University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

ScholarWorks @ UTRGV

5-2010

South Texas journalism: A case study of historical agenda-setting, 1861-1865

Diana Rosa Ybañez
University of Texas-Pan American

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/leg_etd

Part of the Communication Commons

Recommended Citation

SOUTH TEXAS JOURNALISM:

A CASE STUDY OF

HISTORICAL AGENDA-SETTING, 1861-1865

A Thesis

by

DIANA ROSA YBAÑEZ

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Texas-Pan American
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2010

Major Subject: Mass Communication

SOUTH TEXAS JOURNALISM:

A CASE STUDY OF

HISTORICAL AGENDA-SETTING, 1861-1865

A Thesis
by
DIANA ROSA YBAÑEZ

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Aje-ori Agbese
Chair of Committee

Dr. Timothy Mottet
Committee Member

Dr. Greg Selber
Committee Member

Dr. Michael Faubion
Committee Member

May 2010

ABSTRACT

Ybañez, Diana R., <u>South Texas Journalism: A Case Study of Historical Agenda-Setting 1861-1865</u>. Master of Arts (MA), May, 2010, 70 pp., 5 tables, 33 titles.

In a span of two decades, agenda-setting has been a topic of interest in the communication field. Despite this interest, agenda-setting studies lack attempts to make the concept of agenda-setting useful in an historical context. This content analysis was designed to determine what agenda South Texas newspapers set with the Civil War coverage between January 1861 and May 1865. The process of agenda-setting is described by quantity and kind of war coverage. The findings of this thesis lend support to the research question that South Texas newspapers did make the Civil War part of their agenda. This thesis indicates that 39 percent of South Texas newspapers expressed an interest in covering the Civil War.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father, who taught me that the best kind of knowledge to have is that which is learned for its own sake. It is also dedicated to my mother, who taught me that even the largest task in life can be accomplished with God by my side. It is also dedicated to my son, Josean, who has given unknowing inspiration to his mother.

I could have not completed this research without the constant support of my family, who offered me unconditional love and support. Bobby, Joe, Eugene, Rudy, Carlos, and Fernando: thank you for your unselfish support and encouragement throughout the course of this thesis and Master's program.

From the formative stages of this thesis, to the final draft, I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my committee chair and members. Dr. Aje-ori Agbese, Dr. Timothy Mottet, Dr. Greg Selber, and Dr. Michael Faubion. Your sound advice and careful guidance were invaluable. To each of the above, I extend my deepest appreciation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Four months before the firing on Fort Sumter, South Carolina—the events that

triggered the U.S. Civil War—an editorial in Brownsville, Texas' *The Ranchero* assessed

the "sad" state of U.S. affairs: "Looking to the north, we see no streak of blue sky; all is

gloomy, dark, threatening."[1] Henry A. Maltry, the newspaper's editor, then sadly

predicted and called for action on "A fierce civil war, unlike anything ever experienced

on this continent. We must separate from the United States and fight for our own."[2]

Maltry was not alone as editors from the North and South waited anxiously for what the

coming months would bring to the United States.

As threat of war increased between Northern and Southern states, newspapers

were playing a vital role in creating and dividing public opinion. While ordinary citizens

and politicians alike debated military build-up during months prior to and during the

Civil War, newspapers had no doubts and no regrets of southern states entering war

against the union:

> If it must come, let it come. We hail it as the harbinger of independence and
> security. Texas is bound by honor and patriotism to stand next to other
> Southerners. To remain silent and her (Texas) butchered, would be yielding up
> our right bower to our enemies through craven fear.[3]

---

[1]Henry A. Maltry, No headline, *The Daily Ranchero*, 23 January 1861, 1.
[2]Ibid
[3]*The Alamo Express,* 2 January 1861, 1.

Between their editorial debates over slavery, editorial divisions, politics, and taxes, the South's 800 or more newspapers had done their share by setting their own agenda and helping bring the country to war.[4] Utilizing the newspaper as a political vehicle, in a separate December issue, a Brownsville newspaper reflected the apprehensive mood and anxiety of the people, *The Daily Ranchero* warned:

> We, ourselves, feel that imminent danger threatens the Republic. We do not believe in, nor do we concede to any State the right of secession. There is a heavy responsibility resting upon the democracy of Texas. The time has come when everybody must take sides, and he that is afraid to utter his sentiments, may be set down as a good subject out of which to make a traitor.[5]

On April 12, 1861 the first canon shots were fired at Fort Sumter, a military post, initiating the United States Civil War.[6] Ironically, some Civil War books credit two journalists Edmund Ruffin and Roger Pryor for firing the first shots of the war.[7] However, they were not the only journalists responsible for starting the war. The Southern newspapers' agenda became even clearer after they excitingly reported that Fort Sumter had been attacked by Confederate troops and surrendered the next morning. The *San Antonio Express*, a South Texas newspaper, in an editorial stated: "Our devotion to this confederate has been strong and sincere. Texas is in a revolution; all the Southern states are in a revolution; we are for the South and against the North. Let no dissentions divide us. We all have a common destiny…to win."[8]

---

[4]David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Roy Morris Jr., *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalism* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008).
[5]Henry A. Maltry, No headline, *The Daily Ranchero*, 12 December 1860, 2.
[6]David W. Bulla, *Lincoln's Censor* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008).
[7]David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Roy Morris Jr., *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalism* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008).
[8]*The San Antonio Express,*29 April 1861, 2.

Purpose of Study

The Civil War is defined as a war between 11 Southern slave states (Confederates) and the United States government (Union). Economic differences between the industrialized North and the slave-based South led to disagreements over the federal government in raising taxes and regulating trade between the two regions and most importantly if slavery would be allowed into the territories controlled by the federal government before they became states.[9] The Civil War was responsible for 620,000 soldier deaths and an undetermined number of civilian casualties.[10]

While the United States was busy at war, the American press was creating an overflow of news articles and opinion pieces—all clamoring to weigh in their opinions on governmental policies, territory, and slavery. Although one cannot be sure what influence 1800 newspapers had on the public's opinion about the Civil War, it is reasonable to say that the public did depend on the media to provide them with information. By calling attention to some issues, the news media shape the public's perception about the most important issues facing its country, state, or community.[11] The media play a crucial role in helping social problems become part of public issues. Essentially, the media tells people what issues to think about instead of what to think.

---

[9]James Marten, *Civil War America: Voices from the Home Front* (Santa Barbara, CA.: ABC-CLIO Inc., 2006).

[10]Ibid

[11]Ian Budge and Dennis J. Farlie, *Explaining and Predicting Elections: Issue-Effects and Party Strategies in 23 Democracies* (London: Allen & Unvwin, 1983).

James N. Druckman, "Priming the Vote," *Political Psychology* 25, (2004) : 577-94.

James N. Druckman, Lawrence R. Jacobs, and Eric Ostermeier, "Candidate Strategies to Prime Issues and Image," *Journal of Politics* 66 (2004) : 1180-1202.

Thomas H. Hammond and Brian D. Humes, *The Spatial Model and Elections: In Information, Participation, and Choice*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

Lawrence R. Jacobs and Robert Y. Shapiro, "Issues, Candidate Image, and Priming," *American Political Science Review* 88 (1994) : 527-40.

John R. Petrocik. "Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study," *American Journal of Political Science* 40 (1996) : 825-50.

In his seminal book, *Public Opinion*, Walter Lippmann describes how the media plays a pivotal role for the public:

> The only feeling that anyone can have about an event he does not experience is the feeling aroused by his mental image of that event. The world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind.[12]

Hence, a reader depends on the media to provide them with information, including a war and other events that happen elsewhere in the world but affect them directly. In reference to the Civil War, it is safe to say that perhaps people who did not experience the war first-hand had only "the mental images" created by the media to form opinion about the war. In choosing and displaying news, editors and staff members play an important part in shaping what is "real." Aside from learning what is important, the media also directs readers by telling them how much importance to attach to that issue by its position and how much information is in a news story. In reflecting the causes and effects of a war, the mass media may well determine the important issues—that is, the media may set the "agenda" of the war.

Furthermore, through conflicts, like a war, the media helps to confirm, neglect or decide the newsworthiness of actions and events.[13] Increasingly, the press becomes a national and global public forum—a record for events. In this context, if war as an "extra-event" defines some special tasks, then it is important to research how important the Civil War was to newspapers in a specific region like South Texas. According to communication studies news media have a key position in the communication process especially when conflicts arise. Conflicts create powerful images and associations which

---

[12]Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Macmillan, 1992).
[13]Caudill Edward, *An Agenda-Setting Perspective on Historical Public Opinion* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates, 1997).

function as a social phenomenon.[14] Its unexpectedness focuses the attention and sensitizes the audience. Mass media, particularly newspapers, are an important source of information for the public, but this source of information has not been previously examined in the context of Texas newspapers and war coverage.

Limited research has explored the content types of Civil War news coverage. However, the existing research suggests close relationships between media coverage and public opinion.[15] Earlier media research tended to emphasize the assessment of the persuasive effects of media coverage.[16] Studies also conducted from an agenda-setting perspective found that the more a topic is covered by the media, the more importance is credited to it by the public.[17] In literature this assumption is known as first level agenda-setting. Furthermore, agenda-setting has also been used in a historical context. Drawing on the works of D.W. Boyce and Max McCombs, Edward Caudill argues that the past can be viewed as an "arena in which reflections of public opinion can be seen in mass media."[18] Caudill adds, "such an approach definitely is plausible for periods since the 1890s, when a true 'mass press' emerged in a few places, and probably since the 1830s, when the 'penny press' expanded the reach of newspapers."[19]

---

[14]Caudill Edward, *An Agenda-Setting Perspective on Historical Public Opinion* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates, 1997).

[15]Ibid

[16]Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Quarterly* 36 (November 1972) : 176-187.

Jack B. McLead, Lee B. Becker, and James E. Byrnes, "Another Look at the Agenda-Setting Function of the Press," *Communication Research* 1, no. 2 (March 1974) : 131-166.

Marc Benton and P. Jean Frazier, "The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media at Three Levels of Information," *Communication Research* 3, no. 3 (March 1976) : 261-274.

[17]Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Quarterly* 36 (November 1972) : 176-187.

John T.McNelly and Fausto Izcaray, "International News Exposure and Images of Nations," *Journalism Quarterly* 63 (1986) : 546-553.

[18]Caudill Edward, *An Agenda-Setting Perspective on Historical Public Opinion* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates, 1997).

[19]Ibid

Previous research examining agenda-setting primarily focused on the repeat of issues found in the pattern of coverage over a period of time, such as a week, a month, an entire year.[20] During this "period of time" a few issues are emphasized, while others receive light coverage. In short, investigating South Texas newspapers agenda in relation to the Civil War can yield significant evidence of the agenda-setting role in 1860s South Texas newspapers.

This thesis builds on previous agenda-setting studies and aspires to contribute to the research on war coverage and South Texas. The regional differences tearing the United States apart in 1860 were also reflected in Texas, a state since 1846. As it is characterized now Texas was multicultural in the 1800s. Regional differences were even more apparent by the reports of the convention of secession were issued in three languages: German, Spanish, and English. According to Census Bureau, in 1836 12 percent of the population of Texas was African-American. The population increased between 1840 and 1860 when larger numbers migrated from the South and mainly settled in East Texas.[21] Also in 1860, only six percent was of Mexican decent and were primarily concentrated in South Texas.[22]

This thesis presents one research question: What agenda did South Texas newspapers set with the Civil War coverage? This thesis also suggests that various

---

[20]Roy B. Flemming and Glen S. Krutz, "Repeat Litigators and Agenda-Setting on the Supreme Court of Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (December 2002) : 811-833.

O. Quiring Huck and HB Brosius, "Perceptual Phenomena in the Agenda-Setting Process," *Public Opinion* 21, no. 2 (June 1, 2009) : 139-164.

Wayne Wanta and Yu-Wei Hu, "The Agenda-Setting Effects of International News Coverage: An Examination of Differing News Frames," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 5, no. 3 (1993) : 250-264.

[21]Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html (accessed accessed November 16, 2007).

[22]Ibid

editors maintained reasonably consistent attitudes that reflected their appraisal of American democracy, their stance toward President Abraham Lincoln, and their judgment of the outcome of the war. The answer to the research question is important because it can reveal how 1860s journalists talked about war, what stories they used, and what context they invoked when writing about war. For the first time, newspapers took a more autonomous role in national affairs, depending less on editorializing and concentrating more on facts. The Civil War served as a makeshift barometer for the shift in journalism writing and its technology advances, among them better transportation system, improved telegraph cables and faster printing presses.[23] In addition, the Civil War drove home to southern editors the importance of news events in stimulating circulation.[24] The outbreak of hostilities created a demand for accurate information about the war. The war affected many people personally, and northerners and southerners alike were starved for news and war updates. Newspapers did their best to keep up with those demands and in doing so; the operation of journalism was changed.

Publishers and editors were determined to make the conflict as vivid as possible for the reader at home. The Civil War produced a new mechanism of mass mobilization. After Fort Sumter, editors North and South, focused, as never before on the metaphors of war.[25] Editors were waging a rhetorical civil war in the headlines and on the editorial pages of their newspapers. During the Civil War, newspapers were the arguers of the Union or Confederates and battles served as political portents. By interpreting war time events—as "narrators of facts"—journalists wielded a powerful persuasive weapon. In

---

[23]David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Roy Morris Jr., *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalism* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008).
[24]Ibid
[25]Ibid

the election of 1860 and during the war years, the Union and Confederacy spoke to different concerns and confronted different necessities.

Journalists are considered watchmen on the walls, to "look for the approach of danger towards what their readers hold dear."[26] Therefore, media not only create, but shape and give direction to public sentiment. The analysis of this thesis can reveal much about the fortunes of a newspaper, like those of South Texas, using their own agenda to cover the Civil War during 1861-1865.

South Texas is defined as a region of the U.S. state of Texas that lies roughly south of, or beginning at, San Antonio.[27] The southern and western boundary is set by the Rio Grande River, and to the east is the Gulf of Mexico. The population of this region during the Civil War was 83,995.[28] Although most of the Civil War battles were fought east of the Mississippi River, Texas was still impacted by the war. The Union army and navy made South Texas a target. The South Texas cities Brownsville, Port Lavaca, and Indianola were captured, and Sabine Pass, Corpus Christi, and Laredo were all under enemy attack. Also, Union naval blockades of the coastal towns created shortages. Thus, it required South Texans to find substitutes for various commodities such as coffee, salt, ink, pins, and needles.

Using agenda-setting as the main theoretical foundation, a content analysis of South Texas newspapers was conducted. Content analysis is a research methodology that

---

[26]David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Roy Morris Jr., *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalism* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008).

[27]Texas Civil War Facts. http://www.mycivilwar.com/facts/state-tx.htm (accessed August 14, 2009).

[28]Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html (accessed accessed November 16, 2007).

focuses on the content and features of the media.[29] It is used to determine the presence of

certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences within texts or sets of

texts. In his book Bernard Berelson defines content analysis as a "research technique for

the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of manifest content of

communication."[30] These repeated texts and images are what establish an agenda. An

agenda is defined as topics or issues, usually conflicting, which receive major coverage in

newspapers.[31] Content analysis helps track the agenda of a news organization by

focusing on repeated topics or stories by looking at cues, such as the size of a headline,

length of articles, and the page numbers on which the article appears on. The agenda of a

news organization is also found in its patterns of coverage of public issues over a period

of time. Over this period of time, certain issues receive priority while others do not. The

media agenda presented to the public results in these repeated stories. Three components

form agenda-setting: (a) the media agenda, which influences the (b) public's agenda,

which in turn may influence (c) the policy agenda.[32] For the purpose of this analysis, this

thesis only focuses one component of agenda-setting: the media, which are \repeated

issues/topics discussed in newspapers.

In conclusion, reporting a war, as newspaper columnist and one time war

correspondent Walter Lippmann once remarked, "is a very different assignment from

---

[29]Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980).

[30]Bernard Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research* (New York: Free Press, 1952).

[31]Ibid

[32]Roy B. Flemming and Glen S. Krutz. "Repeat Litigators and Agenda-Setting on the Supreme Court of Canada, *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 35, no 4 (December 2002) 811-833.

O. Quiring Huck and HB Brosius. "Perceptual Phenomena in the Agenda-Setting Process," *Public Opinion* 21, no 2 (June 1, 2009) 139-164.

Wayne Wanta and Yu-Wei Hu. "The Agenda-Setting effects of International News Coverage: An Examination of Differing News Frames," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 5, no 3 (1993) 250-264.

almost any other kind of newspaper reporting."[33] Media in general observe and provide

the most continuous line of contact with society. People use media to reduce uncertainty,

judge a specific situation, and as a consequence, adjust the behavior to communicate

properly with their immediate environment. Media has a tremendous amount of power

by attracting and directing public attention and influencing behavior.[34] The way mass

media covers war events has serious consequences on what the public thinks about the

outside world. No systematic analysis of typical coverage of the Civil War in the South

Texas region has been identified. This thesis will provide such evidence as a baseline for

examining Civil War reporting in South Texas. Whether it was in a news article, feature,

editorial or bulletin, did South Texas newspapers cover the Civil War? This is a good

reason for scholars to keep studying the Civil War in conjunction with agenda-setting.

---

[33]J. Cutler Andrews. *The South Reports the Civil War* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970).
[34]Ibid

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

To provide a framework for this thesis, it is important to look at the body of

research that has been done in the field. Main topics include Civil War, 1860s

journalism, and agenda-setting. Subtopics include causes of the Civil War, Texas in the

Civil War, South Texas in the Civil War, war correspondents, famous 1800 journalists,

Civil War coverage, the South reports the Civil War, Texas Spanish-language

newspapers, defining agenda-setting, agenda-setting theory, and the press agenda.

Civil War

The election of Republican Abraham Lincoln as president of the United States in

November 1860 set off a chain of events that led to the outbreak of the Civil War. For

months prior to the election, political leaders in the Southern states had argued that

Lincoln's election would be a direct threat to the Southern way of life. Many Southerners

were convinced that a Republican victory would ultimately lead to the abolition of

slavery.[35]

Many Southern states did not shy away from voicing their lack of support if

Lincoln was to win the presidential campaign. Many states declared that if Lincoln won

they would withdraw from the Union. When Lincoln was elected,

---

[35]Ralph A. Wooster, *Texas and Texas in the Civil War* (Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 1995).

seven states seceded originally because of his election.[36] Virginia, Tennessee, North

Carolina, and Arkansas seceded after and because of the battle at Fort Sumter. States

declared their secession and formed the Confederate States of America. And, Texas was

the last state in the lower South to secede and join the Confederacy.[37]

The Civil War directly affected the lives of most Americans. The Union, led by

Abraham Lincoln, lost 360,000 soldiers in battle, however only 140,414 are listed as

battle deaths. In addition, 275,200 others were wounded.[38] The Confederates were led

by Jefferson Davis and lost 258,000 soldiers with 74,524 killed in action and an estimated

137,000 plus soldiers wounded. Though military losses in the North exceeded those in

the South by nearly 40 percent, the relative impact of the death toll for the South was felt

more because of its smaller population base.[39] The military deaths during the Civil War

exceeded more than 50 percent of the U.S. military deaths in World War II. The Civil

War was responsible for the second highest number of service-related deaths. Indeed, the

Civil War casualties left behind dependent widows, grieving parents, and friends.[40]

Causes of the Civil War

But what led to the Civil War? Historians say the outbreak of the war had three

principal sources: slavery, the future direction of the country, and the nomination of

Abraham Lincoln into presidency.[41]

The war began because a compromise did not exist that could solve the

differences between the free and slave states regarding the power of the national

---

[36]Ralph A. Wooster, *Texas and Texas in the Civil War* (Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 1995).
[37]Ibid
[38]Ibid
[39]Ibid
[40]David W. Bulla, *Lincoln's Censor* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008).
[41]James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

government to prohibit slavery in territories that had not yet become states.[42] During the

1860s, the labor force in the south had about four million slaves. These slaves were very

valuable to the slaveholding planter class. Slaves were a huge investment to Southerners

and if taken away, could mean massive losses to everyone. Slaves were used in the South

as labor in the field of cultivation of tobacco, cotton, rice, and indigo, as well as other

jobs.[43] Cotton production with slaves jumped from 178,000 bales in 1810 to over 3,

841,000 bales in 1860.[44] The Northerners goals were free public education, better

salaries and working conditions for workers, rights for women, and better treatment for

criminals. In contrast, northerners felt slavery revoked the human right of being a free

person and the United States Constitution.[45]

In addition, disagreements over the future direction of national development were

also manifesting. Would America move toward a free-labor capitalist economy and a

democratic policy in all regions, or would a slave-labor plantation economy and a

hierarchical society dominate in half of the country? Shortly after the Mexican-American

War was fought, new territories became available in the West, the South wanted to

expand and use slavery in the newly acquired territories. The North, however, wanted to

limit the number of slave states in the Union and opposed this expansion.[46] The first

evidence of the North's actions came in 1819 when Missouri asked to be admitted to the

Union as a slave state.[47] After months of discussion, Congress passed the Missouri

Compromise of 1820, which regulated the extension of slavery in the United States for

---

[42]James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
[43]Ibid
[44]Ibid
[45]Ibid
[46]Ibid
[47]Ibid

three decades. Shortly, Maine and Missouri entered the statehood simultaneously to preserve sectional equality in the Senate.[48]

Finally, for Southerners the election of Abraham Lincoln was a representation of principles that opposed the further expansion of slavery. In contrast, the Northerners felt that without Lincoln in the presidency, the idea of majority-rule democracy would vanish and the United States would be broken into several small nations.[49] The North favored a loose interpretation of the United States Constitution. They wanted to grant the federal government increased powers.[50] The South, however, wanted to reserve all undefined powers to the individual states. In addition, the South was a minority in Congress and felt they would lose votes held at the central government. The North wanted to develop a tariff. With a high tariff, it protected the Northern manufactures. Hence, the South objected to this concept because it meant not being able to trade its cotton foreign goods.[51] Foreign goods, usually from Mexico, included guns, ammunition, cloth, uniforms, iron, salt, medicines, and other vital goods. Cotton provided the currency to purchase these items.

Texas

The controversies that divided the North and South in the 1860s deeply troubled Texans. Although only one in four Texas' family owned slaves; most Texans opposed any governmental interference and were appalled by the attacks upon Southern institutions by Northern political leaders.[52] In the 1860s Texas' population peaked at

---

[48]James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[49]David W. Bulla, *Lincoln's Censor* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008).

[50]Ibid

[51]Ibid

[52]Henry A. Maltry, No headline, *The Ranchero*, 8 December 1860, 2.

604,215 and 182,566 slaves were owned.[53] Out of 76,781 families residing in Texas, 28 percent owned slaves.[54]

Even though most Texans had strong ties to the Union, most of them considered the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency as a threat to slavery. Texans felt slavery was necessary for the growth and welfare of the state and urged Governor Sam Houston to call a convention of the people to determine what course of action the state should take. But Houston did not want to hinder any step that might aid secession, so he ignored these concerns. [55]

By the end of 1861, 25,000 Texans were in the Confederate army. Approximately 45 regiments of cavalry, 23 regiments of infantry, 12 battalions of cavalry and four battalions of infantry were from Texas. [56] By the end of the war, Texas recruited 60,012 soldiers, 1.6 percent of combined total in military.[57] Soldiers fought in other states, battled frontier and border raiders, protected internal trade routes, evaded federal blockades, supplied manufactured goods and operated prisoner of war camps. In Texas, Confederate and state forces battled Union troops along the Gulf Coast and on the plains. Soldiers fought the last battle at Palmito Ranch near Brownsville, Texas.[58]

---

[53]Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html (accessed accessed November 16, 2007).

[54]Ibid

[55]Texas Civil War Facts. http://www.mycivilwar.com/facts/state-tx.htm (accessed December 4, 2006).

[56]Ibid

[46]Battle of Palmito Ranch From Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battleof Palmito Ranch (accessed November 13, 2006).

[58]Handbook of Texas Online http www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/CC/qdc2_cite.htm (accessed November 13, 2007).

South Texas

Slavery did not play a major role in the lives of South Texans. In the South Texas border counties from Laredo to the Gulf, only 14 slaves were listed on the 1860 census. Of the seven slaves in Cameron County, six in Starr County, and one in Hidalgo County, almost all were female servants or children.[59]

Along the Rio Grande, the ordinance of secession proved to be quite popular. On December 3, 1860, many of the leading citizens of Corpus Christi met at the Nueces County Courthouse in what was called "one of the largest meetings."[60] In Cameron County the ordinance measure was received overwhelmingly by a vote of 600 to 37; in Hidalgo County 62 to 10.[61] Upriver in Starr County the vote was equally decisive, 180 to 2. In Zapata and Webb Counties the ordinance was approved by votes of 212 to 0 and 70 to 0 respectively.[62] Those attending the meetings elected delegates to a state convention at Austin and voted to "fully endorse the action of South Carolina."[63] In early March 1861, the voters of the state voted 46,153 to 14,747 for Texas to leave the Union and unite with the other Confederate States of America.[64]

About 2,550 Mexican-Americans fought for the Confederacy while 950 fought for the Union. South Texas, particularly the area from Laredo to Brownsville, contributed large numbers of soldiers to the Confederate and Union armies.[65] One of the most prominent Mexican-Texan figures defending South Texas territory for the

---

[59]Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html (accessed accessed November 16, 2007).

[60]Henry A. Maltry, No headline, *The Ranchero*, 8 December 1860, 2.

[61]Ibid

[62]Ibid

[63]Ibid

[64]Handbook of Texas Online http:// www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/CC/qdc2_cite.htm (accessed November 13, 2006).

[65]Jerry D. Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray* (Austin: Texas State House Press, 1977), 16.

Confederacy was Colonel Santos Benavides, a Laredo native. According to a news article in the Corpus Christi *Ranchero*, prior to the Civil War, Benavides acted as a slave catcher and even crossed into Mexico in pursuit of escaped blacks.   Rising to the occasion, the unit known as the "Benavides Regiment" defended Laredo and Rio Grande City. Under his direction, the unit was also assigned to save the 100-man post in Brownsville which was under siege.

After four years of bloody battles over slavery and territorial rights, the war hit close to home for South Texans. On May 13, 1865, four weeks after General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Northern Virginia Army at Appomattox Court House, the last land battle of the Civil War was fought 15 miles east of Brownsville, at Palmito Hill.[66] The Confederate and Union armies in Brownsville agreed that there was no point for further fighting and made a "gentlemen's agreement" to cease fire in March.[67] Unfortunately, the cease fire lasted only two months, Union and Confederate forces fought at Palmito Hill, with a final Confederate victory.

In the end, the Southern states were defeated and as a "war measure," slavery was abolished by a presidential proclamation.[68] The Southern states lost all they stood for and their economic system was destroyed.

1860s Journalism

Although millions of men participated in the fighting of the War, many more, particularly in the South, endured its hardships directly and experienced the Civil War by reading about it in papers. As they were living in an era prior to the advent of electronic

---

[66]Handbook of Texas Online http://
www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/CC/qdc2_cite.htm (accessed November 13, 2006).
[67]Ibid
[68]Jerry D. Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray* (Austin: Texas State House Press, 1977).

media, newspapers were the only way Northerners and Southerners could stay abreast of what was happening in the war.[69] This was particularly true in rural areas where families were isolated from the channels of gossip that might otherwise carry war related information.[70]

In 1807, United States President Thomas Jefferson wrote to a friend, "The man who never looks into a newspaper is better informed than he who reads them, inasmuch as he who knows nothing is nearer the truth than he whose mind is filled with falsehoods and errors."[71] This comment reflects how 1800s reporting was disorganized and leaned toward editorial partisanship.

The Civil War affected all aspects of journalism. Reporting, editing, circulation, printing, advertising, and illustration were all modified during this era. Journalists, however, quickly learned that one of the most serious problems of the war was how to keep the public properly informed without giving aid and comfort to the enemy.[72]

In his books, Thomas D. Clark, traces the evolution of country/rural newspapers in the South. He points out how several factors, like racial concern, a one-party political system, and one-crop agriculture influenced southern journalism.[73] As part of his argument, Clark states that Southern newspapers were printed for the common man. Stories reflecting everyday life challenges like "bad roads, the boll weevil, the Texas tick,

---

[69]J. Cutler Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970).
[70]Ibid
[71]Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *The Press* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[72]Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, Inc., 1978).
[73]Thomas D Clark, *The Southern Country Editor* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1948), 34.

filthy public wells, run-down jails and courthouses" appealed more to Southern readers.[74]

Subscribers, he adds, usually never read any other printed material except the Bible, and

the newspaper gave them a sense of knowledge about their surroundings.[75]

In the 1800s, partisanship, politics, and newspapers worked together. Editors

were never questioned on their right to take a partisan position and also hold a political

office. Southern printers were typically small-businesspeople, not journalists. According

to Overholser and Jamieson, editors and publishers invented the newspaper as they went

along. [76] A typical Southern newspaper was a four-page weekly journal designed initially

to advertise their print shop. Their contents followed a model: an assortment of local

advertising, occasional small paragraphs of local hearsay, and large chunks of European

political and economic news.

"If a newspaper of today were to publish its products in the makeup of a typical

Southern paper of 1860, it would probably plunge into bankruptcy," Donald E. Reynolds

writes.[77] Newspapers' in the 1800s were the most popular form of literature available to

Southerners and readers were kept up to date on current events like the Civil War. A

typical daily Civil War newspaper consisted of just a single sheet, which was hand-fed

through a steam-powered press and then folded to create a four-page edition.[78] In 1860

the United States was not yet a major world power, so with the exception of important

world events in Canada, England, France, and Latin America, there was little interest in

international news. In addition to being smaller in scope, Civil War newspapers were

---

[74]Thomas D Clark, *The Southern Country Editor* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1948), 34.
[75]Ibid
[76]Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *The Press* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[77]Donald E. Reynolds, *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis* (Nashville, TN.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966).
[78]Ibid

visually monotonous. Since the technology for transforming photographs into printable

images did not exist, every page was virtually a series of typeset words. It was rare for a

daily newspaper to print a map, a cartoon, or any other type of graphic.[79]

The Civil War made editors aware of the importance of news events in

stimulating circulation. The outbreak of hostilities created a demand for accurate

information about the war. Instantaneous communications facilitated the transmission of

war reports. Dependence on the telegraph led to modification in news writing, as

correspondents understood their stories needed to be more concise. One way to compress

stories was to omit opinion and coloration. Before the Civil War began, reporting was

"rambling and colored."[80]   The summary lead, which put the main feature of the story in

the first paragraph, was developed during the war by reporters in the field who feared that

their complete article might not get through. Civil War stories were transmitted from two

separate locations, New York Associated Press or the Confederate Press Association.[81]

Because news streamed from the telegraph by the hour, metropolitan newspapers

began to bulletin the highlights, and soon the smallest papers were imitating this format.

These bulletins led to the modern newspaper headline, which summarizes the story in a

few lines.[82]

Civil War newspapers not only looked different but functioned differently.

Unlike today, 19th century papers did not even aspire to offer objective, balanced

reporting. Southern newspapers felt compelled to appeal to women to sacrifice gladly

---

[79]Donald E. Reynolds, *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis*
(Nashville, TN.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966).

[80]Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey:
Prentice Hall, Inc., 1978).

[81]Ibid

[82]Ibid

both their men and their material comforts to a righteous cause, as well as to exhort men to fight and if necessary die for the greater good.[83] Rather than attempting to conceal their personal points of view, editors expressed them openly. Even more so, editors were shaping public opinion. Some editors used their papers to focus public attention on certain social problems while others targeted specific racial or ethnic audiences. Other newspapers offered views of particular religious dominance. Aside from using the newspapers as a vehicle to express personal opinion, newspapers were devoted to political opinion. Republican papers were geared toward Republicans, and Democratic papers toward Democrats.[84]

War Correspondents

Prior to the Civil War, no war had ever been so fully and freely reported. Northern newspapers usually devoted at least a third of their space to war news.[85] There is no record in the War Department files of military censorship before the Civil War.[86] Furthermore, before the Civil War, only Baltimore and Washington newspapers assigned special correspondents to cover Congress. The first correspondents were letter writers. Only when tension erupted between the North and the South did this change, with more newspapers hiring Washington correspondents.

When it came time to report battles, war correspondents, or "specials," as they were called, enjoyed a freedom that would not be tolerated in today's press. Many of the battles were fought in remote areas, and the struggle to get back firsthand accounts was

---

[83]David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, Roy Morris, Jr., *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalist* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008).
 [84]Ibid
 [85]Ibid
 [86]Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *The Press* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

seen as heroic. Sometimes the "special" had to make a long ride on horseback through

enemy territory, or even make such journey afoot, to get the news to a point from which

it could be transmitted safely.[87] In addition, many of the "specials" wrote under a pen

name to protect their identity. More importantly, pen names were used to keep war

correspondents from being seen as spies.[88] In addition, during the Civil War,

correspondents usually wrote for half of a dozen papers and earned the same salary as a

clerk for congressional committees or speechwriters for politicians. [89]

<div align="center">

Famous 1800 Journalists

</div>

One of the leading reporters during the Civil War was Samuel Clemens, also

known as Mark Twain. Clemens was a reporter and traveling war correspondent for

papers in Nevada and California. Clemens is also credited for beginning a series called

"traveling letters" that was printed in newspapers from coast to coast. In these "traveling

letters" Clemens would recount his experiences as a traveling war correspondent.[90]

Margaret Fuller opened the doors for many females to become journalists during

the 1800s. As the first American female war correspondent, Fuller, is described by

historians as "the most remarkable and…greatest woman" in American journalism. [91]

During the Civil War Fuller was most noted for commenting and writing on social

change, interviewing political and artistic leaders, and for covering local events.[92]

---

[87]Frank L. Mott, *American Journalism* (New York, New York: The MacMillian Company, 1962).

[88]Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1978).

[89]Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *The Press* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[90]Ibid

[91]George H. Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999).

[92]Ibid

Another person was Mathew Brady, who was considered a pioneering

photographer in the 1800s. Brady built a successful portrait business in New York and

Washington where the public could view photographs of famous people of the day.[93]

When the Civil War broke out, Brady was the only photographer who had official

approval to document the war.[94] According to historians, to do this job, he hired 10

photographers, set up field units in several military camps, and used large-format cameras

and traveling darkrooms pulled by horses. It is estimated that Brady took 3,500

photographs of the Civil War and is the only photographer who captured Abraham

Lincoln and the battles of Antietam and Fredericksburg on camera.[95]

Finally, Jacob Riis was considered a journalist who helped reform the United

States in the 1800s through his investigative reporting and documentary photographs.[96]

Riis worked for the *New York Times* and the Civil War became his beat. Riis wrote what

he saw on the battle sight. More importantly, he wrote about the aftermath of a local

battle and of what he saw. His stories opened people's eyes to the deplorable living

conditions many cities or local towns faced after having a battle fought in their area.[97]

The South Reports the War

When the war began, the South had no system for preparing or transmitting news.

Understanding this dilemma, editors unified and began sending out brief daily summaries

by telegraph to papers willing to pay for the service. They also saw that in order to place

correspondents where they were needed, they would have to pool resources. Following a

series of conferences to discuss war coverage, southern editors agreed on creating their

[93]George H. Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999).
[94] Ibid
[95] Ibid
[96] Ibid
[97] Ibid

own Press Association of the Confederate States of American, or "PA."[98] PA correspondents were instructed to send no opinions or comments on the events, something that irritated northern military officials about reporters. In addition, PA correspondents were also warned to sift through rumors and offer no information that would aid the enemy. This objectivity of the PA stories has been regarded as constituting a "complete revolution" in journalism writing.[99]

Texas and Spanish-Language Newspapers

An estimated 150 Spanish-language newspapers existed in during the 18th century and a total of 300 in the 20th.   In 1855, Spanish-language newspapers originated in Brownsville and San Antonio, providing readers with news, documenting the developing relationship with Mexico. For example, *El Rayo Federal* and *El Noticioso del Bravo* of Brownsville were published to exhort Mexicans to overthrow Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, Mexico's president. Another newspaper, *El Bejareño* was produced and edited to defend Tejano interests when Mexican leaders became alarmed over the growing number and power of white settlers in their territory. Mimicking the English language newspapers, Spanish-language newspaper editors and publishers were influential leaders often telling the public what to think.   The publishers of the *El Bejareño*, Frenchman Xavier B. DeBray and Englishman Alfred E. Lewis, coached their readers on democracy and American history, provided translations of the United States laws, and fought to defeat the anti-Catholic party, whose adherents wanted to deny Mexican-Americans their right to vote.

---

[98]George H. Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999).
[99]Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1978).

Recognizing the multicultural readership in South Texas, English-language newspapers in South Texas also adopted a bilingual format in their newspapers. One side of their newspaper was printed in Spanish, the other in English. *La Estrella de Corpus Christi* began a postwar trend. The Brownsville *El Centinela*, a bilingual newspaper, was renamed *Centinela del Rio Grande* within two months of its founding. Other Brownsville Spanish-language newspapers included *La Bandera Americana*, *El Rio Bravo*, and *La Bandera*.[100] The era for San Antonio newspapers continued through the Civil War with papers like *El Ranchero* and *El Correro*.[101]

In conclusion, the Civil War had serious effects on the lives of Texans and the world of journalism, and—to a degree—on the government. These are good reasons for scholars to keep studying war news in order to better understand these relationships and how they take place. One theory that explains how media shape the public perceptions is called agenda-setting and is discussed below.

Agenda-Setting

Agenda-setting studies investigate the transfer of salience from the media to the public.[102] It has been defined as "the idea that the news media, by their display of news, come to determine the issues the public thinks about and talks about."[103] In addition, it gives an explanation of why information about certain issues, and not others, are

---

[100]Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1978).

[101]Ibid

[102]Maxwell McCombs, *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 2004).

Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36 (November 1972) : 176-185.

Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Evolution of Agenda-Setting Research: Twenty-Five Years in the Marketplace of Ideas." *Journal of Communication* 43, 58-67.

[103]Werner J. Severin and James W. Tankard, *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods, and Uses* (New York: Longman, 1988).

available to the public and how public opinion is shaped. The theory is very compatible

with, and corresponds to other social science theories, including gatekeeping, status

conferral, the spiral of silence, and cultivation theory.[104]

The term agenda-setting was first introduced in 1972 by Shaw and McCombs.

The theory is grounded in psychological and sociological concepts. Human beings feel a

need for orientation, which is conceptualized in terms of relevance and uncertainty that

people experience.[105] The relevance of topic refers to the issues that are more important

to an individual or society in large.[106] This process of agenda-setting is also referred to as

the transfer of salience. The salience on the media agenda tells viewers, readers, and

listeners "what issues to think about."[107] In their study, Rogers and Dearing used a

conceptual model to illustrate the effects of agenda setting.[108]

---

[104]Maxwell McCombs, *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 2004).

Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36 (November 1972) : 176-185.
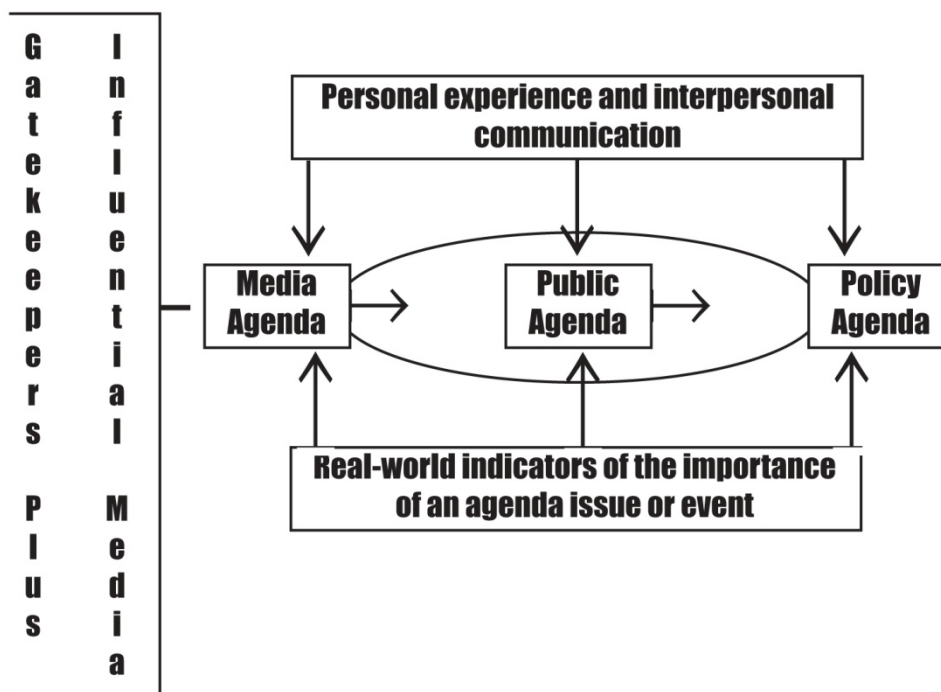
[105]Maxwell McCombs, *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 2004).

[106]Ibid

[107]James Dearing and Evertett Rogers, *Agenda-Setting* (CA: Sage Publications, 1996).

[108]Evertett Rogers and James Dearing, "Agenda-Setting research: Where Has It Been? Where Is It Going?," *Communication Yearbook* 11, 555-594.

Agenda-Setting Conceptual Model

Gatekeepers Plus Influential Media

Personal experience and interpersonal communication

Media Agenda → Public Agenda → Policy Agenda

Real-world indicators of the importance of an agenda issue or event

As indicated in the model above, agenda-setting has three main components: media agenda, public agenda, and policy agenda.[109] The mass media sets the agenda for public opinion by stressing certain issues or topics. In studying the way political campaigns were covered in the media, Shaw and McCombs found that the main effect of the news media was to set an agenda. In other words, the media would tell the people what to think. The media agenda is usually measured by a content analysis of the news media to determine the number of news stories about an issue.[110]

According to the theory, the media influence public opinion by emphasizing certain issues over others.[111] The amount of media attention, or salience, devoted to certain issues influences the degree of public concern for these issues. The roots of this

---

[109]James Dearing and Evertett Rogers, *Agenda-Setting* (CA: Sage Publications, 1996).
[110]Ibid
[111]Ibid

approach can be found in Lippmann's argument that the world is too complicated and out

of reach, and that consequently people must rely on the media to understand it.[112]

According to Dearing and Rogers, the public agenda is typically measured by

sampling a group of individuals and asking them "what is the most important problems

facing this country today." Public opinion surveys are used to measure public agenda.[113]

Since this thesis focuses on the analysis of 1800 South Texas newspapers, public agenda

will not be measured.

Policy agenda are issues policy makers consider important. Public agenda

consists of issues which have received a high level of public interest and visibility in the

media. Decision makers create a list of these issues they accept for serious consideration.

Again, since this thesis focuses on the analysis of 1800 South Texas newspapers, policy

agenda will not be measured.

Agenda-setting effects vary depending on how well the public is familiar with the

issue or topic. Issues are divided into two categories: obtrusive and unobtrusive.

Everyday life experiences people encounter is referred to as obtrusive issues. Issues that

individuals cannot experience or verify themselves are considered unobtrusive.[114]

Because a war is an example of unobtrusive issues; according to the agenda-setting

theory, it will have greater effects on public opinion. Aside from issue relevance, time is

also a factor in creating agenda-setting. Recent agenda-setting research argues that at

least one month of consistent media coverage is needed to show any effect on public

---

[112]Maxwell McCombs, *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 2004).

[113]James Dearing and Evertett Rogers, *Agenda-Setting* (CA: Sage Publications, 1996).

[114]Maxwell McCombs, *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 2004).

opinion.[115] Specifically, a one-month period of coverage prior to assessing public

opinion exerted a strong correlation; a two-month period of coverage was similar to the

results of the one-month period.[116]

Agenda-setting theory also functions over long periods of time. For example, the

theory was tested over a 23-year time period in the analysis of the dynamics of reporting

on the civil rights and the issue salience in the public mind.[117] Twenty-seven Gallup

polls, containing a question on the importance of the civil rights issue, were compared

with *The New York Times* front page news coverage, revealing a robust correlation.[118]

Several related conceptual aspects support the agenda-setting theory. For

example, research has shown that public opinion can attend to only several issues at a

time.[119] The public's attention span is rather limited, and various issues constantly

compete for a place in the public's mind. There are also limits on the amount of media

sources that people are exposed to and the size of most media agendas.[120] Therefore,

only several issues can occupy the public's mind at a certain time. Some issues,

according to McCombs, receive priority over a period of time while others appear only

on occasion.[121]

Shaw and McCombs studied the role of the media in the 1968 presidential

campaign in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.[122] The theory identified a correlation between

---

[115]Maxwell McCombs, *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 2004).
[116]Ibid
[117]Jame P. Winter and Chaim Eyal. "Agenda-Setting for the Civil Rights Issue," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 45, (Winter 1981) : 376-383.
[118]Ibid
[119]Maxwell McCombs, *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 2004).
[120]Ibid
[121]Ibid
[122]Ibid

the rate at which media cover a story and the extent that people think that this story is important. In the study, this correlation occurred repeatedly. Shaw and McCombs concluded from their analysis that mass media "set" the agenda for the public. The public agenda was important in the presidential election because it determined who one voted for.[123]

Since McCombs and Shaw's study, hundreds of studies on agenda-setting have sprouted. Several studies tested the agenda-setting theory within the framework of war news coverage. Shaw, Patnode, and Martinelli analyzed the content of sample newspapers from 1820-1860 to see whether or not traces of the upcoming of the Civil War could be detected. [124] They examined the relationship between a newspapers agenda and the cultural values of the regions being studied. The study found that newspapers from the North and South reflected regional interests, and that the editors of the South were very oriented to the issues that affected the South. Particularly, these issues were new territories, sectional news, and slavery.[125]

In a separate study, Allen et.al, examined the relationship between public opinion and the Gulf War by integrating the concepts of media framing and priming with the spiral of silence hypothesis.[126] The results indicate that media played a large role in shaping democratic debate through the framing of U.S. technological superiority, the language of technology and military jargon, and the priming of patriotic values contributed to the spiral of silence.

---

[123]Maxwell McCombs, *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 2004).

[124]David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Roy Morris, Jr., *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalist* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008).

[125]Ibid

[126]Barbara Allen and others, eds., "The Media and the Gulf War: Framing, Priming, and the Spiral of Silence." *Polity* 27, no. 2, 256-284.

Kang analyzed the Gallop polls and three network newscasts in 2003-2004. The researcher examined whether second-level agenda-setting and framing effects existed during the Iraq War.[127] The results demonstrate that news about the Iraq War was more episodic than thematic and there were more positive than negative frames on the war news about Iraq. The researcher also concluded that news attributes about the Iraq War were similar with poll results indicating that second-level agenda-setting and framing were present.[128]

Defining Agenda

What is an agenda, and how is one formed? In 1972 political scientists Roger Cobb and Charles Elder conceptualized agenda in political terms as "a general set of political controversies that will be viewed at any point in time as falling within the range of legitimate concerns meriting the attention of the polity."[129] In addition, in 1972, scholars Cobb and Eider defined an issue as "a conflict between two or more identifiable groups over procedural or substantive matters relating to the distribution of positions or resources."[130] In his study, McCombs defines agenda as a prioritized list of issues created by the news media.[131] For the purpose of this thesis, agenda is defined as the major topics found in newspapers. In short, the two-sided nature of the issue is important in understanding why and how an issue becomes an important agenda. The nature of the issue also helps make is newsworthy as opponents and proponents of the issue battle it in the mass media.

---

[127]Seok Kang, "Impact of Television News on Public Opinion about the Iraq War: An Assessment of Second-Level Agenda-Setting and Framing." (Ph. D. dis Arkansas Tech University, 2006), 52.
[128]Ibid
[129]James Dearing and Evertett Rogers, *Agenda-Setting* (CA: Sage Publications, 1996).
[130]Ibid
[131]Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *The Press* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Reviewing the front pages of a set of newspapers over a period of time can reveal the newspaper's agenda. Some issues, according to McCombs, receive priority over a period of time while others appear only on occasion. The importance of an issue/topic is provided by cues as the size of headline, length of articles, and the page numbers on which the article appears on. Finally, the exact rank-order of issues on these press agendas can be determined through a content analysis.

Press Agenda

If the press sets the public's agenda, who then sets the press agenda? Typical journalism traditions, interactions with other news organizations, and the interaction with public makers, like government, can help explain the press agenda.[132] The press itself ultimately is the one that decides which events and topics will be covered and how they will be reported. Since this analyses uses 1800 newspapers, this thesis will only focus on press agenda building.

Press agenda building seeks to sort relevant and irrelevant issues in an effort to give priority to certain demands. Agenda building is "the process by which issues are brought to a formal institutional agenda and transformed into policy intentions."[133] Cobb and Elder identify three major steps in the agenda-building process: issue creation, issue expansion, and agenda entrance. In the first stage, an issue is created. A triggering event must exist that helps define and create an issue. For the purpose of this thesis, the triggering event is the Civil War. An initiator, a group or person who converts a problem or grievance into an issue for a public or private reason is also necessary for issue creation. In this instance, South Texas newspapers used the themes of the Civil War to

---

[132]Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *The Press* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[133]James Dearing and Evertett Rogers, *Agenda-Setting* (CA: Sage Publications, 1996).

call attention to the war. The second stage of agenda building is issue expansion. For a created issue to ultimately make an institutional agenda, "adherents must mobilize support for their position on the issue." When support is gained by large numbers of the public, access to managers who control the organization's agenda is more likely to occur. Once an issue has been expanded, meaning that a greater awareness has been generated among the public, the agenda entrance stage has been reached.

Several previous studies have examined agenda setting in conjunction to media war coverage. However, no scholarly study published in a reference journal has been found that studies the item or topic frequency for the Civil War in Southern newspapers. Thus a gap in the research remains to be filled by this study. Similar to previous agenda-setting and war coverage studies, this paper establishes some overall match between the relative frequency of the news media's coverage of the Civil War and the relative salience of the same set of issues among the general public.[134]

This thesis will continue investigating the agenda-setting process by examining the content of South Texas newspapers from the 1861-1865 period and see if traces of Civil War coverage are detected. Based on the review of literature the present study suggests the following research question:

RQ1: What agenda did South Texas newspapers set with the Civil War coverage?

---

[134] This issue-base approach is represented by McLeod, Becker, and Byrnes 1974; McCombs and Stone, 1976; Shaw and McCombs, 1977.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Prior to the first shots of Fort Sumter, Southern editors were busy waging a rhetorical civil war for months—if not for years.[135] Between their editorial debates over slavery, the future direction of the country, and politics, the South's 800 or so newspapers had done their share by setting their own agenda. Newspapers contributed by helping bring the country to war.[136] If this is the case, where was South Texas newspapers?

The Civil War was significant with respect to Texas' growth. While there were crisis's such as an increase in Indian raids, cross-border raids by Texans and Mexicans, formation of frontier regiments to battle Comanche's, and a conspiracy in "Union Legacided," the Civil War was the most direct challenge of all to the future of Texas. Historians and scholars alike, attribute the outbreak of the Civil War to three principal sources: slavery, the future direction of the United States, and nomination of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency. Again, this thesis asks one research question: What agenda did South Texas newspapers set with the Civil War coverage?

This thesis defines South Texas as the region of Texas which lies roughly south of or beginning at San Antonio. The region includes San Antonio, as

---

[135]J. Cutler Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970).

[136]David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Roy Morris Jr., *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalism* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008).

well as the communities of Alice, Beeville, Brownsville, Corpus Christi, Eagle Pass,

Edna, Kingsville, Laredo, Rio Grande City, McAllen, and Victoria.[137]

<div align="center">

Rationale

</div>

The primary research technique used was content analysis. Content analysis is a

research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts

of their use. [138] Leites and Pool describe four functions content analysis: to confirm what

is already believed; to correct the 'optical illusions' of specialists; to settle disagreements

among specialists; and to formulate and test hypothesis about symbols.[139] To better

understand why content analysis is the method chosen for this thesis, Berelson's list of

uses of content analysis is selected. These uses are to describe trends in communication

content; to disclose international differences in communication contents; to construct and

apply communication standards; to expose propaganda techniques; to discover stylistic

features, to reveal the focus of attentions; and to describe the attitudinal and behavioral

responses to communication.[140] For the above reasons, content analysis is a common

method used in studying agenda-setting.

In addition to content analysis, the agenda-setting theory was also used to

understand to what degree the Civil War was covered in South Texas newspapers.

Agenda-setting investigates the transfer of salience from the media to the public.[141]

---

[137]County Maps. http://www.countymapsoftexas.com/region_south.shtml (accessed September 14, 2009)

[138]Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980).

[139]Ibid

[140]Ibid

[141]Ibid

Agenda-setting has been defined as 'the idea that the news media, by their display of news, come to determine the issues the public thinks about and talks about.'[142]

This thesis was not intended to test hypotheses; no statistical tests were done to show the differences among newspapers or South Texas regions. This thesis uses descriptive statistics since the researcher is describing the basic features of the sampled newspapers and news coverage. Quantitative data, however, was used only as an aid in analysis and description for the qualitative-exploratory thesis.

Sample

The population for this study was Southern newspapers that were published during the Civil War from January 1, 1861 to May 1865. Since the 800 newspapers could not be studied, the researcher decided to select a sample using purposive sampling. In purposive sampling, units of analysis are selected using a criterion. In this case, the researcher decided to select newspapers published during the Civil War in South Texas. Newspapers play a big role in the agenda-setting theory. They serve as a source of information and have a large spectrum depending on the circulation. According to records at the Texas State Library and at the University of Texas-Pan American, 42 newspapers were published in South Texas in the Civil War period. Of this number, only 19 newspapers were available. Newspapers were located using the Texas State Library, *Newspapers on Microfilm* from The University of Texas-Pan American, The University of Texas at Brownsville, and Border Heritage Museum in Laredo. The newspapers were published in English and Spanish.

---

[142]Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980).

All available newspapers were analyzed and 19 newspapers fit the criteria.

Newspapers include: *The Ranchero, American Flag, Daily Herald, Fort Brown Flag,*

Cosmopolitan, The Daily Ranchero, The Ranchero, San Antonio Herald, The Alamo

Express, and Semi Weekly News. The communities in South Texas reflected a variety of

Mexican and Anglo populations, diverse in proportion of Hispanics to Anglos,

socioeconomic status, and overall community size. Thus in the three regions, coastal,

central, and border, the newspaper was the main source of local/national information.

For the above reasons, available sampled newspapers also included local Spanish-

language newspapers. These Spanish-language newspapers yielded sufficient local news

coverage of the region for quantitative analysis. Available Spanish-language newspapers

were: *El Ranchero, Estrella de Corpus Christi, Gaceta de Texas, El Noticiero, El Rio*

Bravo, El Daily Ranchero, Boletin Extraordinario, El Correro del Rio Grande, and El

Centinela.

South Texas newspapers shared certain characteristics. Four pages in length, they

carried international and national news on the first two pages, local news and government

reports on the third page, and advertisements on the fourth. Since each paper had its own

style and was highly opinionated, it was not difficult to determine a point of view.

Finally to reflect a regional pattern, sampled newspapers were divided into three

regions (Coastal counties, Border counties, and Central counties) to reflect broad regional

patterns. Coastal counties include: Cameron, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, and

Guadalupe; Border counties include McKinney, Maverick, Webb, Zapata, Starr, Hidalgo,

and Cameron; Central counties include: Bexar, Duval, Encinal, Dimmit, Lasalle, McMullen, Live Oak, Bee, Goliad, Carnes, Atascos, and Dewitt.[143]

Coastal Counties. Within Coastal counties, Cameron County was the largest with 6, 028 residents.[144] Cameron County consisted of cities like Brownsville, a small trading post in the Mexican wilderness, not well integrated into the rest of the state.[145] Brownsville is located 20 miles from Palmito Hill where the last Civil War battle occurred. Another coastal city was Corpus Christi.

Border Counties. Cities located in the border counties included Rio Grande City and Laredo. On March 19, 1864 in the Battle of Laredo, the Union hoped to cut off the flow of cotton and seize Texas.[146] Instead the Confederates defeated the Union and secured Laredo. Laredo was also a small trading post in the Mexican wilderness, not well integrated into the rest of the state.[147] According to historical maps and archived newspapers, Laredo was the oldest city in South Texas.[148] Fort Ringgold, located in Rio Grande City, is the southernmost installation of the western tier of forts constructed and stood guard during the Civil War over the Rio Grande and Rio Grande City.[149]

---

[143]County Maps. http://www.countymapsoftexas.com/region_south.shtml (accessed September 14, 2009)
[144]Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html (accessed accessed November 16, 2007).
[145]Handbook of Texas Online http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/CC/qdc2_cite.htm (accessed November 13, 2006).
[146]Ibid
[147]County Maps. http://www.countymapsoftexas.com/region_south.shtml (accessed September 14, 2009)
[148]Ibid
[149]Jerry D. Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray* (Austin: Texas State House Press, 1977).

Central Counties. The largest county in Central South Texas was Bexar county with a population of 14, 454.[150] The largest city in Central South Texas was San Antonio, located in Bexar County.[151]

Each of the four years, from 1861-1865 was represented in all three regions by a single newspaper selected randomly from all newspapers during that period. In 1863, for example, the Coastal counties might have been represented by a newspaper in cities such as Corpus Christi, Refugio, or Brownsville, the towns or cities included in the sample frame for Coastal South Texas.

Procedure

The content analysis includes news, features, editorials, and bulletins about the Civil War within the study period (1861-1865). Nineteen newspapers under study were read, categorized and coded for purposes of description and analysis. All items were from daily, non-dailies, and Sunday newspapers.

While the researcher gathered background information about the entire paper such as number of pages, the bulk of the analysis focused on each content item in depth. Each Civil War story was analyzed in terms of characteristics such as topics, sources, writing style, and number of paragraphs (see Appendix A). The conventional column inch or word count system or measurement was not used because of the differences in column inches and newspaper sizes.

---

[150]Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html (accessed accessed November 16, 2007).

[151]County Maps. http://www.countymapsoftexas.com/region_south.shtml (accessed September 14, 2009).

Before beginning to work on each newspaper, the researcher checked to ensure there was a complete edition. Next, the researcher examined each newspaper systematically and identified all news, features, editorials, and bulletins. The researcher defined each of these content types and categorized them based on a fixed criterion. A total of 180 news stories were identified in the sample. A total of 60 feature stories were identified, a total of 82 editorials were identified and 152 bulletins were identified. The sampling procedure yielded a total of 474 articles that were analyzed for this thesis. The articles were then analyzed for story topic (slavery, the future direction of the country, and the nomination of Abraham Lincoln into presidency).

Category Definitions

The analysis focused exclusively on news, bulletins, editorials, and features. A news article is a discrete piece of information four lines or longer that typically is indicated by use of a headline. It attempts to answer all the basic questions about any particular event in the first two or three paragraphs and focuses on the five w's (who, what, when, where, and why) and how.[152] Bulletins were defined as sets of brief announcements that shared the same format and information.[153] Editorials were defined as articles where the writer gathers facts and writes his/her opinions.[154] Features were defined as non-news item on a specific topic covered in depth and usually with a "human interest" angle.[155]

---

[152]Roger Wimmer and Joseph R, Dominick, *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*. (Denver, Colorado, 2005).

[153]Bradley S. Greenberg, Michael Burgoon, Judee K. Burgoon, and Felipe Korzenny, *Mexican Americans and the Mass Media* (Norwood, New Jersey: ABLEX Publishing Corporation, 1980).

[154]Roger Wimmer and Joseph R, Dominick, *Mass Media Research: An Introduction* (Denver, Colorado, 2005).

[155]Ibid

After skimming the material for Civil War items, the materials were analyzed into three comprehensive themes. According to historians, the Civil War was triggered over three issues: slavery, future direction of the country, and Abraham Lincoln. The researcher used these three causes of the Civil War as themes to categorize the newspaper content. The following definitions were used to code the newspaper content:

- Slavery/Abolition: This category includes abolitionist propaganda and reactions, fugitive slave news, the slave trade, slave conspiracies, and the underground-railroad.

- Future direction of the country: This section includes territorial governments, the sale and settlement of public lands, disputes of Texas property since its secession, and dispute over what flag represents Texas, commerce (cotton trade, wool, crops), tariffs, banking, agriculture, government finance programs, land and market speculation, manufacturing and industry, taxation, public construction, and government spending.

- Abraham Lincoln: This category includes debates by government agencies, governmental employees and operations, the post office, military news, and political spoils.

Since the categories used were the major causes of the Civil War, the list was a comprehensive one. Categories were then checked for overlapping. All categories were mutually-exclusive where the categories were given specific operational definitions. All articles were categorized in one theme.

After the Civil War news articles were identified, two coders coded the newspapers content. During the coding process three randomly selected articles of three randomly selected newspapers were used for a reliability check at two different times.

Coding Sheet

Researcher coded South Texas Region 1, 2, or 3 (Coastal Region, Border Region, Central Region), number of paragraphs, byline 1, 2, or 3 (editor/publisher, other: news items supplied from other local South Texas communities, wire), type of article 1 or 2 (news, feature and editorial or bulletin) local referent 1 or 0 (yes or no), and article location 1 or 2 (page one or inside) (See Appendix A).

For news, features, and editorials, a judgment was made as to whether the story focused primarily on a Civil War issue and/or Civil War related topics. During the 1800s, bulletins mainly consisted of births, deaths, marriages, and calendar announcements. Bulletins were coded if any of the above categories made reference to a specific Civil War event, issue or key figure.

During the coding process, three separate content topic categories were assessed as being central to the story: slavery, the future direction of the country, and the election of Abraham Lincoln as the United States President. Hence, the categories were coded 1, 2, or 3 (slavery/abolitionist, future direction of the country, the election of Abraham Lincoln as the United States President).

Reliability Testing

Research assistant was trained by the researcher on category definition, main focus of thesis, and methodology. Next, researcher and assistant practiced several sets of selected examples of stories. After each set of examples was analyzed, the researcher and

assistant discussed the correct coding. The training phase was important for creating consistency between researcher and assistant. Finally, a random sample of 20 stories was pulled and coded a second time to allow the researcher to evaluate inter-coder reliability. Both sets of coding forms were compared. The results show a satisfactory level of agreement between the researcher and assistant (Cohen's Kappa coefficient averaged 0.83).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This section will provide specifics on the descriptive findings and inferences. Specifics on each individual region will be discussed and compared and specific examples of coverage will be noted.

Findings

Of the total news space in the 819 issues sampled, an average of 39 percent was devoted to Civil War news coverage with the remainder given to domestic news. The research question asked: What agenda did South Texas newspapers set with the Civil War? Table 1 illustrates the items in the news-hole.

Table 1

Items in the News-hole

		N=474
News-hole	No. of Stories	Percentage
News	180	38%
Feature	60	13%
Editorial	82	17%
Bulletins	152	32%

Of the total news space, news articles represented 38 percent, or 180 items, feature articles represented 13 percent, or 60 items, editorials represented 17 percent, or

82 items and bulletins represented 32 percent, or 152 items. Thus, the research question was supported.

The 474 items qualified as Civil War items because they either spoke directly of or speculated upon local Civil War battles or raids, its causes or outcomes economically or politically, key figures like politicians and military generals, and public or political responses to the cry for governmental protection. The number of articles analyzed included 1,208 paragraphs and forty two percent of the Civil War news were front page items. The exact position of the stories or bulletins could not be correctly determined because some sampled newspapers were available as copies printed out in Microsoft format.

The set of items were content-analyzed more in-depth, concentrating on the three South Texas regions (central, border, and coastal) and is illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Content analyzed by South Texas Counties

Counties	No. of Stories	N=474 Percentage
Coastal	192	41%
Border	161	34%
Central	121	26%

South Texas coastal counties had the most Civil War coverage in its newspapers with 41 percent, or 192 articles. The border counties had 34 percent, with 161 articles. Central counties published 26 percent Civil War news in its newspapers, or 121 articles. Finally, Table 2 shows that South Texas newspapers agreed that the topic, Civil War, was

important but might not have completely agreed on the way they approached the broad topic.

Coastal Region

This section reports the analysis of the Coastal region stories.

In all, 192 articles or bulletins spoke of or made reference to the Civil War (N=474) in the five coastal counties' newspapers. The number of the articles analyzed included 798 paragraphs. From these 192, 143 items were news, features, and/or editorial and 49 were bulletins. Ninety two percent of the articles referencing to Civil War were in the front page of the newspaper, and the remainder on page two or three.

Seventy eight percent were written by the editor/publisher of the newspaper, 22 percent were written by other (news item supplied by other local South Texas communities), and zero percent were written by a wire service. Interestingly, from the 22 percent of Civil War news items, all were supplied by Rio Grande City, a border town. News correspondences about the war were sent via postal and the byline read:

"This just came in from our dear friends in Rio Grande City."

Central Region

This section reports the analysis of the Central region stories.

In all, 121 (26%) articles or bulletins were analyzed in the five central counties' sampled newspapers. The articles included 605 paragraphs. Ninety seven percent of the articles referencing to Civil War were in the front page of the newspaper, and the remainder on page two or three.

Eighty one percent were written by the editor/publisher of the newspaper, 19 percent were written by other (news item supplied by other local South Texas

communities), and zero percent were written by a wire service. Similar to the coastal counties, the 98 stories in San Antonio newspapers were supplied by Brownsville, a border/coastal town. News correspondences about the war were sent via postal and the byline read:

"The following story is from our friends at *The Daily Ranchero*."

Border Region

This section reports the analysis of the Border region stories.

In all, 161 (34%) articles or bulletins were analyzed in the eight border counties' sampled newspapers. The articles included 644 paragraphs. Eighty three percent of the articles referencing to Civil War were in the front page of the newspaper, and the remainder on page two or three.

Ninety three percent of the articles were written by the editor/publisher of the newspaper, 19 percent were written by other (news item supplied by other local South Texas communities), and zero percent were written by a wire service.

Focus of Civil War Coverage

The review of literature argues that the issues more pertinent to the coming of the war were those dealing with slavery, the future direction of the country, and the nomination of Abraham Lincoln into presidency. If South Texas' newspapers made the Civil War part of their agenda, this section will then illustrate various ways in which 1800 South Texas newspapers covered the biggest story of their lives—the Civil War— and in doing so reflected and shaped the opinion of their readers.

The content of the 474 articles was categorized into three separate content topic categories: slavery, future direction of the country, and Abraham Lincoln's nomination.

Table 3 shows the rank order in terms of the number of stories on Civil War themes. The

election of Abraham Lincoln to the United States presidency was by far the most salient

issue with the future direction of the country trailing behind. In contrast,

slavery/abolition received the least amount of news coverage across South Texas

newspapers. Finally, Table 3 shows what agenda-setting describes as Level 1—

agreement on the big topic, Civil War. It also indicates a Level 2—an agreement on

attributes within any given topic.

Table 3

Number of stories on Civil War themes

		N=474
Topic	No. of Stories	Percentage
Slavery	108	23%
Future Direction of Country	180	38%
Abraham Lincoln	186	39%

In order to structure the analysis of regional agendas on these themes, a basic

descriptive statistic of news coverage by year is presented below in Table 4. Table 4

illustrates news accounts of the Civil War primarily focused on the future direction of the

country and briefly shifted to Abraham Lincoln—but shifted back to the future direction

of the country almost immediately as the war progressed.

TABLE 4
Newspaper coverage of topics by year, 1861-1865

N=474

Topic	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	Total
Slavery	N = 23 % sample 5% % row = 21% % col. = 24%	N = 27 % sample = 6% % row = 25% % col. = 20%	N = 18 % sample = 4% % row = 17% % col. = 17%	N = 37 % sample = 8% % row = 34% % col. = 32%	N = 3 % sample = .63% % row = 3% % col. = 14%	Row Total = 108 % of sample = 23%
Future Direction of Country	N = 41 % sample = 9% % row = 23% % col = 43%	N = 57 % sample = 12% % row = 32% % col. = 42%	N = 39 % sample = 7% % row = 22% % col. = 37%	N = 32 % sample = 7% % row = 18% % col. = 28%	N = 11 % sample = 2% % row = 6% % col. = 52%	Row Total = 180 % of sample = 38%
Abraham Lincoln	N = 32 % sample = 7% % row = 17% % col = 33%	N = 53 % sample = 11% % row = 28% % col. = 39%	N = 49 % sample = 10% % row = 26% % col. = 46%	N = 45 % sample = 9% % row = 24% % col. = 39%	N = 7 % sample = 1% % row = 49% % col. = 33%	Row Total = 186 % of sample = 39%
Total	Col. Total = 96 Col. % = 20%	Col. Total = 137 Col. % = 29%	Col. Total = 106 Col. % = 22%	Col. Total = 114 Col. % = 24%	Col. Total = 21 Col. % = 5%	

Table four shows patterns in the coverage of news about slavery, future direction of the country, and the election of Abraham Lincoln to the United States presidency. Looking first at the election of Abraham Lincoln into the presidency and other political issues, it is evident that this was an issue of greater importance in South Texas newspapers. The data indicates further that the interest in Abraham Lincoln and other political issues was not restricted to only one year, but was indeed most salient in the South Texas press in 1862, 1863, and 1864. Not surprisingly, politics and/or governmental issues were heavily emphasized in the agenda of the sampled newspapers from all three regions. After Abraham Lincoln's election to the presidency, pressure mounted on Texas Governor Sam Houston to call a convention so that Texas could consider secession.[156] In February Texas became the seventh state to secede and join the Confederacy by a vote of 166 to 8.[157] Furthermore, new territories naturally raised questions about whether or not slavery would be allowed in them, generating lengthy and heated debates. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which determined where slavery would be allowed, were much discussed in the South Texas press.

Finally looking at the data by year for all 474 articles, Table 4 also indicates there was a rise in the number of articles with the election of Abraham Lincoln, and slavery/abolition in 1862, with a peak in 1863 followed by a decline, indicating an agenda. In 1863, the Confederates recapture the island of Galveston, capturing the Union's vessel and nearly 400 men. Although the Battle of Galveston was fought 200 miles away from South Texas, the victory restored control of Galveston to the

---

[156]Jerry D. Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray* (Austin: Texas State House Press, 1977).
[157]Ibid

Confederacy. Also, in 1862-1863 Abraham Lincoln issued out two executive orders

declaring the freedom of slaves in Confederate States of America, this was also known as

the Emancipation Proclamation.

      Table 5 reflects the degree to which Civil War issues were included in the

agendas set forth by the press in the three regions of South Texas.

TABLE 5
Newspaper coverage of topics by region, 1861-1865

N=474

Topic	Slavery	FD of Country	Abraham Lincoln	Total
Coastal	N = 42	N = 79	N = 71	Row Total = 192
	% sample 9%	% sample = 17%	% sample = 15%	% of sample = 41%
	% row = 22%	% row = 41%	% row = 37%	
	% col. = 39%	% col. = 44%	% col. = 38%	
Central	N = 22	N = 48	N = 51	Row Total = 121
	% sample = 5%	% sample = 10%	% sample = 11%	% of sample = 26%
	% row = 18%	% row = 40%	% row = 42%	
	% col = 20%	% col. = 27%	% col. = 27%	
Border	N = 44	N = 53	N = 64	Row Total = 161
	% sample=9%	% sample = 11%	% sample = 14%	% of sample = 34%
	% row = 27%	% row = 33%	% row = 38%	
	% col = 41%	% col. = 29%	% col. = 34%	
Total	Col. Total = 108	Col. Total = 180	Col. Total = 186	
	Col. % = 23%	Col. % = 38%	Col. % = 39%	

The summary data in Table 5 leads to two conclusions. First, Table 5 indicates that newspapers sampled in all three regions (Coastal, Border, and Central), during the years 1861-1865 were for the most part aligned as to what they were covering in their newspapers, indicating an agreement of topics. The three causes of the Civil War, as identified by historians, was indeed a significant part of the total agenda of all newspapers sampled. Second, further evidence suggests that there are significant regional differences in the setting of agendas in the press.

Only the Border county newspapers, however, put stories about slave trade and slave capture in all four years, whereas Coastal and Central region newspapers did not focus on that issue. Since Texas annexation in 1845, the responsibility for defending the frontier from Indian raids and Mexican guerrilla wars had rested largely on the U.S. Army. According to Thompson, in *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray*, between 3,000 to 3,500 army men were assigned to carry out military operations against Indians.[158] When raiding became even worse in the border counties, an area that had few slaves, angry Texans believed that the federal government did not care about their suffering. A border country newspaper informs its readers: "As an emergency measure, all counties are ordered by the state to organize minutemen companies."[159]

Texas as a slave state not only provided many benefits to the expansion of the South's institution but also gave the South two new senators. In addition, when Texas seceded in 1861, all Union forces were ordered by President Lincoln to pull out of the

---

[158]Jerry D. Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray* (Austin: Texas State House Press, 1977), 16.
[159]Ibid

state, forcing Texas to find ways to protect its frontier and border counties from Indian

raids and Mexican guerrilla attacks and still provide men to fight the Civil War.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

War news coverage influences the way people perceive the government,
economic and cultural globalization. Based on the work of other media researchers, we
know quite well that people tend to seek more information and up-to-date news in times
of national or international conflicts. The use of news content from newspapers during
periods of war provides an ideal opportunity to identify a newspapers' agenda. Most
prior studies of war news coverage have studied agenda-setting using established
newspapers like *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*, while few have examined
war news flow in smaller rural newspapers. The goal in this thesis has been to examine
South Texas newspapers' coverage of the Civil War. The process of agenda-setting is
described by the quantity and kind of Civil War news coverage identified in the
newspapers. To achieve this, 19 daily and nondaily South Texas newspapers with Civil
War news were analyzed to enhance knowledge about the flow of war news into a region
that was in the process of developing. The present thesis offered one research question:
What agenda did South Texas newspapers set with the Civil War coverage? Civil War
news coverage accounted for 39 percent of the news in South Texas local newspapers
during this four year period.

This examination suggests that South Texas newspapers generally favored a democracy guided "by a single master." Nevertheless, all 19 newspapers were faithful in their support of early Southern secession efforts and Southern independence while sometimes criticizing specific actions or lack of action by the government. In this war, newspapers provided the public with strong religious metaphors and repetitious messages of support for the Civil War. "My kingdom for a war! he cries; may it never end, he prays," writes a Brownsville editor.[160]

In addition, according to Table 4, coverage was most extensive in 1862 and 1864. In late 1863, newspaper bulletins highlight how Union vessels anchored off Brazos Santiago seized several British ships delivering munitions to the Confederacy.[161] In addition, a San Antonio newspaper reported the events describing how Brownsville was engulfed in flames.

> "All the public property and two hundred bales of cotton were burned by order of Gen. Bee…We learn every one left behind us on the road between the Rio Grande and Arroyo Colorado was murdered by robbers. The Rio Grande is lined with small parties of robbers, murdering all the Confederates that fall into their hands."[162]

Although most of the major Civil War battles were fought east of the Mississippi River, Texas was still impacted by the war. The Union army and naval militaries made Texas a target. South Texas cities Brownsville, Port Lavaca, Brazos de Santiago and Indianola were captured, and Sabine Pass, Corpus Christi, and Laredo were all under enemy attack. Union naval blockades of the coastal towns created shortages requiring

---

[160]"Third Letter from Trimmer," *The Ranchero*, 30 April 1863, 2.
[161]Brazos Santiago is defined as the jetties projecting from the extreme south end of South Padre Island and the north most extent of Brazos Island.
[162]No headline. The San Antonio Express, 25 November 1863, 1.

Texans to find substitutes for various commodities such as coffee, salt, ink, pins, and needles.

In keeping with the expectations of agenda-setting, the content analysis indicates that South Texas as a region kept focus on topics prudent to the Civil War and reflected these issues in their newspapers, indicating a first-level of agenda-setting. In first-level agenda-setting, media use objects or issues to influence the public and this is where the media begins to tell the public what they should be thinking about. According to agenda-setting researchers, the focus of agenda-setting stresses the order in which the media place issues before the public for discussion.[163] More than serving simply as means for military information, newspapers also framed and primed views of slavery, economy, and politics. When all three issues are sorted out by numbers of stories, it is clear that there appears to have been a consistence in coverage, indicating a second-level of agenda-setting. Table 1 indicates that South Texas newspapers converged in terms of space on the topics of slavery, future direction of the country, and the election of Abraham Lincoln—all topics that helped frame the war from 1861-1865. By the amount of coverage per each issue the media suggest how the people should think about the Civil War. Additionally, Table 3 indicates that South Texas selected and wrote about the three main causes of the Civil War and placed them before its readers. Although 39 percent of South Texas newspapers might not be enough in telling its readers what to think, they were, however, successful in telling its readers what to think *about*. For example, as a whole 38 percent of the sampled newspapers included stories of the future direction of the countries issues. New territories naturally raised questions about whether or not slavery would be allowed in them, often generating long and heated debates for editors.

---

[163]James Dearing and Evertett Rogers, *Agenda-Setting* (CA: Sage Publications, 1996).

For example, creating a Texas flag was much discussed in the Central region press, where one San Antonio editor wrote:

> "We need to create our own identity and what better way than not with our own flag. The Texas flag will fly high in every corner of our state, letting people know she is ours. She stands alone…governs herself."[164]

In addition, there also is evidence that such events as Indian raids and Mexican guerrilla wars influenced Civil War news coverage and perhaps made regional differences more evident to its own reader population. Thus one can argue that depending on the region, a newspaper's agenda can play different roles. While historians and scholars claim the future direction of the country and the election of Abraham Lincoln into the presidency, it was slavery that received more emphasis in the columns of South Texas newspapers. Only Border region newspapers made frequent reference to slavery/abolitionists. Slavery, according to Table 5, was part of the Border newspapers agenda all four years of the Civil War, while for Coastal and Central newspapers it was not. These sentiments were clear in a February 23, 1861 article title "The Question."

> "For voters to decide upon to-day is: Are you in favor of being on a political equality with the free negro of the north, or are you in favor of being recognized superior in the south? Who can hesitate to cast his vote FOR SECESSION!"[165]

Furthermore, in April 1861 when Texas succeeded from the United States, President Abraham Lincoln requested all military troops to be removed, leaving Texas vulnerable to Indian, Mexican, and outlaw attacks. With shock and uncertainty, a February 19 issue of the *Tri-Weekly Alamo Express* was decorated with such headlines as "A Sad Day For San Antonio, Evacuation of the U.S. Troops, Feeling of the People" and

---

[164]No headline, San Antonio Herald, 14, May 1861, 1.
[165]"The Question," *The Ranchero*, 23 February 1861, 2.

"Taking of the United States Property."[166] In order to secure Texas, Governor Sam

Houston ordered each region to recruit local citizen soldiers and establish Minutemen

organizations to protect Texas' frontier.   Minutemen stationed along the Rio Grande

border. In contrast, central region editors found base Southern motives, not ideals, as the

primary cause of the Civil War. The "only" reason for the conflict, said *The Alamo*

Express, was economic interest.[167] Conflict was inevitable, claimed *Daily Herald*

between Northern merchants and Southern planters. The war, concluded *The Alamo*

Express, was "born by a question of tariff and encouraged by material ambition."[168]

While this thesis does not present data correlating "press agendas" and "public

agendas," previous studies show that "the rank ordering of salient events by the press

differs by region and/or language."[169] Newspapers in all three South Texas regions

provided a wide range of war news in terms of subject, amount, and editorial comment.

This variety is exhibited in Table 5. Although South Texas included San Antonio, one of

Texas' largest cities during that time, and Laredo, one of the oldest towns in Texas, in its

region, it was still in the developing stages. Newspapers like *El Ranchero*, a Corpus

Christi newspaper, included stories like the discovery of a sea turtle on the coast, while

La Bandera, a Brownsville newspaper, wrote about requesting information on a

"suspicious Mexican man that can cure all illness with an egg."[170] Perhaps these stories,

and others similar to these, give an indication that South Texas communities were in the

process of developing their own identity, making issues like having the opportunity to see

---

[166]No headline, *Tri-Weekly Alamo Express*, 19 February 1861, 3.
[167]No headline, *Tri-Weekly Alamo Express*, 17 April 1861, 1.
[168]Ibid
[169]James Dearing and Evertett Rogers, *Agenda-Setting* (CA: Sage Publications, 1996).
[170]La Bandera Brownsville tx no headline May 14, 1861

a sea turtle far more important than the Civil War being fought hundreds of miles from them.

Limitations of the Study

This thesis uses descriptive statistics versus inferential statistics, creating a big limitation for this analysis. For agenda-setting scholars, a key question is to determine why the salience of an issue on the media agenda, public agenda, and policy agenda increases or decreases. Descriptive statistics restricted the researcher from making such comparisons between South Texas newspapers. Hence, only basic features of the data were used. Since this is a historical content analysis, inferring from the sample data what the population (editors or readers) might think is impossible.

Ideally, this thesis would have been performed with coders actually looking at each physical page and counting column inches for Civil War articles in the 819 issues. However, the physical pages were no longer accessible, and the idea of copying every page of every newspaper was dropped quickly as the prohibitive expense of such an undertaking became obvious. Besides, even copying every page did not assure that the size of the pages would be proportionately the same, making measuring column inches problematic.

Hence, the decision was made to count articles and paragraphs, which was not without its problems as well. Eighteen-hundred newspapers included some very long and very short paragraphs. Additionally, a range existed in type size for the body copy, or the article after the headlines. One also had to be cautious of seeming Civil War appellations in headlines that could be misleading. The 1800 newspapers were not hesitant, for example, to use "Negro" or "Blacks" liberally.

Moreover, no background information mentioning the disparities in circulations and economic conditions between newspapers is offered. Background information would have been helpful to determine differences in which South Texas newspapers reported the war. Also, South Texas newspapers never gave the indication that they had stable correspondents who stayed in the battlefields for the duration of the war. This lack of war correspondents could have made a difference in the way war was covered in South Texas newspapers. According to the review of literature, in circumstances when the newspapers did not have correspondents close enough to watch the battles, editors acquired their information elsewhere. News reports were sometimes based on rumors, press associations, articles clipped and reprinted from other newspapers, random letters from soldiers in the field, and official military reports which were usually slow to be disseminated. Consequently, only newspapers available were used as part of the sampling. Perhaps if historical newspapers were better archived and available, the research would have yielded more conclusive data.

Another limitation was coding only text, which raises the question of level of objectivity. Historians and journalism scholars alike agree that partisanship, politics, and newspapers worked together. Editors were never questioned on their right to take a partisan position and even held a political office at the same time while managing a newspaper. Finally, the focus of this thesis is on the quantity, not quality, of Civil War coverage. Admittedly, some of the articles were short stories local residents wrote detailing life during the Civil War era. Poems and other dramatic fiction installments ran in South Texas newspapers.

Suggestions for Future Studies

The problem with generalizability was noted earlier in the discussion of limitations. The next step would then be to continue to add newspapers using the same time frame and random dates. Since only South Texas newspapers were used in this thesis, the obvious choice for adding more newspapers would be to compare and contrast the quantity of Civil War coverage between South Texas and the rest of the state, or the rest of the country for that matter. The number of newspaper sampled would then increase, allowing a researcher to correlate the data. One such way could be comparing to what degree is the agenda-setting process for the Civil War in a Southern community similar to a Northern community. A researcher can also study how the Civil War pushed all other issues off the Northern and Southern agenda for a period of several months, even years. Although the dynamic of "issue competition" has rarely been addressed, issues do compete for salience with other issues.

In addition, it would be a benefit for this study to measure and compare the media agendas over time. Comparing the Civil War newspaper coverage to other wars from other periods can be important in determining the attention level a war receives in newspapers. Finally, this thesis offered only one research question. A future study might address other research questions such as: Did newspapers keep Civil War issues on their press agenda for all four years of the war and is there a correlation between the Northern and Southern presses agenda-setting process.

REFERENCES

Andrews, J. Cutler. *The South Reports the Civil War*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970.

Battle of Palmito Ranch From Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle of Palmito Ranch (accessed November 13, 2006).

Benton, Marc and P. Jean Frazier. "The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media at Three Levels of Information," *Communication Research* 3, no. 3 (March 1976): 261-274.

Berelson, Bernard. *Content Analysis in Communication Research*. New York: Free Press, 1952.

Budge, Ian and Dennis J. Farlie. *Explaining and Predicting Elections: Issue-Effects and Party Strategies in 23 Democracies*. London: Allen & Unvwin, 1983.

Bulla, David W. *Lincoln's Censor*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008.

Clark, Thomas D. *The Southern Country Editor*. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1948.

Clark, Thomas D. *The Rural Press and the New South.* Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1954.

Cohen, Bernard. *The Press and Foreign Policy.* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963.

County Maps. http://www.countymapsoftexas.com/region_south.shtml (accessed September 14, 2009).

Douglas, George H. *The Golden Age of the Newspaper.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999.

Druckman, James N. "Priming the Vote," *Political Psychology* 25 (2004) : 577-94.

Druckman, James N., Lawrence R. Jacobs, and Eric Ostermeier. "Candidate Strategies to Prime Issues and Image," *Journal of Politics* 66 (2004) : 1180-1202.

Edward, Caudill. *An Agenda-Setting Perspective on Historical Public Opinion*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates, 1997.

Emery, Edwin and Michael Emery. *The Press and America.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, Inc., 1978.

Flemming, Roy B., and Glen S. Krutz. "Repeat Litigators and Agenda-Setting on the Supreme Court of Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (December 2002) : 811-833.

Greenberg, Bradley S. and others, eds. *Mexican Americans and the Mass Media.* Norwood, New Jersey: ABLEX Publishing Corporation, 1980.

Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y. Shapiro. "Issues, Candidate Image, and Priming," *American Political Science Review* 88 (1994) : 527-40.

Hammond, Thomas H. and Brian D. Humes. *The Spatial Model and Elections: In Information, Participation, and Choice*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993.

Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html (accessed accessed November 16, 2007).

Huck, O. Quiring and HB Brosius. "Perceptual Phenomena in the Agenda-Setting Process," *Public Opinion* 21, no. 2 (June 1, 2009) : 139-164.

Krippendorff, Klaus. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980.

Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion*. New York: Macmillan, 1992.

Marten, James. *Civil War America: Voices from the Home Front*. Santa Barbara, CA.: ABC-CLIO Inc., 2006.

McCombs, Maxwell. *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion*. Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing Inc.

McCombs, Maxwell and Donald L. Shaw. "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Quarterly* 36 (November 1972) : 176-187.

McLead, Jack B., Lee B. Becker, and James E. Byrnes. "Another Look at the Agenda-Setting Function of the Press," *Communication Research* 1, no. 2 (March 1974) : 131-166.

McNelly, John T. and Fausto Izcaray. "International News Exposure and Images of Nations," *Journalism Quarterly* 63, (1986) : 546-553. McPherson, James. *Battle Cry of Freedom: the Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Mott, Frank L. *American Journalism*. New York, New York: The MacMillian Company, 1962.

Overholser, Geneva and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. *The Press*. Okford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Petrocik, John R. "Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study." *American Journal of Political Science* 40 (1996) : 825-50.

Reynolds, Donald E. *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis.* Nashville, TN.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966.

Rushing, S. Kittrell and Roy Morris Jr. *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalism* West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008.

Sachsman, David B., S. Kittrell Rushing, and Roy Morris Jr. *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalism.* West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008.

Salwen, M.B. "Public Salience of Foreign Nations," *Journalism Quarterly* 69 : 623-632.

Shaw, Donald L. "Some Notes on Methodology: Change and Continuity in American Press News, 1820-1860," Journalism History 8, no. 2 (Summer 1981) : 38-50.

Texas Civil War Facts. http://www.mycivilwar.com/facts/state-tx.htm (accessed August 14, 2009).

Thompson, Jerry D. *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray*. Austin: Texas State House Press, 1977.

Wanta, Wayne and Yu-Wei Hu. "The Agenda-Setting Effects of International News Coverage: An Examination of Differing News Frames," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 5, no. 3 (1993) : 250-264.

Wimmer, Roger and Joseph R, Dominick. *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*. Denver, Colorado, 2005.

Wooster, Ralph A. *Texas and Texas in the Civil War*. Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 1995.

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

CODING SHEET

Civil War Story: _____   Date: _____   Newspaper Name:_____

Operational Definition Codebook

I.   Items in the newshole:
A. News item/article: a discrete piece of information four lines or longer that typically is indicated by use of a headline, but may not be in the case of briefs, especially in older newspapers like those printed during the Civil War.
B. Briefs: count as separate stories even if under a joint headline if the combined news items are obviously unrelated, i.e., separated by a graphic device such as bold-faced, etc.
C. Feature: non-news item on a specific topic covered in depth and usually with a "human interest" angle
D. Editorial: articles where the writer gathers facts and writes his/her opinions.
E. Limitations: Headlines are not included in measurements since I am counting paragraphs; exclude all ads (display and classified), cartoons, pictures, and maps.

II.   Length: count paragraphs

III.   Coding Civil War items:
1. **Name of region:**
      A. Coastal Region
      B. Border Region
      C. Central Region

2. **Issue date:** Date was noted on front of copied stories.

3. **Story number:** Number of articles in issue linked to Civil War coverage.

4. **Number of paragraphs:** Count and note number of paragraphs.

5. **Jump:** Does the story "jumps" to another page, code yes.

6. **Byline:**
      A. Editor/Publisher
      B. Other : news items supplied from other local South Texas communities
      C. Wire: Confederate Press Association

7. **News focus:**
   Slavery/Abolition: This category includes abolitionist propaganda and reactions, fugitive slave news, the slave trade, slave conspiracies, and the underground-railroad.

Future direction of the country: This section includes territorial governments, the sale and settlement of public lands, disputes of Texas property since its secession, and dispute over what flag represents Texas, commerce (cotton trade, wool, crops), tariffs, banking, agriculture, government finance programs, land and market speculation, manufacturing and industry, taxation, public construction, and government spending.

Abraham Lincoln: This category includes debates by government agencies, governmental employees and operations, the post office, military news, and political spoils.

8. **Local referent:** hometown connection
   A. Yes (regional or closer)
   B. No

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Diana Rosa Ybañez was born August 10, 1972 in McAllen, Texas. She received the Bachelor of Arts in Communication with a concentration in print journalism from The University of Texas-Pan American in 1994 and the Master of Arts from The University of Texas-Pan American in 2010. She resides at 203 Becky Lane, Edinburg, TX 78541.