Editorial Advocacy Frames Explanatory Model

An Analysis of Newspapers withdrawing from Presidential Endorsements

Kenneth Campbell
Associate Professor
University of South Carolina
KCampbell@sc.edu

Ernest Wiggins
Associate Professor
University of South Carolina
ernestlwiggins@gmail.com

Three decades ago, Fedler, Counts, and Stephens noted some editors *"who continue to publish political endorsements say that newspapers have a responsibility to endorse political candidates regardless of the endorsements' effect upon voters"* (Fedler, Counts and Stephens, 1982: 3-4). That was a different time, when many major U. S. cities still had competing daily newspapers and people primarily looked to the press for political news and views. Since then, U.S. newspapers have increasingly withdrawn from making endorsements in presidential races, redefining their responsibility and arguing in part that their endorsements do not matter (Porter, 2004; Folkenflik, 2012; Schreckinger, 2012; McGoun, 2012a; McGoun, 2012b). Nine of the top-100 circulation newspapers in the U. S. did not endorse in the 2008 presidential election, including five that did not endorse as a matter of policy for the first time. In 2012, the number jumped to 22, including an increase to 11 newspapers that did not endorse as a matter of policy. Recent defections include the *Orange County Register, Chicago Sun-Times, Atlanta Journal-Constitution,* and *St. Paul Pioneer Press* (Peters and Woolley, 2012). At least two newspaper chains with dailies, Landmark Communications and Halifax Media Group, recently prohibited their newspapers from making endorsements in political races (Fernandez, 2007; March, 2012). In

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what has been one of the most consistent public forums for the exchange of ideas, which is considered a foundation of democracy, key voices are choosing silence. And these may be voices that are among the most reasoned and well informed, despite attacks on their credibility (Pew, 2008; Morales, 2011; Mendes, 2013). In this article, we use framing theory to explain editorialists' decisions to no longer endorse in presidential races. We chose framing theory because it goes beyond mere chronicling of arguments (Boeyink , 1992/1993) and captures the meaning and reasoning in the arguments. Thus, we contribute to the lagging research on frames in opinion journalism (Hoffman and Slater, 2007; Golan, 2010); to date, most attention addressing frames in journalistic content has focused on news stories (de Vreese, 2012; Matthes, 2009; Borah, 2011).

Background: Editorials and Influence

Through the years, editorial pages have provided a forum for public discourse, particularly political discourse, even if the variety of ideas in this virtual marketplace of editorials, opinion columns and letters to the editor has been limited (Hallock, 2007). A key part of the discourse is editorials, defined as "*unsigned columns that represent the official opinions of the newspaper's editorial board and that appear on the editorial page*" (Hallock, 2007: 12). Editorials that support specific political candidates are considered endorsements and carry the weight and prestige of the newspaper behind them. Interestingly, newspaper editorial endorsements in political campaigns are a remnant of the partisan journalism of the 18th and 19th centuries, when newspapers were aligned with and often financially supported by a political party (Kaplan, 2002). Even as partisan discourse, the endorsements provided perspective as they stirred debate and helped to give the newspaper an identity. When newspapers became more professionalized and began to practice objective journalism on the news pages—at least in theory—their editorial pages continued to recommend political candidates for office (Hallock, 2007; Baldasty, 1992). Generally, the newspapers expressed a special obligation to convene and participate in the public forum because of the tradition of making political endorsements and protection of First Amendment freedoms (Cooper, 1986; Elder, 1986; Nethaway, 1996). While a few newspapers have never endorsed political candidates as a matter of policy, or did so only for a short time, *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal,* respectively, a trend began in the 1980s of newspapers withdrawing from making endorsements, especially in presidential elections. The Michael Dukakis-George Bush presidential matchup in 1988 put this matter front and center when about half of the nation's newspapers perceived both candidates as weak and refused to endorse either one in what was described as *"the Great Editorial Wimp-Out of '88"* (Cleghorn, 1992). Some newspapers, which did endorse presidential candidates that year, harshly criticized their colleagues. *"An editorial board is obliged to make difficult choices. In fact, it is in such circumstances that an endorsement is most needed,"* the *Daily News* of Los Angeles wrote. It continued, *"Editorial boards that refuse to endorse in the presidential election this year are worming out of a decision all voters should feel obligated to make."* The editorial quoted *New-York Times* publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger saying, *"It's the responsibility of a paper not to cop out on the biggest issue of all"* ("Editorial – Why We Endorse," 1988).

A considerable body of literature has found that newspaper endorsements can be influential in presidential contests, worth 1 to 5 percentage points in the vote (Gregg, 1965; Hollander, 1979; Rystrom, 1986; Ansolabehere, Lessem and Snyder, 2006). For example, undecided voters were influenced by editorial endorsements in the 1968 presidential election, and both Independents and Democrats voted differently in the 1972 election depending on which candidate was endorsed by the newspaper they read most often (Robinson, 1974). Newspaper endorsements can *"influence a small but significant portion of the presidential votes" in "highly ideological contests"* (Erikson, 1976: 220). In the 1980 presidential election, all three presidential candidates received a larger percentage of the votes cast in cities with daily newspapers that endorsed their candidacies (Fedler, Counts and Stephens, 1982). More recently, a 2008 Pew Research Center for People and the Press survey found that 14 percent of respondents said they could be affected by a newspaper's endorsement, and Jamieson found that 11 percent of respondents in her study said newspaper endorsements influenced their vote (Jamieson, 2000). Although these and other studies suggest small influence (McCombs, 1967; Hurd and Singletary, 1984; Dautrich and Hartley, 1999), it translates to possibly millions of votes or enough votes to sway a close election. The best indication of the possible influence of newspaper editorial endorsements in presidential elections might be the continuing desire of the candidates to secure them (Klein, 2004) and their use in campaign advertisements and speeches (Jamieson, 2000).

Admittedly, the scholarly research can be—and sometimes is—read as evidence of newspaper endorsements having little or no impact in presidential elections. This reading prevails in some of the professional and industry discourse found in articles and blog discussions (Thompson, 2004/2011; Mitch-

ell, 2012; Folkenflik, 2012; Schreckinger, 2012; McGoun, 2012a; McGoun, 2012b). Because this discourse is consistent with that of the editorialists—in some cases, it is written by them or they are the sources of quotations—it will be folded into the analysis later. In doing so, we will consider editorialists' viewpoints for and against newspapers making political endorsements. Framing theory will be applied in order to understand how editorialists see their role.

Journalistic Frames and Advocacy Frames

Framing is presenting information in a certain way, which promotes making sense of it in that way. *"Mass media actively set the frames of reference that readers or viewers use to interpret and discuss public events"* (Scheufele, 1999: 105). Newspaper stories and editorials always have a frame, whether intended or not. Entman and Kuypers offer separate definitions of framing that describe the work of editorialists. According to Entman's popular definition: *"To frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described"* (Entman, 1993: 52). Similar guidance from Kuypers defines framing as *"the process whereby communicators act to construct a particular point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be viewed in a particular manner, with some facts made more noticeable than others"* (Kuypers, 2002: 7). Framing literature has primarily addressed selection and organization of information that leads to journalistic or news frames adhering to the journalistic norms of balance and objectivity (de Vreese, 2012; Iyengar, 1991; Price, Tewksbury and Powers, 1997; Rhee, 1997), which is also referred to as *"two-sidedness"* (Aday, 2006: 770) or *"issue dualism"* (Lee, McLeod and Shah, 2008: 696). The balance sought through journalistic frames can affect how one sees reality and forms political opinions (Entman, Matthes, and Pellicano, 2009; de Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Semetko, 2011; Matthes, 2009; Matthes, 2012).

Editorialists traditionally have not limited their work to the use of journalistic frames. Rather than balance multiple sides, editorials take a side in an effort to solve problems (Richardson and Lancendorfer, 2004). In effect, they use what social movement and political communication literature refers to as advocacy frames, which *"are defined as being largely one-sided, often solution-oriented, and/or reflecting consensus"* (Aday, 2006: 769; de Vreese, 2012). Typically, advocacy frames are thought of as *"frames that are brought forward by different proponents in a political debate"* (de Vreese, 2012: 367) or frames used by advocacy groups to promote their side or their cause. This promotional characteristic of advocacy frames may make it more appropriate to understand editorial endorsements as advocacy frames rather than journalistic frames. Thus, this study adheres to the advice of de Vreese, who suggests that "[t]he *interplay between advocacy frames and journalistic frames is a crucial area for future framing research to consider so as to get a broader and more inclusive understanding of the role played by advocates and journalists in the frame-building process"* (2012: 369). While de Vreese was referring to advocacy frames that journalists select from sources for inclusion in news stories, conceptualizing newspaper editorials and endorsements as advocacy frames is worthy of consideration. Editorialists are advocates with no intermediary to filter their views. Frames can be embedded, stated outright, or both (Gitlin, 1980; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). While the expectation would be that advocacy frames would be stated outright, editorials could also contain embedded frames, which are not specifically stated in the editorial. Frames may also be identified as overarching, which means they were dominant in a single news article or editorial, or in a set of articles or editorials (Campbell and Wiggins, 2014).

It is also important to note that a frame is different from an argument. While a frame is the selection and arrangement of the information that creates a way of thinking or is a way of thinking, an argument is a statement of a position. An argument is "*a verbalization of a specific point of view in which a claim is expressed with a certain evaluation*"; the "*main patterns of arguments*" may constitute a frame (Schemer, Wirth and Matthes, 2011: 339). This study is interested in identifying frames used by editorial writers, which are reflected in their arguments about the appropriateness of making an endorsement in a political or presidential election. We address the research question: What explanatory frames are present when editorial writers address their newspaper's reasons for endorsing or not endorsing presidential candidates?

Methodology

To identify the frames, we conducted a qualitative analysis of arguments in editorials and relevant columns by editorialists from each top-100 circulation newspaper that announced during the 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns that as a matter of policy it does not or would no longer endorse presidential candidates. The newspapers were identified through the American Presidency Project (Peters and Woolley, 2012), which compiled and provided

links to the editorials and columns. This produced 14 editorials and columns in which editorialists addressed the appropriateness of endorsements and decided against them in presidential elections. Additional editorials and columns explaining the appropriateness of political endorsements, all published since the year 2000, were found using the keywords *"newspaper"* and *"endorse"* and *"will no longer endorse"* in NewsBank and Google. Thirteen additional editorials and opinion columns were found through this process; these included justifications for and against political and presidential endorsements, and included newspapers in the top-100 circulation category and under. Newspapers that did not endorse because their editorial board was undecided were not included in the study unless they were identified in the additional search as publishing an opinion column addressing the issue of endorsing.

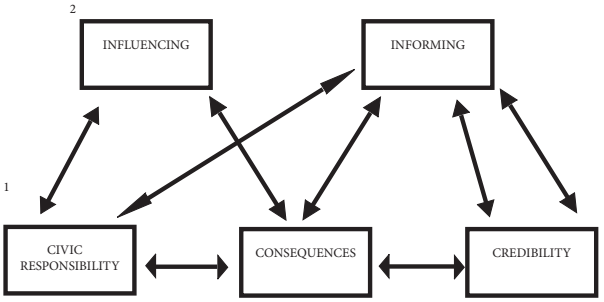
Guided by Campbell and Wiggins' (2014) study of frames in opinion columns, frames were operationalized by first identifying the main topic in each editorial or column. That topic was whether the editorialist would endorse a presidential candidate. Second, themes were identified as explanations in the editorials' arguments that determined what the editorials were saying about the topic. We examined for arguments we previously identified in the industry literature as well as others that might arise. Finally, we determined frames by observing thematic patterns and context (Campbell and Wiggins, 2014).

Professional Values, Professional Practices and Frames

Illustration 1: *professional values*

Illustration No. 1 shows the first stage of the model, which identifies three professional values found in the editorialists' arguments as a basis for determining whether to make political and presidential endorsements. The professional values are: (1) civic responsibility, which is defined as newspapers providing and monitoring a public forum for civic engagement; (2) consequence, which is distinguished from civic responsibility, is defined as newspapers going beyond merely being a public forum but also participating in the forum with their own ideas and recommendations that have consequence; and (3) credibility, which is defined as newspapers projecting integrity and trustworthiness to maintain public confidence in their information and opinions. The arrows in this first stage of the model indicate interaction among the professional values, which we attribute to the nature of the work of editorialists. Because of the interaction, discerning distinct frames proves to be challenging. We do not see this challenge as problematic because each frame is an aggregate of ideas expressed as a pattern across editorials and columns.

Illustration 2: *professional values and professional practices*



1 Professional values ; 2 Professional practices

The second stage of the model, which is shown in Illustration No. 2, depicts how professional values are manifest in two themes—informing and influencing. We categorize the themes as professional practices because they describe the work of the editorialists. The professional practice of informing denotes newspapers providing information and analysis whereas influencing refers to newspapers promoting principles, positions or candidates. The two professional practices—informing and influencing—are consistent with concepts within journalistic and advocacy frames, respectively. Each professional value is manifest in each of the two professional practices. However, as presented in the final stage of the model shown in illustration No. 3, only the professional practice of informing is evident in the journalistic frame while both informing and influencing are evident in the advocacy frame. We present the three professional values separately in the discussion that follows, with each discussed in the context of the arguments addressing the two professional practices. We then discuss the appropriateness of the two frames for editorials and political endorsements. In effect, we offer a deconstruction of the journalistic and advocacy frames, which shows how journalists and editorialists have different obligations to political discourse.

Professional Value of Civic Responsibility

The professional value of civic responsibility is largely present in the professional practice of informing. The editorialists posit that newspapers have

a responsibility to provide what David D. Haynes, editorial page editor of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* in 2012, called *"a robust forum for all kinds of ideas."* Haynes said a reason his newspaper was dropping endorsements was to *"reserve most of our space for readers to interact and for commentary from columnists and experts from across the political spectrum,"* which is the notion of the newspaper as a forum. The concept of the robust forum, also called the marketplace of ideas, is considered a basis for freedom of the press in the U.S. and is generally attributed to Enlightenment philosopher John Stuart Mill (1859), who argued in his book *On Liberty* that truth will emerge from an open discussion of ideas. Consistent with the professional value of civic responsibility, *The Chicago Sun-Times, s*tated in 2012 as it was disbanding presidential endorsements, *"We pride ourselves in offering a smart editorial page that is deeply engaged in vital civic issues"* (Barron and McNamee, 2012). Similarly, *The Dayton Daily News* cited its *Ideas & Voices* pages as a forum to give readers *"a balance of views, with columnists on the right and on the left"* (Wallace, 2012). For editorialists who were choosing to withdraw from presidential endorsements, the forum—at least in those races—was for the ideas of others, not the newspaper's. Interestingly, some newspapers that withdrew from making presidential endorsements indicated that not endorsing would, as Haynes (2012) said, free *"space for readers to interact and for commentary from columnists and experts from across the political spectrum."* The professional value of civic responsibility is present in the professional practice of influencing through editorialists monitoring the forum. *The Press Democrat* in Santa Rosa, California, assured readers in 2012 that the newspaper would *"continue to offer election-related commentary on our opinion pages and continue, through editorials, columns and blog items, to offer ongoing analysis of political campaigns and candidates, although no individual candidate will end up with our full support or endorsement."* The newspaper was one of 34 owned by the Halifax Group that was prohibited by ownership from making endorsements (Gullixson, 2012).

Professional Value of Consequence

The role of newspapers in the public forum as endorsers of political candidates, especially for the presidency, began to gain attention in the 1980s as a split emerged among editorialists. Three schools of thought on presidential endorsements surfaced among the editorialists. First, the No Endorsement School consisted of editorialists who believed newspapers should provide information and impartial analysis as well as editorialists who believed the newspaper's viewpoints on candidates could be provided, but endorsements should not be made. Second, the Partial Endorsement School of editorialists believed newspapers should endorse in local and/or statewide elections, but not in presidential elections. Third, the Endorsement School of editorialists believed newspapers should endorse in political races, and especially the presidential election. All three schools believed newspapers' participation in the forum should have a consequence, specifically that it should impact the public's thinking and decision-making.

The No Endorsement School reflected the professional practice of informing, as represented by the decision of *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* to withdraw from political endorsements at all levels in 2009. The newspaper noted, *"The (editorial) board will provide readers with clear, concise information about candidates' positions and records"* but no endorsements ("To Our Readers: AJC Takes New Approach on Election," 2009). The decision, according to the newspaper, was a response to the sentiments of the readers who wanted the newspaper out of the endorsing business. Generally, the professional practice of informing reflected that the consequence No Endorsement School editorialists desired was empowering readers to think through the newspaper's information and analysis to make informed decisions. *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution's* Editorial Board stated it this way: *"We see our role now as providing you with information to help you make decisions—and not trying to make them for you"* ("To Our Readers: AJC Takes New Approach on Election," 2009). The professional practice of influencing was reflected in the view of some No Endorsement editorialists, like Haynes with the *Journal Sentinel,* who saw a place for the newspaper's views in the forum as a part of analysis, but short of political endorsements. Haynes (2012) wrote: *"We think the better approach is to thoughtfully analyze individual issues, clearly explain our views and then, not endorse but provide other perspectives in the forum."* Similarly, the Oregonian in 2012 found it best *"in this presidential contest to comment on the debate, to assess each side's arguments for putting its principles into practice,"* but not endorse ("*The Oregonian* Editorial Board will not make presidential endorsement," 2012).

A variety of reasons were given for opposing endorsements in presidential elections. Some editorialists saw presidential endorsements as a relic of the past when newspapers had special access to candidates, often including an interview typically taking place in newspaper offices. But because of today's 24-hour news cycle, presidential candidates' ability to appeal directly to the public through social media, and the public's greater access to informa-

tion via the Internet, some editorialists doubted the usefulness of endorsements. Mark Kimble, explaining the *Tucson Citizen's* decision not to endorse in 2008, wrote: *"Any endorsement we write wouldn't be any more insightful or tell you anything you didn't already know"* (Kimble , 2008), and the editors of the *Virginian-Pilot* stated in 2008 that as a local newspaper *"we ordinarily don't know the presidential candidates better than another informed voter"* ("One Last Thing," 2008). Debbie Hiott, editor of the *American-Statesman* in Austin, Texas, contended in 2012: *"we have no special insight into the presidential election that readers can't glean from their own attention to the news"* (Hiott, 2012). In 2012, *The News-Sentinel* in Knoxville, Tennessee, offered to reverse its new no-endorsement policy if presidential candidates would sit down and talk with the editorialists (McElroy, 2012). *The Chicago Sun-Times* captured the tenor of the No Endorsement School when it confessed during the 2012 presidential primaries, *"We have come to doubt the value of candidate endorsements by this newspaper or any newspaper, especially in a day when a multitude of information sources allow even a casual voter to be better informed than ever before"* (Barron and McNamee, 2012).

The Partial Endorsement School of editorialists supports newspaper endorsements for state and local political contests, but not for presidential races. Newspapers are in a unique position because of their proximity and access to the candidates, which gives them an obligation to participate in the public forum through informing and influencing, the editorialists argued. Expressing the sentiment of the editorialists, *The Wichita Falls Times Record News* in Texas stated in 2012, *"A local newspaper, we feel, is still a vital component to the political dialogue, and our position in the community allows contact with candidates who express their zeal for public service and their ideas for successful government."* ("Our Opinion: Your vote is your choice," 2012). *The Indianapolis Star* noted, *"In putting forward our recommendations on whom we view to be the best candidates for local, state and federal offices,* The Star *is very much in the mainstream of American journalism. But endorsements are about far more than tradition. Endorsements fit with our daily mission of community leadership"* ("We'll keep it local on candidate endorsements," 2012; see also, Hiott, 2012). Peck (2012), with the *Commercial Appeal* noted, *"Our expertise and knowledge of local and regional issues can be helpful to citizens and community leaders as they think through local issues,"* and similarly *The Stuart News* in Florida stated, *"Our local knowledge is why we put our efforts into local races"* ("Newspapers play critical role in issuing endorsements," 2012).

The Endorsement School, which supports newspapers making endorsements in presidential elections, reflects the professional values of informing and influencing in the largest political arena in the U.S. The views of editorialists in this school are represented in the assertion of Nick Pappas, who explained in 2008 as editorial page editor at *The Telegraph* in Nashua, New Hampshire: *"… (W)e endorse candidates for the same reason we publish editorials every day for the rest of the year: to participate in the civic life of the community"* (Pappas , 2008). Vanessa Gallman, editorial page editor of *The Herald-Leader*, was more vociferous: "The Herald-Leader*, as a journalistic endeavor and a civic force in this community and state, also has a right to its say."* According to these editorialists, a good citizen takes a position for the good of the community; a newspaper should be a good citizen. They believe a newspaper should do more than expression an opinion in the public forum, they should offer guidance and leadership. They should give advice and make recommendations that will have consequence. Gallman questioned, *"…why would a paper that gives lots of space to readers to extol or denounce candidates choose to be quiet about its own views?"* These editorialists pointed to the notion that the journalistic media are privileged by the Constitution and therefore, as stated by Stephen J. Winters, opinion editor of the *Connecticut Post* in 2006, need to, among other things, *"fulfill our obligation and responsibility as a constitutionally-protected media enterprise to not only be a part of our communities but to also help improve those communities"* (Winters, 2008). John Montgomery of *The Hutchinson News* in Kansas in 2008 put it this way, *"Our democracy calls us all to participate…."* (Montgomery, 2008).

The editorialists in all of the schools of thought sought to distinguish between what was sometimes a thin line between participating in the public forum to stimulate thinking, which was their purpose, rather than to direct thinking, which some say was the purpose of editorials in the past. Editorialists for newspapers including *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The Chicago Sun-Times,* and *The Rocky Mountain News* noted that some newspapers, including theirs, were founded as political organs but evolved into responsible leading citizens. John Barron and Tom McNamee, publisher and editorial page editor of the *Chicago Sun-Times,* respectively, stated in a signed editorial as their paper withdrew from presidential endorsements in 2012, *"… our goal … is to inform and influence your thinking, not tell you what to do"* (Barron and McNamee, 2012). *The Charlotte Observer* in an editorial in October 2002 declared: *"We don't tell readers how to vote. We tell them what we think"* (Observer Staff, 2002). *The Charlotte Observer* reprinted the editorial, or parts of it, in

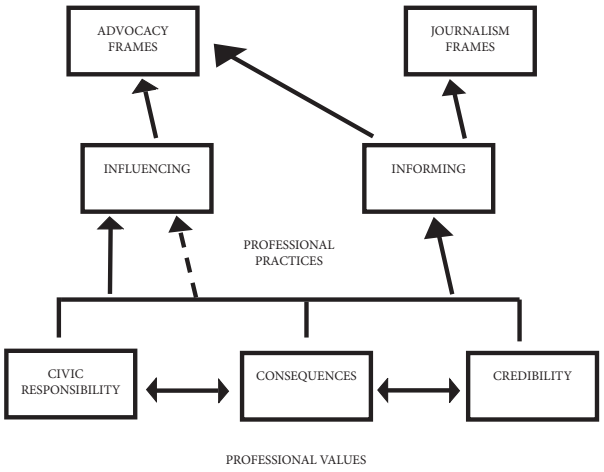
subsequent years (Observer Staff, 2003; 2005; Williams, 2005). Similarly, *The Telegraph* in Nashua, New Hampshire, stated in 2008 that *"the purpose of an editorial is not—we repeat, not—to tell readers what to do or how to think—especially when it comes time to step behind the curtains in the voting booth. That's your decision; not ours"* (Pappas, 2008).

Professional Value of Credibility

The public's trust in newspapers, which has dropped to an all-time low during the past couple of decades (Pew, 2008; Morales, 2011; Mendes, 2013), emerged as an essential concern of editorialists and is reflected in the discussion of the professional value of credibility. It is understandable that editorialists would not want to do anything that might erode their newspaper's credibility, particularly in news coverage where objectivity and fairness are the standards. Editorialists did not express concern for the professional value of credibility in the practice of informing the public. However, there was considerable uncertainty expressed in the discussion of credibility as it was manifest in the professional practice of influencing. Editorialists opposing political endorsements believed taking political positions threatens journalistic credibility because stances newspapers take in editorials are too often perceived to show up as a slant in news stories where objectivity is expected. The Milwaukee *Journal Sentinel's* Haynes stated in 2012, *"In their (readers') minds, the endorsements color everything else we do, no matter how often we criticize the folks we recommend. To these readers, our mission is suspect; and some of them confuse our political news coverage with our editorial recommendations"* (Haynes, 2012). Newspapers that attempt to offer a balanced editorial page also expressed concerns about the perception of bias, which *The Sentinel* in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, referred to in 2008 as *"misunderstandings (that) undermine our ability to present convincing arguments"* ("Leaving the choices up to you," 2008).

Concerns about promoting bias combined with questions about the actual influence of endorsements (Temple, 2008) as reflected in the discussion of the professional value of consequence, raised further questions about the value of endorsements for a number of editorialists. In the 2012 presidential election, Hiott with the *American-Statesman "questioned the benefit of making a presidential endorsement for the newspaper as we work to give readers balanced views"* when the newspaper wasn't sure the *"valuable insight"* provided in a political endorsement was worth the potential loss of credibility (Hiott, 2012). The Memphis *Commercial Appeal* in 2012 invited a guest writer for each candidate to write a column rather than let the editorial board make an endorsement with *"hopes to reduce any concerns that the newspaper's endorsement of one candidate or another will somehow color our news coverage"* (Peck, 2012). Additionally, beyond reader perceptions and misunderstanding is the possibility that newspapers might indeed lean more toward candidates they endorse without realizing it. The *Appeal-Democrat* of Marysville, California, noted in 2008, *"When a newspaper endorses, it can become invested in that candidate and his or her success. Does an endorsement make the institution less critical of the candidate when he or she wins, even if it's only to downplay a bad endorsement? It might"* ("Our View: Election Day: It's your call," 2008).

Illustration 3: *editorial advocacy explanatory frames model*



Conclusion

The analysis of the editorials and columns suggests an industry in transition when it comes to the presence and role of newspaper political endorsements, especially at the presidential level. The changes that have brought about the trend to not endorse and the contrasting nature of the journalistic practices identified might suggest value in political endorsements that perhaps is being overlooked by the withdrawing newspapers. First, the no-endorsement trend began to pick up momentum at the same time the public (also called civic) journalism movement was questioning some of the traditions of journalism such as objectivity in news stories and journalists' detachment in an effort to avoid bias (Merritt, 1998; Glasser, 1999) Newspapers were reassessing how to maintain their relevance and better connect with the communities they cover. Part of the solution was to give readers—the community—a greater say in newspaper content, including content of editorial pages. Second, about the same time, the concept of market-driven journalism had taken hold, with

newspapers increasingly falling into the hands of publicly held corporations that appeared to be more concerned with the bottom line than the quality of journalism (Bennett and Entman, 2001; McManus, 1994). Third, the growth of revolutionary new technology changed the nature of journalism, making news, information, and opinions easily and readily accessible from an abundance of outlets (Cornfield, 2005; Fallows, 2007; Horrigan, 2006; Kohut, 2008; Smith and Rainie, 2008; Smith and Duggan, 2012). And fourth, a downturn in the economy along with the increased competition created by the new technology pushed newspapers to try alternative means to retain their dwindling audience (Rosenstiel and Kovach, 2001). Given these daunting challenges, it is understandable that abandoning presidential endorsements, which in today's divided political climate in the U.S. may alienate as many readers as it pleases, is seen as a solution to holding on to both groups. Also, these reasons may be the justification for not abandoning the practice of newspaper presidential endorsements.

The application of framing theory to the editorials and columns shows that the editorialists are guided by professional values of civic responsibility, consequence and credibility, which are reflected in professional practices of informing and influencing. In their decision to inform or influence, editorialists are choosing between the journalistic frame and the advocacy frame as they decide whether or not to endorse. This distinction is particularly important for those newspapers that have decided not to abandon editorializing on the presidential elections altogether, but to only offer analysis. The analysis presented here and represented in illustration No. 3 suggests editorialists should consider the political and presidential endorsement question in the context of the Editorial Advocacy Frames Explanatory Model, which illustrates how the work of editorialists differs, or should differ, from that of reporters. News pages seek to inform; editorial pages seek to influence. Thus, news pages use journalistic frames to inform; editorial pages use advocacy frames to inform and influence. Endorsements are advocacy frames. It is not a matter of newspapers taking positions, or making arguments; it is a matter of newspapers making sense of issues and political races and promoting what they think is best. Framing research shows that all journalistic content has frames, whether news stories or editorials, whether objective or not. To avoid making an endorsement is not to avoid communicating a frame. Reese Cleghorn, a former newspaper editorial page editor and at the time dean of the College of Journalism of the University of Maryland, wrote in the early stages of the no-endorsement debate that *"the better papers' endorsements usually have offered some cogent reasoning. That's what is most important. An endorsement simply finishes the thought"* (Cleghorn, 1992).

The greater abundance of and easier access to information and opinions, argued by some editorialists as a reason to stop presidential endorsements, may be a prime reason not to stop it. *"(I)t is impractical to imagine people being their own editor and sorting through reams of unfiltered information"* available nowadays, according to Tom Rosenstiel and Bill Kovach (2001), in their well-received book, *The Elements of News.* Editorial writers are substantively different from the blogger who might be here today and gone tomorrow, or whose cause may be parochial or self-serving. *"We can use the endorsement process to position ourselves in terms of credibility, because anybody can say anything, frankly, on the Internet and…on television and talk radio,"* stated Lynell Burkett, editorial page editor at the *San Antonio Express-News* and president of the National Conference of Editorial Writers. *"If we present ourselves as the source of opinion with no axe to grind, as those who spend our time researching and writing about issues, it seems we can use this as a strategic advantage"* (Makker , 2012). Additionally, newspaper editorial writers generally are well-educated and well-prepared for the practice of journalism and even in advocacy mode they abide by journalistic rules of fairness and accuracy. Arguably, a number of the newspapers that do not endorse in presidential races concede some value to endorsements by supporting candidates in state and local political races and taking sides on political and social issues. They do not adequately explain how this is consistent with not endorsing in presidential races, other than to say newspapers no longer have access to the candidates and they do not have access to information beyond what the general public can get. John T. Woolley, co-director of the American Presidency Project, which compiles newspaper presidential endorsements, has suggested*: "We need more, not fewer, examples of calm reasoned argument. A good editorial may contribute to more informed and thoughtful voting even if it does not change a single mind. That's beneficial."* He added, *"We get useful information from the way newspaper editors, as opinion leaders, evaluate a common set of circumstances—even in the age of Twitter and Google"* (Woolley, 2012). Newspaper editorialists would be wise to consider their frame when deciding to endorse political and presidential candidates.

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Abstract | Résumé | Resumo

En. In the United States, newspapers are increasingly withdrawing from endorsing a candidate in presidential elections. Our qualitative analysis of frames used by U.S. newspaper editorialists to justify their newspaper's decision finds editorialists are guided by three professional values expressed through two professional practices. The professional values are civic responsibility, consequence, and credibility; the two professional practices are informing and influencing. We propose a guide, the "*Editorial Advocacy Frames Explanatory Model*," that deconstructs their decisions and distinguishes the roles of journalists and editorialists in political discourse, particularly in presidential endorsements. The model illustrates how the work of editorialists differs, or should differ, from that of reporters. News pages seek to inform; editorial pages seek to influence. Thus, news pages use journalistic frames to inform; editorial pages use advocacy frames to inform and influence. Endorsements are advocacy frames. It is not a matter of newspapers taking positions, or making arguments; it is a matter of newspapers making sense of issues and political races and promoting what they think is best. Framing research shows that all journalistic content has frames, whether news stories or editorials, whether objective or not. To avoid making an endorsement is not to avoid communicating a frame that can influence voters. The greater abundance of and easier access to information and opinions, argued by some editorialists as a reason for no longer making presidential endorsements, may actually be a prime reason not to stop it. The no-endorsement trend seems to have begun largely when American newspapers sought to stay afloat and relevant in response to declining circulation brought on by advances in technology that created more ways to get news. It is understandable that abandoning presidential endorsements, which in today's divided political climate in the U.S. may alienate as many readers as it pleases, is seen as a solution to holding on to both groups, but in doing so the model shows newspapers also abandon a major responsibility.

Keywords: frames, editorials, endorsements, newspapers, journalism.

Fr. Aux États-Unis, les journaux s'abstiennent de plus en plus de soutenir un candidat aux élections présidentielles. Notre analyse qualitative des cadres utilisés par les éditorialistes américains pour justifier les décisions de leurs journaux montre que les choix des éditorialistes reposent sur trois valeurs professionnelles : la responsabilité civique, la conséquence et la crédibilité, s'exprimant à travers deux pratiques : l'information et l'influence. Le « *Modèle explicatif des cadres du plaidoyer éditorial* » que nous proposons sert de guide pour déconstruire les décisions et distinguer les rôles des journalistes et des éditorialistes dans le discours politique, en particulier dans les soutiens présidentiels. Le modèle illustre comment le travail des éditorialistes diffère, ou devrait différer, de celui des journalistes. Les pages d'information cherchent à informer ; les pages éditoriales cherchent à influencer. Ainsi, les pages d'information utilisent des cadres journalistiques pour informer ; les pages éditoriales utilisent des cadres de plaidoyer pour informer et influencer. Les soutiens présidentiels sont des cadrages de plaidoyer. Il ne s'agit pas pour les journaux de prendre position ou d'argumenter mais bien de donner du sens aux problèmes et aux campagnes politiques et de promouvoir ce qu'ils pensent être le plus pertinent. Les recherches sur le cadrage médiatique montrent que tout contenu journalistique contient des cadres, qu'il s'agisse de reportages ou d'éditoriaux, objectifs ou non. S'abstenir de montrer son soutien n'est pas s'abstenir de communiquer un cadre qui peut influencer les électeurs. La grande abondance et la facilité d'accès à l'information et aux opinions, qui selon certains éditorialistes font disparaitre la nécessité de soutenir explicitement un candidat, pourraient au contraire constituer une bonne raison de continuer. La tendance au non-soutien semble avoir débuté en grande partie lorsque les journaux américains ont cherché à rester à flot et pertinents en réponse à la baisse de la circulation provoquée par les progrès technologiques qui ont créé plus de façons d'obtenir des nouvelles. Il est compréhensible que l'abandon de mentions présidentielles, qui dans le climat politique divisé d'aujourd'hui

aux États-Unis peut aliéner beaucoup de lecteurs, soit considéré comme une solution pour retenir les deux groupes mais, ce faisant, le modèle montre que les journaux abandonnent également une responsabilité importante.

Mots-clés : cadres, éditoriaux, soutiens, journaux, journalisme.

Pt. Nos Estados Unidos, os jornais estão cada vez mais retirados para endossar um candidato nas eleições presidenciais. Nossa análise qualitativa de quadros utilizados pelos editorialistas de jornais dos EUA para justificar a decisão dos seus jornais encontra editorialistas que são guiados por três valores profissionais expressos através de duas práticas profissionais. Os valores profissionais são responsabilidade cívica, consequência e credibilidade; as duas práticas profissionais são informar e influenciar. Propomos um guia, o "*modelo explicativo das estruturas de defesa editoriais*", que desconstrói as suas decisões e distingue os papéis dos jornalistas e editorialistas no discurso político, particularmente em endossos presidenciais. O modelo ilustra como o trabalho de editorialistas difere, ou deveria diferir, do de repórteres. As páginas de notícias procuram informar; as páginas editoriais procuram influenciar. Assim, as páginas de notícias usam quadros jornalísticos para informar; as páginas editoriais usam quadros de defesa para informar e influenciar. Endossos são quadros de defesa. Não é uma questão de jornais tomando posições para fazer argumentos; é uma questão de jornais fazendo sentido de questões e disputas políticas e promovendo o que eles acham que é melhor. Pesquisas de enquadramento mostram que todo o conteúdo jornalístico tem quadros, sejam notícias ou editoriais, sejam objetivos ou não. Evitar fazer um endosso não é evitar comunicar um quadro que pode influenciar os eleitores. A maior abundância e facilidade de acessos a informações e opiniões, defendido por alguns editorialistas como uma razão para não fazer endossos presidenciais, pode realmente ser a principal razão para não parar. A tendência ao não-endosso parece ter começado, em grande parte, quando os jornais americanos procuraram se manter à tona e relevante em resposta à queda de circulação provocada por avanços na tecnologia que criou mais maneiras de obter notícias. É compreensível que abandonar endossos presidenciais, que, no clima político dividido de hoje nos EUA pode alienar muitos leitores, é visto como uma solução para manter os dois grupos, mas, ao fazer isso, o modelo mostra que jornais também abandonam uma grande responsabilidade.

Palavras-chave: frames, editoriais, endossos, jornais, jornalismo.