of the *Alligator’s* Political Cartoons**

Each of the *Independent Florida Alligator*’s cartoons is drawn by their resident cartoonist Andy Marlette. Marlette, through both clever depictions and sometimes blatant textual reference, frames the situation uniquely on the Opinions page of the *Alligator*. The four frames recognized are those of “Last Chance,” “Revolucion,” “Anti-Greek,” and “David and Goliath.” Each of the cartoons is described in detail in order to illustrate the frames which are apparent throughout the published cartoons. All of the cartoons are available in the appendix section of the research.
Alligator cartoon: “Last Chance”

The first cartoon, published February 25, 2004, was entitled “Last Chance.” The cartoon frames two main subjects; the first, depicting the Innovate Party as a demon and the second of Sowell serving as a savior to the University of Florida student body (see Appendix C to view actual cartoon).

The Innovate depiction is in itself quite simplistic. A giant abyss is filled with a black demonic figure with four-heads. Simply labeled as “Innovate,” the monster is shown with the words “greed, white-Greeks, lies, and corruption” upon its body. While relatively graphic, the image is self-explanatory, and Marlette’s cartoon depicts the Innovate Party as vividly as possible.

The next series of images are also relatively simple. According to Marlette his version of “Albert the Alligator,” is designed to represent the “average Gator.” Standing on a solid foundation entitled “Access,” Marlette’s image of Jamal Sowell is shown rescuing Albert from the grasp of the Innovate beast.

The frame is simple enough to recognize: voting for Access will save SG from the Innovate monster. Although this is the first cartoon of the current political season, Marlette timed his cartoon on the final day of voting for the election. With the subsequent run-off, more cartoons were set to follow.

Alligator cartoons: “Revolucion”

The next cartoon, entitled “Revolucion” appeared on Monday, March 1st, the first day of the run-off week. (see Appendix D to view actual cartoon) The first and primary subject is a giant bejeweled pig, titled “Innovate (White-Greeks).” The image conjures images of extravagance and wealth, through the many rings, crown, and money tattoo.
The next image is that of many dozen “Albert the Alligators.” The first, holding a flag portraying “Student Body” is leading an attack against the Innovate pig. The rest of the mob is shouting “Viva la revolucion!” and hurling projectiles at Innovate.

The final depiction is that of Century Tower and domed building inflamed with the description “SG corruption.” Again, the cartoon’s frame is obvious: a revolution from the student body will overthrow the corruption of SG from the white-Greek system. The frame emphasizes the Greek role in the campaign while also making note of the “extravagance” associated with such system.

**Alligator cartoons: “Trojan Pig”**

The “Anti-Greek” frame, noticed first in the “Revolucion” cartoon, takes primary focus in the next political cartoon which appeared the following day. (see Appendix E to view actual cartoon) Entitled “Trojan Pig,” the cartoon was published on the first day of voting, March 2, 2004, and makes an obvious reference to the “Trojan Horse” story of Homer’s Iliad. Again as the focal point of the cartoon, written on the money-stuffed pig is the word “Innovate” followed by “We’re honest and ethical!, We are qualified!, no Greeks inside!, We’re different from Ignite!, We’re diverse!, and We care about you!”

The pig itself is wheeled by a depiction of Scott Kennelly with a large, conspicuous “I” on his shirt. Next to the “Trojan Pig” stand Jamal Sowell and Albert. According to the text, “lying Greeks” do not come in wooden horses but instead “fit better in pigs” at UF. Lastly, Marlette’s illustration encourages the reader to “take your money from the mouth of the pigs . . . vote now!”

**Alligator cartoons: “David/Goliath Revisited”**

The final political illustration for Innovate and Access is entitled “Moment of Truth,” which appeared on the final day of the run-off election, March 3, 2004. (see
Appendix F to view actual cartoon) Following with the “pig” motif, the central “Goliath” figure is once again a bejeweled pig adorned with rings, jewelry, and “Innovate.” Next to the large figure stands a defiant Albert, standing with Michelangelo’s “David,” dressed in an Access banner. The cartoon proclaims, “The Moment of Truth” to the reader.

Each of Andy Marlette’s cartoons follows a similar pattern: a negative depiction of the Innovate Party coupled with a “savior/underdog” depiction of the Access Party. Taking well-known cues from biblical stories, mythology, and contemporary revolutions, the cartoons take a unified stance against Innovate and champion Sowell.

The themes of “revolution,” “David and Goliath,” and “deceptive” politicians all fit within typical stereotypes of politics in the United States. One of the most interesting aspects of the cartoons is the compelling nature with which they are shown. Each of the allusions is not merely an example of conflict; moreover, they are all pivotal moments from the stories they represent. The most telling feature of the cartoons, especially during the subsequent run-off, seems to impress upon the viewer that this election is particularly crucial. Each compels the ordinary student, typically apathetic, that this one election is revolutionary. This “Emergency” frame, united into each of Marlette’s pieces, is perhaps one of the most gripping frames employed in all the forms of communication during the spring 2004 campaign.

**Frames the Alligator’s Opinion Editorials**

Leading up to the last days of the election, the *Alligator* published eight editorials concerning the Student Government election. Each of these editorial pieces listed the complete editorial staff, consisting of Cameron Ackroyd, Laura Merritt, Sarah Anderson, Claudia Adrien, James VanLandingham, David Michaelsen, and Nick Weidenmiller, as contributors to the pieces.
Most of the editorials only appeared on actual voting days of the election, the first of which appeared on the voting days of the first election, Tuesday, February 23rd and Wednesday the 24th. Curiously, directly after the results, the Alligator published the only editorial not falling on a voting day on Thursday, February 25th which reiterated support of the Access Party. The next week of the run-off election would feature three more editorials with two appearing on Tuesday, March 2nd, and the final on March 3rd.

The editorial pieces contained two significant frames, that of “Qualifications,” and “Anti-Greek Establishment.” The two frames would have aspects derived in all eight of the editorial pieces which illustrated a strong Pro-Access and Anti-Innovate stance from the editorial board.

*Alligator editorials: “The Qualified Frame”*

Through the last days of the election, the editorial board of the Alligator issued its own editorial pieces discussing the campaign. The pieces had two main sets of frames; the first and most dominant frame in nearly every opinion piece was that of “Qualifications.”

The Alligator editorial board published eight pieces over the course of the election and following run-off election. Seven of the eight pieces each followed a strict depiction of Jamal Sowell and the Access Party: that of the highest qualifications.

Sowell was labeled as being a non-traditional candidate, one who is sincere and not afraid to stand up to the administration to fight for the average student. The Alligator lists his numerous resume lines, illustrating his “proven track record.” They also cite his own personal endorsements from city officials as proof of his “drive and proven ability.”

Likewise, the editorial pieces also classified Sowell’s running mates, Jennifer Puckett and Dennis Ngin as two experienced running mates who have the strongest of
desires to serve the student body. The *Alligator* argues that the Access executive ticket displays the best ability as a team, and that the three would work the best in office.

On the flip-side of the “Qualified Frame,” the *Alligator* editorial board describes the Innovate ticket as a “polished and formula ticket.” Although the *Alligator* reiterates that Kennelly would make an excellent Student Body President, they believe that his choice of running mates make his ticket weaker overall.

The frame of “experience” is repeated over the full range of editorial pieces. The pieces present a unified front: that of confidence in Access for experience, dedication, and willingness to serve the students.

*Alligator* editorials: “The Anti-Greek Establishment Frame”

Although the “Experience” frame dominates over the course of the editorial pieces, the editors still allow for the “Greek Establishment” frame to be suggested. Announcing that “Innovate shouldn’t hide,” they admonish Innovate for not admitting that “they are the Greek party.” The express concern that the Innovate staff seems “ashamed” of the stigma associated with Student Government and the Greek community. They follow up in stating that the Innovate Party and Scott Kennelly should not be “beholden” to the Greek machine and should attempt to “buck the trend” of the past Greek parties and advocate both Greek and non-Greek concerns.

In a much more subtle manner, the editorial pieces continue to add mentions of the “Greek Establishment” frame in suggesting that only the Access party would “open Student Government to all students.” They suggest that not only is Sowell a “nontraditional candidate,” but that he is not part of the political system typified by Ignite and Innovate and would not be “beholden” to Greek interests.
Similarities and Differences Amongst the Alligator’s Frames

The second research question posed by this study would examine how similar or different would the frames among the Alligator’s news stories, political cartoons, and opinion editorials compare. Although there were some significant aspects of correlation, some would vary slightly to give both similarities and differences in each of the ten overall frames.

The first strong similarity noted in the Alligator pieces is that of a “Anti-Greek” frame. Noted in all three of the sources, (news stories, cartoons, and editorials) the Alligator firmly establishes the Innovate Party as the “Greek” party while at the same time criticizing this relationship both directly and indirectly. While the cartoons depict the relationship most harshly, the frames range in criticism with the other two being less severe.

The next similarity is that of a positive image for Sowell. Ranging from a “savior” to the big-man-on-campus, Sowell is framed by all three sources as “the” choice for UF. The news stories emphasize time and again the establishment of Sowell on the University of Florida campus, mentioning his vast array of campus involvement in student organizations as well as his foundations outside student life. The editorial board illustrates his involvement and repeatedly endorses him for the office by stating that he is “the most qualified.” Finally at the most extreme, Sowell is even depicted by the cartoons as a “savior,” claiming that his election will most surely remove the “Greek” corruption of Student Government.

Within the news stories and cartoons, a strong similarity exists in the Access Party being depicted as a “David” figure and the Innovate Party as a “Goliath” figure. Each of the sources firmly illustrates the monetary advantages of the Innovate Party while also
depicting Access as the anti-establishment party facing difficult odds. Each of the sources attempt to classify Innovate as the all-powerful “machine,” complete with increased financial backing and organizational bloc voting while emphasizing the grassroots approach of the Access Party.

Although there are many striking similarities in the *Alligator* coverage, one of the primary examples of divergence lies with the cartoon representation of “revolution.” The frame of “Revolution,” is a radical frame that does not appear in the news stories or editorial pieces. While the other sources emphasize Access and Sowell’s positive qualifications, the cartoons depict the election as an uprising against a Student Government “privileged class.”

**Frames Used by the Two Political Parties**

The Access and Innovate Parties themselves established through their political communications a type of internal framing for the campaign. Each of the frames from the parties were derived from campaign fliers, campaign communications, in-depth interviews and, when possible, internal communications. The frames would then be compared and contrasted with the frames derived from the *Alligator* coverage of the campaign.

**Access Party Framing**

The resulting frames and political messages were very defined and unified across the campaign for the Access Party. The party had two strong frames, labeled the “Fighting the System” frame and the “Average Gator” frame. The frames were derived from six literature sources and a number of in-depth interviews with those involved.
Access Party “Fighting the System” frame

The first frame depicted by the Access Party was that of “fighting the system” to represent the student body. The primary aspect of the frame, unified in campaign shirts, platforms, fliers, and advertisements proclaimed that Access was fighting “for Access for all students.” The primary Access platform stated that Student Government was “run by the elite” and limited involvement to only those with connections. The Access Party repeated this sentiment on the following fliers and ads; each claimed all students would get a voice in Student Government. The logo of the Access Party even featured a set of keys in an attempt to illustrate this idea even more poignantly. With a promise to “put the keys back into the hands of students, to give them access to Student Government,” the party platforms, fliers, and supporters reinforced this message.

In each of the fliers, ads, and interviews, Access members claimed that they would “increase lobbying efforts” on behalf of students at the administrative and state level. With an already developed, “familiarity with university administration,” stressed that he would be able to fight for student issues at Board of Trustees meetings. His interviews and campaign fliers all mentioned that he was “the only student to attend every meeting this year – even the ones out of town.”

On the state level, Andre Samuels, spokesman and founder of the Access Party, mentioned that Student Government would, “rejoin the Florida Student’s Association (FSA).” Featured in the debates, Sowell also stressed the need to join with the other Florida universities to “lobby effectively in Tallahassee.” Likewise, each of the fliers, especially the Access platform, stressed that Access would “fight for the students at the state level” through FSA and independent lobbyists to “safeguard” the Florida Bright Futures scholarships.
The idea of Access “fighting the system,” developed not only through the ideas of fighting an established Student Government, but also fighting the administration and legislature on behalf of the students.

**Access Party “All - Gator” frame**

The “All - Gator” frame established by the Access Party highlighted just how platform issues and campaign promises were designed with inclusion for all, especially the average student.

The primary Access campaign flier highlighted platform issues such as “free music downloads,” “increased wireless availability,” and “reinvesting in the Student Nighttime Auxiliary Patrol (SNAP) program,” as widespread campaign issues that would benefit all students at UF. Depicting platform promises as those, “that matter to you,” the Access campaign fliers reiterate the idea of the “All – Gator” representation.

The “All - Gator” frame also includes aspects of the “Fighting the System” frame, especially with the slogan “access for all students.” Jennifer Puckett, vice-presidential candidate for the Access Party stated, “We want to spend a year fighting for and representing all students – not just the ones who know the right people.” Samuels concurred, stating, “Any time you start looking at groups that aren’t 18 to 21 year old undergraduates, the can be less heard from Student Government . . . we want to represent everyone, including but not restricted to the undergraduates.” Through the candidates statements and reinforced through the campaign literature, the Access Party framed itself as on of inclusion, ready to unify the University of Florida student body.

Finally, even in Sowell’s acceptance speech the night of his victory, he proclaimed a message of inclusion, even to his political opponents. According to field notes as well as articles in the *Alligator*, Sowell is quoted as saying,
“No one will be excluded – those that were behind me, those that weren’t, those that want to be involved – let them come. Scott is going to be involved, Rachel is going to be involved, Shema is going to be involved.” (Barwig 2004c)

**Innovate Party Framing**

Much in the same fashion as the Access Party, campaign literature, political communications, and in-depth interviews provided data for construction of an internal frame for the Innovate Party. Unlike the opposition, however, the Innovate internal frames of “New Ideas with Experience” and “Fiscal Responsibility” were weakly derived from the political communication. The lack of unity, mentioned in the interviews, was especially pronounced with comparison with the printed materials.

**Innovate Party “New Ideas with Experience” frame**

The first Innovate Party frame, labeled the “New Ideas with Experience” frame, was revealed through the campaign literature. The initial idea was summed up by Innovate Party advisor Jess Johnson in a press release stating, “We draw from both the enthusiasm of people who just now want to get started in making a positive impact on the student body . . . we also draw on the experience of those who make it happen.” He continues in stating that Innovate’s members are those “who just got off the boat and are ready with new ideas” as well as students “who have been there and done that.”

In another press release, the party describes its platform as “new and shining . . . not issues that have been sitting on a shelf for a while, but real issues that are affecting students today.” The campaign fliers attempt to unify with this idea in describing its “commitment to overhaul the RTS system and increase student parking spaces.” It also highlights a, “facility for students with disabilities” as a new idea proposed by Innovate.

The “New Ideas with Experience” frame, is loosely gathered from the Innovate Party sources. The unifying information is peppered sporadically through external and
internal communications, although one anonymous executive member admitted, “the [internal frame] idea was never clearly articulated or effectively reproduced” during the course of the campaign.

**Innovate Party “Fiscal Responsibility” frame**

The “Fiscal Responsibility” frame within the Innovate Party political communications included two aspects in the frame: first, that the Innovate Party campaign issues were “realistic” compared to those of the “unrealistic” Access, and that Sowell as treasurer had a “lack” of fiscal responsibility.

A flier released by the Innovate Party describing “fiscal spending,” estimated that Access platforms would cost, “less than $2 million” while Innovate’s would cost, “about $60,000.” The flier claims that Access’s platform is “unrealistic,” while Kennelly is quoted as adding, “[Innovate’s] is practical.”

In the clearly established use as a frame for attacking the Access Party, Innovate press releases criticized the SG treasury under Sowell. According to an Innovate Press release, Scott Kennelly states, “The current administration has done a poor job of handling the students’ money; Innovate will eliminate waste and return public trust to Student Government.” Innovate’s party spokesman Brian Aungst is quick to retort, however, “We aren’t necessarily talking about Jamal . . . but there is definitely a lack of leadership.”

The “Fiscal Responsibility” frame included in Innovate’s campaign literature both accentuates the parties’ “realistic” ideas while at the same time makes strong criticism of the opposition.
Framing Similarities and Differences of the *Alligator* and the Political Parties

When the frames within the *Alligator* are compared to those composed by the two parties, only one similarity appears to emerge from the sources. The “Fighting the System” frame from the Access Party appears to be reflected in the frames of “David and Goliath” frames of the *Alligator*.

Each of the frames depicts the Access Party as fighting against the Student Government establishment. The *Alligator*, both through its’ news stories and cartoons, depict Access as the underdog, fighting against an established opposition. The party, likewise, self-declares its mission to “put the keys of Student Government back into the hands of students.” Each of the corresponding frames by the *Alligator* and the Access Party appear to have some unity in depiction to the student body.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Overview

The overall purpose of this content analysis study was to determine what types of frames were used in the 2004 Student Government election at the University of Florida. Employing the vast array of coverage in the *Independent Florida Alligator*, including news stories, cartoons, and editorial columns, frames were constructed and analyzed in comparison with those constructed by the Access and Innovate political parties.

The spring 2004 Election for Student Body President was chosen as significant for a number of reasons relative to this framing analysis. The campaigns and concepts of Student Government at the University of Florida are especially interesting, considering the fact that the SG system is in the largest top five in the entire nation. Likewise, the *Independent Florida Alligator* too, was nationally ranked as a publication.

The entire scenario was ideal; not only was the campaign personally interesting, but so too was the media storm by which it was followed. The election was unusual; not only was the voter turnout significantly higher than normal, but the turnout actually managed to increase during the runoff!

After some careful research, it was discovered that there were no analyses performed on any college media markets. An interesting aspect of the media market at the University of Florida is that there is only one outlet delivering student news. If this news source could potentially spin the campaign in a certain way, is it possible for it to have affected the campaign?
The theoretical research, guided by mass communication theory, signified a content analysis for framing theory. The literature for this study followed a certain pattern: the groundwork was quite broad and led to more specialized research into specific realms of framing.

Entman’s “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm,” was a broad platform with which to begin the research. Entman lays out many aspects of framing research and compels the communication community to find some sort of paradigm with which to standardize. It is through these means that Entman believes that framing could cease to be a “scattered conceptualization,” and could then “aspire to become a master discipline (p.51).” His explanation of framing, stating that media text could contain frames based upon, “keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments,” would be most salient.

Likewise, the Scheufele, Pan and Kosicki, and D’Angelo articles each contribute to a more selected branch of framing. Scheufele organizes framing research further, and comment that framing will help modify the perception of the information received rather than merely increasing the issue salience.

Pan and Kosicki, examined voters’ reasoning processes and media influences early in the 1990s. They reasoned that the reasoning chain that linked principles and concrete opinions on certain issues along with the use of various “cognitive heuristics,” could help determine just how voters made decisions. Through these various “shortcuts” in the reasoning process, Pan and Kosicki attempted to formulate a casual model of how the individual formed an opinion.
D’Angelo’s response to Entman, however, takes a varied approach to the foundational work. Rather than attempting to establish a research paradigm, D’Angelo believes that a multiparadigmatic research program for framing would be more beneficial to the overall approach of the study.

The literature review finalized with the June Rhee article, “Strategy and Issue Frames in Election Campaign Coverage.” This article, out of the rest, seemed to really give information concerning media framing in political campaigns. Rhee discovered that in political communication, not only was the print media highly significant in reinforcing strategy versus issue frames, but that the individual was susceptible to influence in his or her social cognitive account of the interpretation of political news.

Through these resources, the study was narrowed towards a more specialized approach of framing. Since the study would move into the college media market, an area previously unexplored by framing analysis, the literature needed to be as specialized as possible to lead the study in the right direction.

**Methodological Steps**

Due to the small total of articles, cartoons, and editorial pieces, a qualitative approach of content analysis was most appropriate when attempting to analyze the material. Through a standardized coding legend, each of the articles were then analyzed in detail and conclusions were drawn to determine what, if any, frames appeared from the data.

The next aspect of the data collection would draw upon personal interviews with those heavily involved in the campaign. The in-depth interviews had both strengths and weaknesses in dealing with the framing study. The party members felt at ease when discussing much of the subject material, and it was easy to get a clear inside look at each
of the campaign communications and organizational structures within. Although this granted my excellent personal access, one disadvantage to the personal interviews was the purely subjective opinion found therein.

A content analysis was then performed on the political communications materials in order to help gather external consistency with the in-depth interviews. Through a careful comparison, the potential frames were then unified not just in the media, but also in the internal frames that would shape the campaign.

**Conclusions**

**Overall Alligator Frames**

Ten overall frames were depicted within the *Alligator* news coverage over the course of the campaign. The frames in the *Alligator* successfully framed both the Access and Innovate parties, criticized Greek involvement, and characterized Jamal Sowell. Since the news stories, cartoons, and editorials each depicted their own sets of frames, the theoretical information then suggests that since the *Alligator* newspaper did to some degree, frame the coverage of the 2004 Student Government Election, it is possible to have affected the outcome of the election.

**Similarities and Differences in Alligator Coverage**

The different frames gathered from the *Alligator* coverage also contained a number of similarities that made them significant to the research. In establishing the Access Party as a type of underdog, or “David,” and the Innovate Party as the dominant “Goliath,” the *Alligator* may then have placed positive and negative connotations on the respective parties.
Furthermore, through the negative association with Greek support and the overwhelming positive classification of Jamal Sowell, it is possible that the *Alligator* further accentuated these frames upon the student body.

The theoretical information, especially Rhee’s article on campaign coverage, also then suggests very highly that the *Alligator* coverage as a print media may have affected the outcome of the campaign.

**Overall Party Frames**

The overall party frames by the Access and Innovate parties clearly attempted to allow the parties to define themselves in the political engagement. The analysis of the campaign materials coupled with the in-depth interviews suggests, however, that the Access Party was far more efficient in defining themselves than the oppositional Innovate Party.

The Innovate Party, with a clear lack of internal consistency, was unable to provide an effective, unified message in their campaign communications. This would then potentially allow other sources, including the media or opposition, to frame the Innovate Party in a manner of their choosing.

**Similarities and Differences between the *Alligator* and Parties**

According to the research, a similarity exists only in the frames composed by the *Alligator* and the Access Party. The frames, based upon an idea of an underdog Access Party fighting the establishment, are distinctly unique to their respective sources but contain certain characteristics that link the two.

Each of these frames gives positive reinforcement to the Access Party while at the same time placing a slightly negative spin on the rival Innovate Party.
A vast disparity does exist, however, between the frames of the Innovate Party and those depicted by the *Alligator*. The messages of “new ideas and experience” coupled with “fiscal responsibility,” are nowhere to be found in the pages of the *Alligator* coverage. The fact that the two do not register any similar frames may possibly be attributed to the inability of the Innovate Party to clearly articulate any internal frame. The frames constructed through the campaign literature and in-depth interviews are weak and were not readily identified even by members of the Innovate Party. This suggests that had the Innovate Party clearly established an internal frame, the *Alligator* may have shown some sorts of similarities within its coverage.

**Contributions to Framing Analysis**

This study is unique to the literature found on framing analysis due to its highly specialized subject matter. Research produced little, if any, information concerning either college media markets or Student Government campaigns at American Universities. The research suggests that in the college market, an environment with a monopolistic media outlet can have the ability to frame a student campaign and potentially affect the outcome of the campaign.

**Understanding Political Campaigning at UF**

The study contributed a great deal of information concerning political campaigning at the University of Florida. It demonstrated that an influx of communications in the media coupled with the framing ability of this media, can have an affect in the outcome as well as the turnout of the campaign.

The study also showed that a strong or weak internal consistency can potentially be a factor in political coverage. The Access Party, with a strong message of “fighting the system,” was able to accurately gain this portrayal in the *Alligator* news coverage.
Likewise, the inability of the Innovate Party to effectively present an image allowed for the image and subsequent frames to be determined by the media.

**Advice to Future Campaigns**

Future Student Government election officials at the University of Florida should recognize a few very key aspects of campaigns derived from this study. First and foremost, the *Alligator* newspaper, as a monopolistic force for student information, wields great power in the course of a campaign. With a high level of readership on campus and lack of alternate information sources, the frames from the media can have a significant impact on the outcome of the election.

It appears, however, that this effective power of the media can be somewhat countered through a strong campaign message and effective communication. Had the Innovate Party been able to present a clear internal frame which could be articulated, it is possible that it may have had more success with the coverage presented in the *Alligator*.

Lastly, it appears that unanimous support from the Greek system can play at a very strong disadvantage as it was depicted in all three outlets in the *Alligator*. If a campaign does have the unified support from the Greek system, special care should be taken in order to limit the dissemination of this information as well as manage it properly.

**Limitations of Study**

The in-depth interviews and content analysis from the Access and Innovate campaigns were also subject to a number of strengths and weaknesses. The interviews provided first-hand information on just how the campaigns were constructed, as well as how their political communication developed. This, coupled with the data from the *Alligator*, would reveal what kinds of information and events were covered by the media. This strength would help determine if the *Alligator* “played favorites” or gave either team
any perceived advantage. Likewise, the mass-produced campaign communications were distributed on a large scale – thus ensuring that the campaigns attempted to stay “on message” and would not actively deviate from their strategy and tactics. The weaknesses, however, lay in the inherent bias of the individuals themselves. As any campaign is an intensely personal issue, the spectrum of perceived bias varied greatly between the individuals. Whereas one party might believe that an article is fair, the other may feel that it was prejudiced or unfair. A weakness of the in-depth interviews also included the small number of interviews conducted. Although the most important individuals involved in strategy and distribution were consulted, dissemination of information could pass differently among individuals, and the campaigns each had several hundred volunteers.

The limitations of the study, however, include very strongly the fact that there existed only one media source. The static editorial board and small number (n=5) of reporters on the subjects eliminated the possibility of different frames within the community. Additionally, a qualitative content analysis is subject to internal bias by the researcher, and great care must be taken in order to remain subjective. Finally, the use of the online edition for the Alligator did not allow the actual page numbers of the articles and their display in the print version of the Alligator to be determined. The information concerning the pagination of certain articles may have contributed to framing study.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should undoubtedly be conducted in other college media environments to determine more effectively the results from this study. Further research should be conducted in other college media markets, either with single or multiple media outlets, to further refine the results from this study. Additional information may also
provide insight into the connections between internal framing and media framing within political campaigns.

Since little information is available concerning student-run campaigns available, it is possible that more research into this subject could result in new applications for political campaigns beyond the collegiate realm. Aside from the connection between internal framing and media framing, more information should be collected concerning media framing in political campaigns. Since many individuals may only consult a single news source, further research similar to this study may be able to provide greater insight into the connection between voting behavior and campaign outcomes.
APPENDIX A
CODING LEGEND

Title:
Type:
Date:
Author:
Party or Parties Involved:
Key Phrases:
Location:
APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

General Questions

• What is your past involvement in Student Government?
• What role, if any, did you play on the 2004 SG election?
• What is your opinion of Student Government at the University of Florida?
• How is SG organized? (i.e. voting blocs, etc?)
• What is your experience with the Alligator newspaper?
• Do you think the Alligator is fair and balanced?
• Can you expand on this idea?
• What sorts of problems have you run into with the Alligator over the years?
• Do you personally feel that the Alligator has an agenda/pre-conceived ideas?
• Why do you think the turnout in 2004 exceeded previous years?

Marketing/Framing

• How was your campaign [in 2004] organized? (i.e. were there specific people in charge of marketing, press relations, etc?)
• What kinds of themes did you portray in the campaign?
• Do you feel your campaign had a unified theme to present?
• Do you feel the Alligator accurately depicted your coverage?
• What problems, if any, did you run into when dealing with the media?
• How do you feel the Alligator framed your party/campaign?
APPENDIX E
TROJAN PIG

I thought that lying Greeks brought wooden horses?

At UF they fit better in pigs.

Take your tuition from the mouth of the pigs! Vote now!

We're different.
We're diverse.
We're igniting.
We're honest and ethical.
We care about you.
We are diverse.
We're no Greeks inside.
We're not qualified.

INNOVATE
APPENDIX F
MOMENT OF TRUTH

![Cartoon Image]

The Moment of Truth

Innovate
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Josh Aubuchon earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in history from the University of Florida in 2003. As an undergraduate, Josh first began his involvement with Student Government through the Accent Speaker’s Bureau. In a career with Accent spanning four years, Josh served as the Director of Campus Involvement, Vice-Chairman, and Executive Coordinator. He was also able to work with President Young’s office to produce a speaking engagement by famed UCLA coach John Wooden.

He became active in political campaigns as a sophomore and served in a variety of advisory capacities. He worked for the Swamp Party as a Greek Affairs and Structure consultant, the Ignite Party as head of Structure and Greek Involvement, and the Access Party during the fall of 2004 as a voluntary consultant. Most recently, in the spring of 2005, Josh served as Executive Director and Campaign Manager of the Gator Party and oversaw all aspects of the campaign.

Josh was first tapped into membership of Florida Blue Key during the fall of 2002. He served during his tenure as an Evaluations Committee member, Chairman of Tapping, Gator Growl Chief-of-Staff, and Secretary. During the fall of 2004, he served as President of Florida Blue Key and helped host and oversee the Homecoming and Gator Growl preparations.

Josh’s involvement also featured positions as Student Senate President Pro-Tempore, Director of Student Insurance, member of the Faculty Senate, student member
of the Sesquicentennial Committee, and member of the Matthews Society. He is also a member of the University of Florida Hall of Fame.