Chapter Five. Analysis component

Social media sites have become integrated in the environment of news, journalism and media. It is nearly impossible to address current events without at least being aware of what is said about them online. Media professionals are expected to be comfortable sharing content, interacting with readers, competing with other news outlets and doing so at a faster pace than ever before (Beaujon 2013, Hamby 2013 p. 22,55). Before the Internet became so commonplace, experts and journalists speculated that it would broaden lanes of global communication. As scholars seek understanding about whether those predictions are true, journalists have struggled to integrate these new forms of interaction and understand their implications on traditional journalistic norms such as objectivity.

Reporters and editors have claimed they are objective and independent from outside influence in efforts to gain more credibility with a broad audience (Schudson p. 150). Reporters are trained to seek diverse sources that represent different views and avoid relying on the journalist's personal opinion. The exposure to such sources, however, can be shaped by individual's life experiences and social circles, which are often representative of a certain demographic. The ideal of objectivity has not been abandoned in the age of the Internet but online communities have the potential to introduce bias in other ways (Parmalee, 2013, p. 303). Journalists at traditional news publications, like newspapers, do not operate in a vacuum from online conversation. Anyone who uses social media on a regular basis is exposed to a variety of opinions and

is susceptible to influence by them, a phenomenon that media scholars do not completely understand. In some cases this conversation is neither organic nor fully representative of public opinion, which presents concerns about the influence it may exert over an individual's understanding of an issue. This research seeks to explore the more subtle ways that interaction with social media can affect a journalistic product, in this case news stories about political candidates.

The research question has to do with the impact of activist social media campaigns on the framing of political news reports. The researcher will examine news coverage of a campaign associated with social media activism and compare it with coverage of a campaign with no notable activist social media presence. It is necessary to understand several intersecting theories — framing, agenda setting and theories about behavior on social networking sites — to form the basis of this research. The research will examine this question specifically through the frame of gender, using feminist campaigns on social media and coverage of women candidates as case studies. Because of this, it's also important to understand theories surrounding gendered frames and bias toward female candidates, as well as theories specifically related to feminist groups on social media.

RQ: Does the amount of gendered framing in traditional coverage of women political candidates change when a coordinated social media effort is involved?

Theoretical Framework

    Framing theory.

This study focuses on the frame of news stories, as in how a story is told rather than the story itself. Framing theory began with Goffman (1974), who introduced frames as "a definition of the situation" or problem (p. 3) which individuals generate based on their subjective relationship to an experience (p. 11). In reporting terms, this frame can be the "angle" or "spin" taken in a story, which chooses specific information and perspectives to share with the audience and sometimes excludes others (Scheufele 1999, p. 105). Framing can be used to simplify a story by relying on well-known narratives or "cognitive schemas," such as pitting two sides against one another as "good versus evil" or relying on the "horse race" approach to campaign coverage (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007, p. 11). This theory has been adopted as a subset of agenda setting and media effects research to discuss how journalists' perceptions and choices shape the audience's interpretation of a story. While most framing research examines the effects of these media trends on audiences, similar factors play a role in how journalists create news frames. These factors include daily routines, judgment about the impact of an issue or source, relationships with sources such as spokespeople, economic pressure or lack of resources and other institutional factors such as professional norms (Bennett 1996, p. 373-376). Stakeholder groups and sources influence journalists framing decisions, in turn shaping the messages absorbed through the mainstream media (Scheufele et al. 2007, p. 12). Framing is essentially a subset of agenda setting theory, practicing a similar effect on a specific story that the mainstream media does on public discourse. Agenda setting theory posits that the issues covered by the news media will move to the forefront of

public consciousness (McCombs 2005, p. 156-160). News media outlets guide how citizens evaluate government, also called *priming*, by prioritizing some issues over others (Scheuefle et al. 2007, p. 11).

Another aspect of these frames is the process of filtering information to include in news content, which is part of gatekeeping theory. This theory describes the idea that journalists and editors choose what information is released from the "gates" of their media organization by deciding what to cover and what to include in that coverage (Bruns 2005, p. 11, Shoemaker, Eicholz, Kim & Wrigley 2001, p. 1, Lewin 1947, p. 145). Traditional printed products had limited space so certain topics or stories were prioritized or deemed more "newsworthy" than others. Bruns (2005) writes that the lack of physical space concerns online have forced the gatekeeping role to adapt into "gatewatching," where journalists monitor the constant flow of information to share or follow up on what they deem important (p. 17). The Internet and audience participation challenge the practice of traditional, top-down, journalism because both facilitate communication and targeted distribution of information between journalists and diverse groups (Bruns 2005, p. 36-37, Gans 2011, p. 9).

The increasing role of these social platforms can also foster more interaction between members of the public and news organizations, which has reinforced the importance of the audience in the eyes of traditional journalists and allowed the audience a greater role in the process of creating news (Hermida p. 314-316, Bruns). News that "harnesses the collective intelligence," as Bruns puts it, is thought to be more democratic but less is understood about the dynamics when one perspective speaks louder than the others, such as during a coordinated campaign (p. 5). As social platforms emerged into

public use many scholars speculated they it would have a democratizing effect on public discourse but further observation has shown that online conversation can introduce just as much bias as interactions with real-life social groups.

Social media theory.

Social networking sites serve some of the same functions as physical communities or social groups. Users enforce group membership by adhering to group norms, which informs their behavior and ideology (Price 1989, p. 198, Stern 2006, p. 409, Steinfield 2008, p. 434). One benefit of identity enforcement via social media is the potential for exposure to more diverse opinions than in social groups tied to geography or institutions. Exposure to these mixed opinions increases the likelihood that the individual will be accepting of contradictory views and accept different norms, instead of discounting other opinions and retreating into an ideological silo (Steinfield, Ellison & Lampe 2008, p. 442-444, Stern 2006, p. 416-417, Anastasio, Rose & Chapman 1999, p. 155, Barbera 2014). A secondary consequence of exposure to diverse information is to prevent the spiral of silence effect. When audience members viewing media or interacting with social groups does not believe their views are reflected, such as an ideological moderate viewing partisan news coverage, they are less likely to get involved with that issue or conversation because they see themselves as the minority opinion. They retreat into their ideological silo, which contributes to a more partisan and segmented discourse (Gunther, Christen, Liebhart & Chia 2001, p. 315, Price 1989, p. 199). Needed to add a plural noun so you can use they as a plural pronoun.

Despite early theories about democratization in online conversation, further research on social media use shows it does not guarantee exposure to diverse views.

Users often choose to follow people or groups who share their values and ideas, which in turn strengthens their own views (Himelboim, McCreery & Smith, 2013, p. 158, Hamby 2013, p. 27, Cillizza 2013). A 2012 Pew survey of Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+ users found that 18 percent of users blocked an account that posted political material they disagreed with and 16 percent have followed someone because they have similar political views, further entrenching the user in groups that share their opinions (Rainie 2012, p. 2-3). This pattern is especially relevant in regard to Twitter, which has been compared to a chat room or "echo chamber," enforcing groupthink by repeated shared views among participants in a political conversation (Himelboim 2013, p. 158, Hamby 2013, p. 27, Parmalee 2013, p. 293, 303, Cillizza 2013). Other research has shown that users communicate with more extreme and uncivil language online than in real life, which can further alienate those with more moderate views (Anderson, et al. 2014 p. 383).

Even the demographics of who is online are not fully representative of the population. Twitter users represent only 18 percent of Americans who use the Internet, according to a 2013 Pew survey. Women and men use the Internet and social networking sites in different ways, which impacts the likelihood that journalists will be exposed to their opinions (Cotton 2006 p. 501, Bimber 2000 p. 868-869). Artwick (2013) found that journalists cited and sent more mentions to men on Twitter than women (p. 10). The Internet does not necessarily bring new voices into the conversation; people who engage in discussion online, especially political discussion, are probably already invested in that issue and have formed an opinion (Holt 2013 p. 31, Anderson et al. 2014 p. 374). If journalists are unaware of these discrepancies, it presents more opportunities to introduce

bias into news coverage when social media is used as a source of information because of the assumption that online conversation is representative of broader public opinion.

Social media and journalism.

While many academics have sought understanding about how journalists adapt to new technologies, there has been surprisingly little study of how new media affect the way journalists work and think. A study on the use of Facebook and Twitter in two South African weeklies found that social networking sites put journalists in touch with sources to which they wouldn't otherwise have access to, making them more aware of the realities experienced by different audiences (Jordaan 2013 p. 30-32). This is consistent with the idea of community engagement or "Web 2.0," as it was called in earlier stages (Reilly 2005, Mayer 2011). This idea suggests that journalists engage with audiences at every stage of the process. Figure 1.1 is an image used by Meg Pickard at The Guardian to illustrate the traditional editorial process, in which journalists control content before publication and users interact with it after.
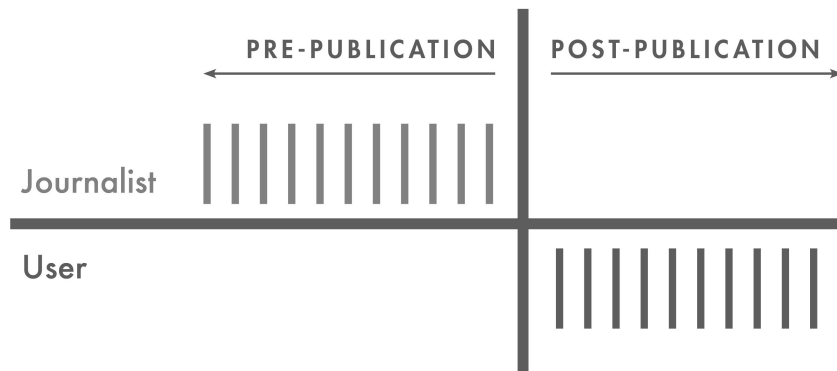
Figure 1

In the idea of "Web 2.0" the audience is no longer passive. Users participate in shaping

news and information as well as consume it (O'Reilly 2009). Users participate in shaping

news and information as well as consume it (O'Reilly

2009). The neat lines in Pickard's illustration are now destroyed, creating a system that

looks more similar to the Twitter news compass, reproduced below from a presentation at

the 2014 Online News Association conference. It demonstrates how the stages of news

are a continuous process, with the social platform integrated in every phase.
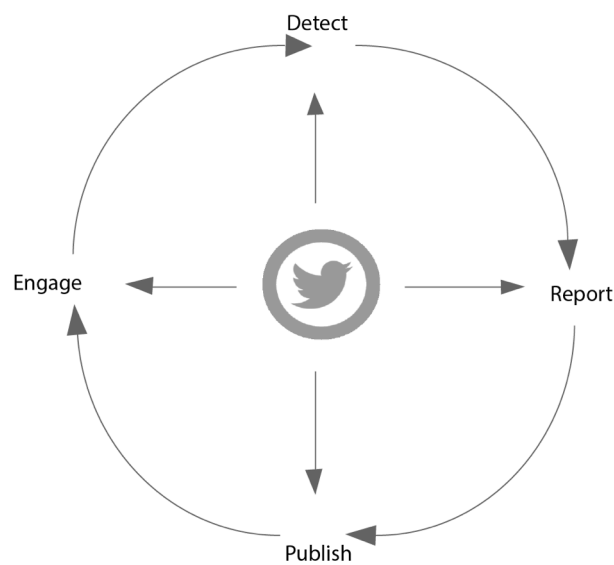
Figure 2: Reproduced from Online News Association

In breaking news situations, for example, reporters share information as they hear

it and use social media to crowd source first-person accounts (Hermida 2012, p. 314).

The emphasis on speed that accompanies social networking sites sometimes leads to

more mistakes or information taken out of context, but it enables users to get an idea of

what a large number of people are thinking at once, "a collective mind" as O'Reilly

(2009) calls it (p. 9). Modern reporters are expected to be constantly online and working

to monitor potential stories, promote published work and interact with followers,

meaning that they are very likely to be exposed to conversations on social platforms

(Hamby p. 22, 55, Carr 2013, Hermida 2012, p. 314). One function of this speed is that

social media, particularly Twitter, allows interested parties to react immediately to

reward good work or correct bad reporting (Hamby p. 25). Jonathan Martin of The New

York Times described Twitter in Hamby's study as a "real-time political wire," where

politicians, pundits, donors and campaign staff are constantly weighing in on the news of

the day (p. 24). Hamby writes that "thanks to the velocity of the Twitter conversation that

now informs national reporters, editors, and television producers" minor gaffes can

quickly become the dominant narrative of the day (Hamby p. 4).

Literature review

      Media coverage of women politicians.

      Quite a few studies, most of which use framing theory, have examined how women politicians are discussed in the media. Gender provides an interesting lens through which to examine framing decisions because the way reporters and editors frame gender influences public opinion of political candidates. Research in communications and political science reinforces the idea that news coverage of women politicians follows certain trends. Women often receive more coverage than men because it is considered out of the ordinary that a woman could fulfill a political leadership role, especially executive positions such as president or governor (Meeks 2012 p. 183, Meeks 2013a p. 522, 530-533, Bradley 2011 p. 807). That coverage attaches more gendered descriptors or labels to women than men and women are more often portrayed based on congruence with gendered stereotypes (Meeks 2013a p. 527, 533). Bligh et al. suggests that voters rely on those stereotypes to make decisions about a candidate when they have little political information about them, such as when a newcomer challenges an incumbent (p. 589). Women's gender expression is analyzed through a focus on their appearance, likeability and personal history, elements that are mentioned far less often for male politicians (Bligh et al. 2012 p. 566, 587, 590, Bradley 2011 p. 816). It is worthwhile to note that the audience member's gender and attitudes toward gender roles, as well as the frame of the news coverage, can influence the effect of these differences. For example, Bligh found that audiences perceived a woman candidate as warm after reading positively framed coverage, while negative coverage often, though not always, led to decreased likeability (579). Coverage often focuses on issues commonly associated with female gender roles,

such as health or education, while men are more often associated with economic or military issues (Lawless 2004 p. 482, Meeks 2013a p. 528). This has become especially relevant since Sept. 11, 2011, as the nation's attention shifted to focus more on national security as a top priority. Lawless's (2004) case study of news coverage after Sept. 11 found that support for women candidates decreased between 2001 and 2004 while priority on issues relating to national security increased (p. 480, Bradley 2011 p. 810). How well candidates fit within the expected gender role affects public perception, which Eagly and Johnson (1990) call the gender congeniality theory (p. 237). In this theory women's likeability ratings decrease when they are associated with desirable leadership traits, most of which are stereotypically associated with men (Lawless 2004 p. 480, 482, Bligh et al. 2012 p. 587).

A lot of research in this area focuses on high-profile women politicians such as Hillary Clinton or Sarah Palin (Bradley 2011, Carlin, Harp, McCarver, Oles-Acevedo, Shepard, Meeks 2012). While this adds understanding to the overall body of literature, Clinton and Palin have a more public profile than other candidates and could represent unique situations. It is also necessary to look at research that focuses on races with a low profile. Devitt (1998), for example, examined the quantity and nature of coverage in four gubernatorial races that featured men and women candidates (p. 449-451). He found that women candidates were the subjects of more personal coverage and less issue-based coverage than men candidates, while both campaigns were the focus of coverage based on strategy. He found that the incumbent in the sample was the focus of even more personal coverage than the other women candidates (Devitt 1998 p. 453-454).

Impact on voters.

The media's agenda-setting effect has an influence on voters that warrants close and careful study. The characteristics that news coverage chooses to focus on frame the public's idea of how politicians should be evaluated (Sheufele and Tweksbury 2007 p. 11, McCombs p. 163). The effect of the amount of media coverage seems to be a double-edged sword. In an absence of knowledge about a candidate, such as a newcomer to the political realm or someone who receives little media attention, the public relies on methods such as congruence with gendered stereotypes, to form an opinion (Bligh et al. p. 589). As candidates receive more media attention more members of the public and potential voters will form an opinion about that candidate. However, if that coverage is focused on gendered traits (Meeks 2013a, Lawless 2004, Schlehofer 2011, Meeks 2012, Bradley 2011) audiences will use gendered stereotypes to form those judgments (Bligh et al. p. 587, Scheufele p. 11, McCombs p. 163). When women display leadership traits typically associated with men they are portrayed as incongruent with accepted female gender roles and tend to be judged negatively and disliked by others (Bligh et al. p. 588).

Research into the intersection of social media, politics and news coverage has led to some interesting conclusions that will inform this study. In his work as a Nieman Fellow, CNN political correspondent Peter Hamby found that the dynamics of political reporting have shifted, as Twitter became a larger part of journalists' lives. He describes how the "pack journalism" phenomenon is amplified in the echo chamber of Washington, where all journalists and influencers follow the same groups or individuals (Hamby 2013 p. 56). This "pack journalism" pattern refers to political journalists' tendency to all report

the same thing, a tacit "story of the day." The term was used prominently in Timothy Crouse's "The Boys on the Bus" in 1973 and Hamby's "How Twitter Killed The Boys on the Bus" describes how Twitter has sped up the pace of this practice and made substantive campaign reporting more difficult (Hamby 2013 p. 22).

Networked activism.

As social media has become more engrained in everyday life, it also has become more strategic. It is now commonplace for political organizations and campaigns to use social networks to strengthen and share their message, or to use them to circumvent reporters altogether. Grassroots organizations can use social media sites to overcome logistical challenges (Conover et al. 2013). Services such as Thunderclap allow organizations to sign users up for an automatic message to be sent by hundreds or thousands of accounts at the same time. One example of a networked campaign discussed in Tufekci (2013) is the public pressure on the Susan G. Komen Foundation in 2012. After the organization announced it would withdraw funding from Planned Parenthood, social campaigns posted 1.3 million tweets directed at the group. This volume of posts pushed the issue into the traditional media and Komen leadership reversed its decision within days of it becoming public (Preston & Harris, 2012, p. 853).

Apart from political causes, this kind of action often is used in support of an issue, a phenomenon known as "slacktivism" or "hacktivism." The first and most widespread instance of this was Kony 2012, in which an organization called Invisible Children circulated a video about Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony on social media. The video was viewed almost 100 million times on YouTube and generated an estimated 5 million tweets in the week after its release (Pew 2012). The campaign was deemed a success but

also generated substantial criticism for simplifying the narrative of the war in Uganda and garnering support through social networks that had no substantial impact on the issue (Nothias p. 124).

Part of the success of movements such as Kony 2012 relates to the sense of self-gratification that comes from showing others you care about an important issue. The combination of strategic marketing actions and humanitarian ideas creates "the celebration of a neoliberal lifestyle of 'feel good altruism,'" which allows people to receive the satisfaction of contributing to a cause with very little effort (Chouliaraki 2012, Nothias p. 125). This campaign is also an example of how traditional media can be affected by online campaigns. Karlin and Matthew (2012) describe "mediatization" as a process by which the media organizations both influence and are influenced by the communities in which they are embedded (p. 255). Specifically in this case, the traditional media began covering the story of Kony 2012 after it reached "viral" popularity, further raising the profile of the issue and relying on the online conversation to provide the frame of the coverage (Nothias p. 123).

Feminist groups are another example of this concept, using social networks for "networked feminism" or "flyover feminism." These groups, primarily made up of women, use social media to express views that are traditionally marginalized, especially when responding to offensive comments by politicians or companies (Watson 2013, Aarons-Mele 2012). Social media can be especially effective in connecting feminists in communities less likely to be politically involved when the majority of the discourse is conservative, hence the term "flyover" in reference to traditionally conservative "flyover states" (Gunther et al. p. 315, Price p. 199). Before and during Wendy Davis's abortion-

rights filibuster in Texas, for example, abortion advocacy groups coordinated support for Davis through social media and by gathering supporters to rally at the Capitol to support Davis. This effort attracted national media attention and boosted political donations to Davis, a state senator, from people all over the country (Dewey 2013, Fine 2013). In mainstream news coverage, this incident has become part of the narrative surrounding Davis' political popularity, showing that traditional journalists are also paying attention to the conversation on social media.

Methodology

Since the research question here primarily has to do with the frame of news articles, this study combined qualitative rhetorical and textual analysis to compare texts about women political candidates, with a bit of a quantitative approach to coding. Using a combined approach, this study examined the implication of descriptive terminology and language with a gendered connotation to evaluate whether, and to what extent, a gendered bias is present (Van Dijk p. 112, 117).

This requires a critical approach that acknowledges that the text is interpreted subjectively through the researcher's perspective (McKee 2003 p. 64). As a control or "ideal" text, the study will compare coverage of Wendy Davis' campaign with that of Martha Coakley, a Massachusetts gubernatorial candidate who had no notable social media activity connected to her bid for office (Larsen 1991 p. 122, McKee 2003 p. 9-10). Some of the interesting elements of Davis's campaign relate to an event a few months prior to announcing that she would run for statewide office. In June 2013, Davis received national attention because she filibustered a bill that would restrict availability to abortions in the Texas legislature. The reason this local issue was so prominent in the national media was because pro-choice organizations in Texas coordinated hundreds of volunteers to spread the word physically and online (Fine, Dewey). Her filibuster lasted for 13 hours and went late into the night, when more than 180,000 people around the country were watching the live stream and generated almost 5,600 tweets per minute (Brown). Though the social media activity was supposedly completely independent of Davis' campaign, it cemented her in the national view as a crusader for women's rights, leading to big donations from national organizations (Slater). Davis's personal story

became a big part of her campaign; her biography describes her experience as a young, single mother who made her own way to her education at Harvard, but inconsistencies in her story led to criticism and even claims that she lied about her personal background (Slater). By the time Election Day rolled around she was polling well behind Republican Greg Abbott and lost by about 20 points.

The race in Massachusetts was closer in the end but attracted less national attention. She lost to Republican Charlie Baker by only one percent, which has been attributed to an unfocused campaign. Coakley and her opponent had failed campaigns in 2010 that are referred to often in state and national media, one writer referred to Coakley's as "seemingly unlosable" (Seelye, Fehrenthold, Caplan-Bricker). Polls taken before the Democratic primary showed Coakley ahead in public support and articles about the campaign often describe her efforts to connect with voters at baseball games and door-to-door visits (Fahrenthold). There are no standout issues attached to her campaign and some lengthy articles, such as one that appeared in National Journal in July 2014, mention her personal and political background extensively but don't mention political issues other than some she worked on as attorney general (Caplan-Bricker). Her campaign ads and talking points mention multiple issues, including advocating for victims of domestic abuse, economic recovery and universal education.

It is difficult to find campaigns that replicate the same set of variables, so this study will keep the party of the candidate and nature of the campaign the same to create the most reliable comparison. Both these candidates are Democrats and both are competing in an open election for the governorship, which should eliminate some external variables that would account for differences in coverage based on incumbency

(Devitt 1998 p. 453-454, Bligh 2012 p. 489). One notable difference is that Davis is a state representative and Coakley is attorney general in Massachusetts. Another potential factor is the political dynamic of the states: Texas is typically Republican, and the current governor is a Republican, while the opposite is true for Massachusetts. This could be a complicating factor but shouldn't cause too many problems because the study is focused on language associated with gender. It will compare the use of specific language, metaphor, symbols and cliché in coverage of both campaigns to make an informed statement about the presence of gender bias in the coverage.

To make this measurement more manageable, the study involved a purposive sample of news articles based on the time of publication to reduce the overall sample size. Similar to Meeks' (2012) content analysis, this was done by identifying the most relevant time period of coverage for each candidate (p. 182). The researcher collected coverage from the month after each candidate announced her campaign, as those stories serve to introduce candidates for governor and set the precedent for further coverage. For Wendy Davis this is the month following October 3, 2013, and for Martha Coakley the month following Sept. 15 of the same year. An initial search with the terms "name + governor" identified 62 articles meeting these search parameters for Wendy Davis, 58 for Coakley. In addition, the study will look at samples of coverage from the month leading up to day after the election in November 2014. Using the Factiva database, it will identify coverage from national newspapers (Washington Post and New York Times), and the major metropolitan newspapers with the highest circulation in both states, the Dallas Morning-News and Houston Chronicle in Texas, and the Boston Globe and Boston Herald in Massachusetts. These outlets are chosen to represent coverage with the highest

impact; their coverage reaches a large audience and thus has a greater agenda-setting effect than outlets with a smaller circulations. National outlets such as The New York Times are often cited as the agenda-setters in the media, setting the frame for how other media outlets will approach the issues. It is worth noting that, in this case, some of the Wendy Davis coverage in the Times' is from a relationship with the Texas Tribune, a non-profit news organization that covered her filibuster. Since this was still published in the Times' and for the Times' audience, it will be treated the same as other Times coverage. The more local newspapers, on the other hand, have more flexibility to frame coverage based on the priorities of their audience. The analysis will include only articles appearing in the news section, not opinion content or editorials (Devitt 1998 p. 451). As the articles are read, a set of codes will be generated to categorize content based on general frame, references to gendered traits, and other qualities related to the gendered frame. More details on the coding system can be found in Appendix A. After working with a portion of that sample I estimate that the researcher will eliminate about 30 percent of the texts because they are irrelevant to the research question. If this number still appears unmanageable, the researcher will cap the sample at 200 articles. For example, articles about Martha Coakley's work as attorney general that do not mention the campaign for governor will be excluded.

To make the coding of articles more reliable, the researcher created a codebook (Appendix A) using a sample of articles from the database search. Each article will be categorized as "heavily gendered, gendered, and not gendered" in reference to the amount of gender bias in the frame. These labels will be assigned based on the number of gendered references in the text, specifically the percent of paragraphs that include a

gendered reference. The researcher will code only text elements of each article, as the Factiva database does not provide images. As outlined in Tankard (2001) this includes headlines, subheds, leads, source selection, quote selection, and concluding statements (p. 101). The analysis will not include data from the content of quotes, as those are likely from candidates and intentionally portraying a certain frame or message. For this purpose, gendered references are defined as terms or phrases that are typically associated with one gender. Gendered issue references could include abortion or women's rights, for example, because they are almost always associated with women (Bligh et al. 2012 p. 566, 587, 590, Bradley 2011 p. 816, Lawless 2004 p. 482, Meeks 2013a p. 528). References to a candidate's personal life, appearance or spouse will also be considered gendered. The analysis will include informal notes about the nature of these gendered references, including which candidate they are associated with, as well as information on the author's gender and the other subjects in the story. These terms will be catalogued as the list evolves to allow the researcher to note commonly used terms for each candidate as well as provide rationale for what fits this definition of a gendered reference. An example of the codebook is shown in figures 3 and 4.

This research could inform the work of all journalists, especially reporters, by increasing understanding of the relationship between online communities and traditional reporting. The expected findings are that robust social conversation around a candidate does impact how reporters write about that candidate, especially when the campaign is as organized and popular as the one surrounding Wendy Davis' filibuster.

Results

The results of the content analysis were fairly consistent and found notable

differences between coverage of the two candidates. The researcher coded 72 articles, 35

about Martha Coakley and 37 about Wendy Davis. 36 of those articles were from the

month after each candidate announced and 42 in the month before the election concluded.

Although the initial search results were drastically larger, the researcher eliminated

opinion columns, redundant results and articles that were not related to the campaign.

Men wrote twice as many articles as women in the sample.

Both candidates had a larger sample in the month before the election than the

month after announcing their candidacy, but Davis had close to twice the number of

articles as Coakley for the first sample. Coverage was also more likely to earn the code

not gendered in the month before Election Day.

Figure 3: Sample Size
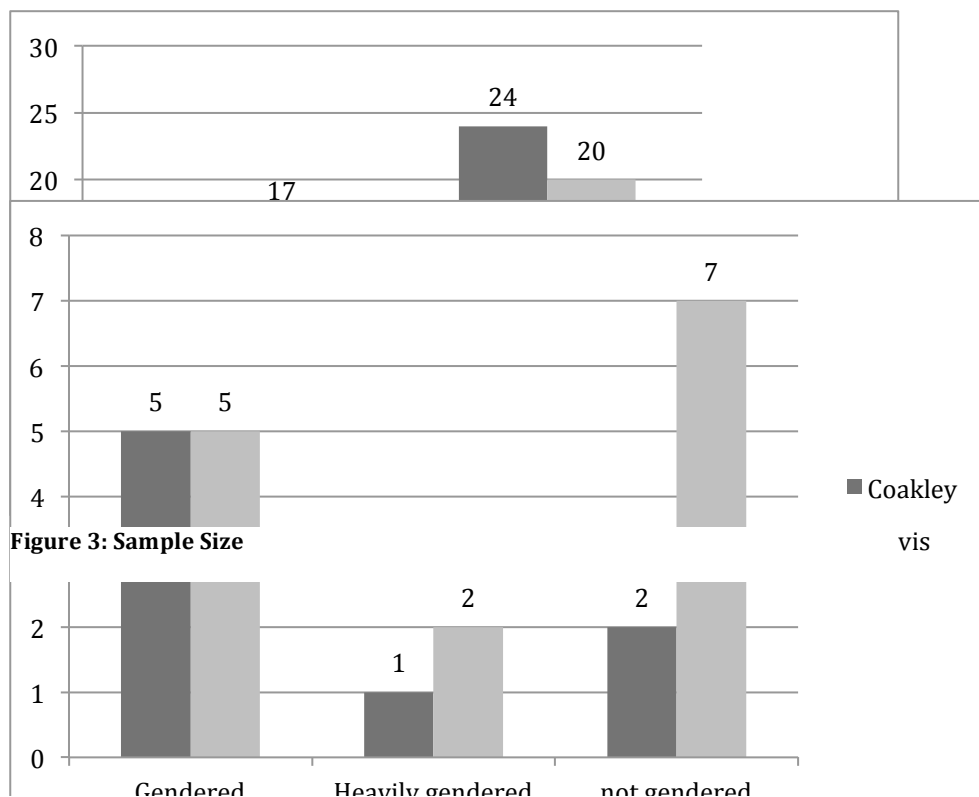
Figure 4.1: 2013 articles, code distribution
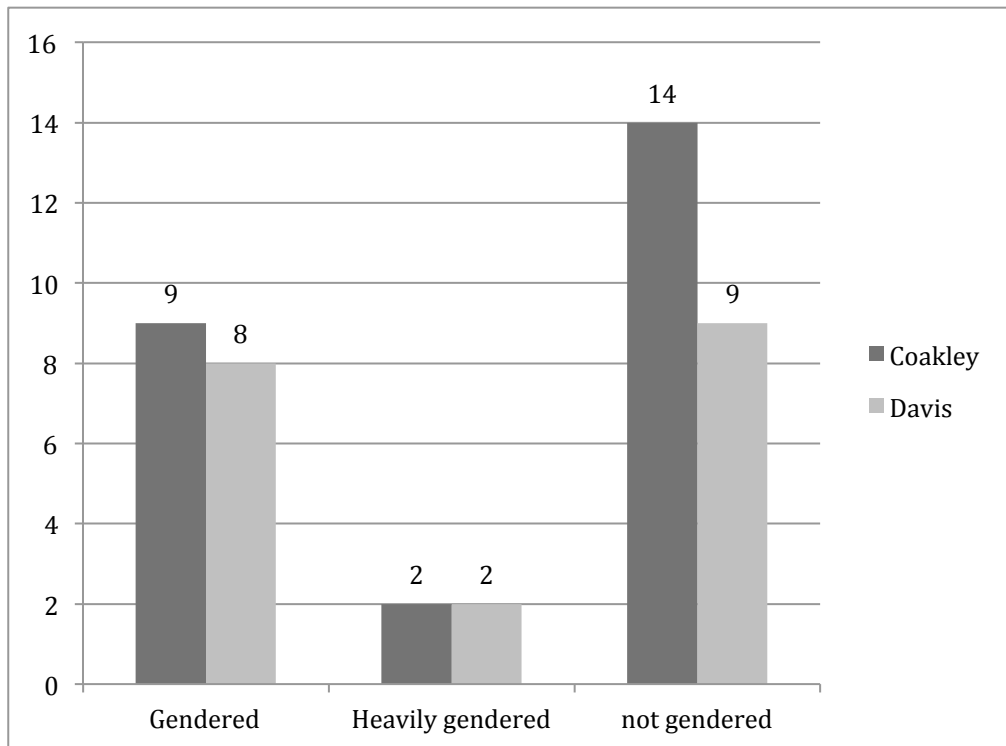
Figure 3.2: 2014 articles, code distribution

Both candidates had more coverage in local papers than national, but Davis received slightly more national coverage than Coakley. Davis received more coverage after she announced her campaign while Coakley received more coverage before Election Day. This is likely due to the fact that the Massachusetts race was close until the last minute, while polls showed Davis was unlikely to win.
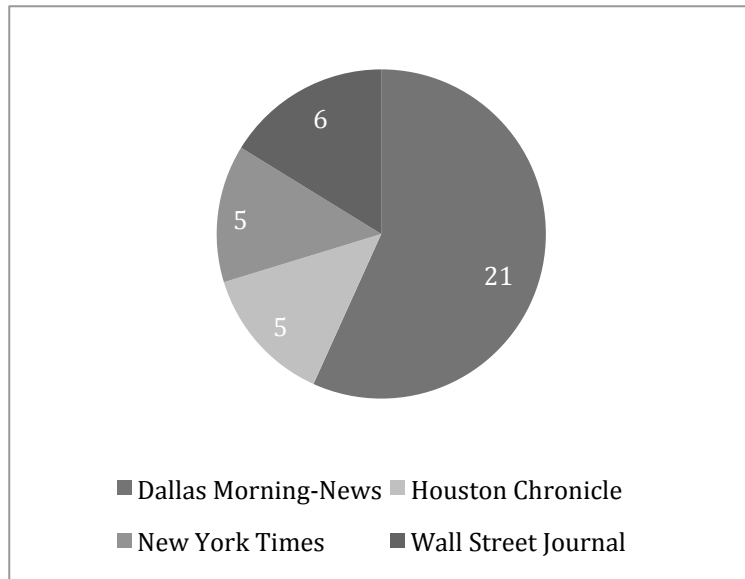

Figure 4.1: Davis coverage by outlet
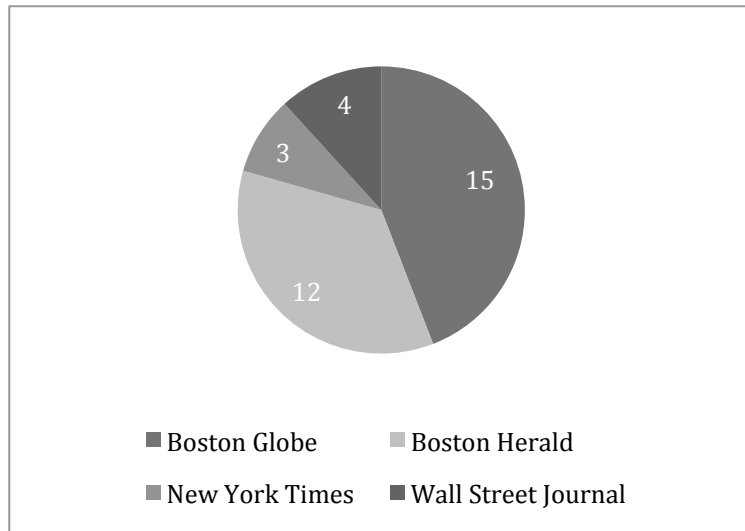

Figure 5.2: Coakley coverage by outlet

The length of those articles ranged from one paragraph to more than 30 paragraphs with an average of 13 paragraphs. Local news sources were more likely to rely heavily on quotes. Shorter articles were more likely to be coded as gendered or highly gendered because one instance of gendered language could skew the entire article.

Once coded, the sample for both candidates broke down to very similar numbers in each category. About 53 percent of the articles fit into a code that indicates some level of gendered frame; 39 percent of articles were coded "gendered." An additional 14 percent of articles were coded "highly gendered." Some of the articles in this category were extremely short, so earned the code despite including only one or two gendered terms. It is also worth noting that some of the articles coded "gendered" were very close to the line for the "highly gendered" code but were still below the mark of 50 percent of paragraphs including a gendered reference.
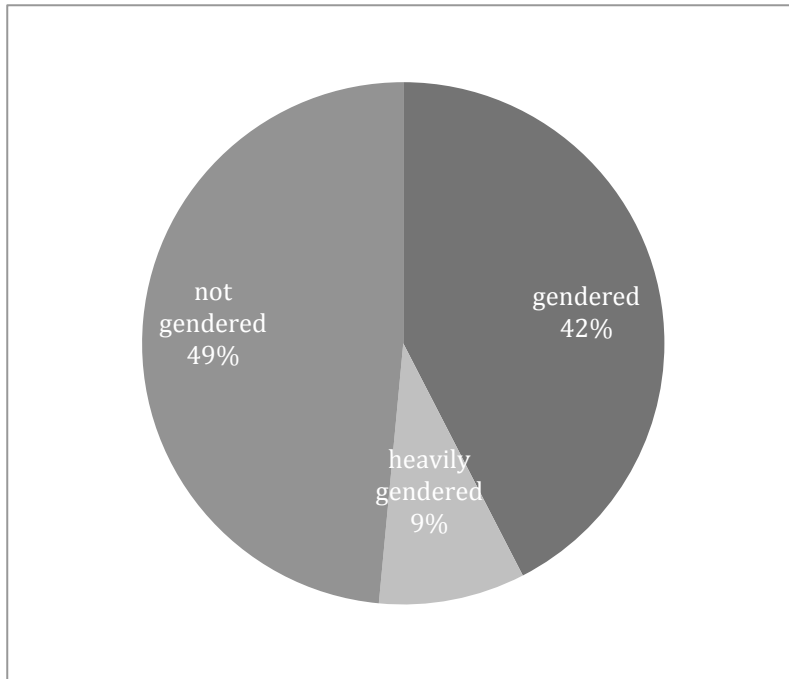
**Figure 6.1: Coakley coverage by code**
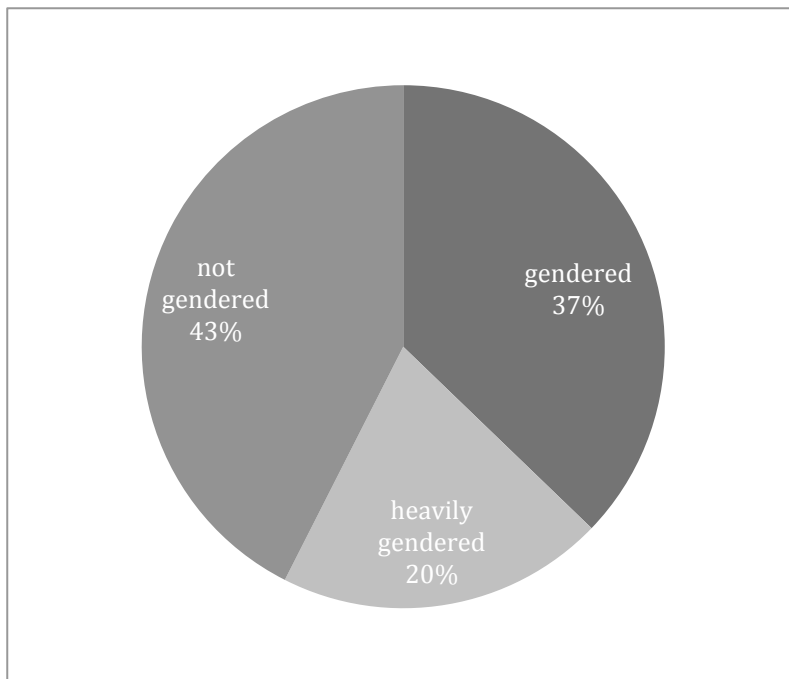
Figure 6.2: Davis coverage by code

These numbers broke down similarly for each candidate with one notable difference. About 12 percent more coverage of Wendy Davis was rated "highly gendered" than coverage of Martha Coakley, while Coakley had more coverage in the "gendered" or "not gendered" categories.

The distribution of articles within this coding system also varied by outlet; for all six, at least 40 percent of articles qualified as "not gendered." Some outlets had significantly more than 40 percent, including 50 percent "not gendered" for the Boston Herald and New York Times and 60 percent "not gendered" for the Houston Chronicle. Both local outlets in Texas had the highest percentage of heavily gendered articles with around 20 percent. The New York Times was the only outlet included that did not have any articles that fit the heavily gendered category. This was surprising given that national outlets often had to provide context for a race that readers were less likely to be following closely, many of the articles in national publications included introductory statements such as "Wendy Davis, the Texas senator who gained national attention after an abortion filibuster."
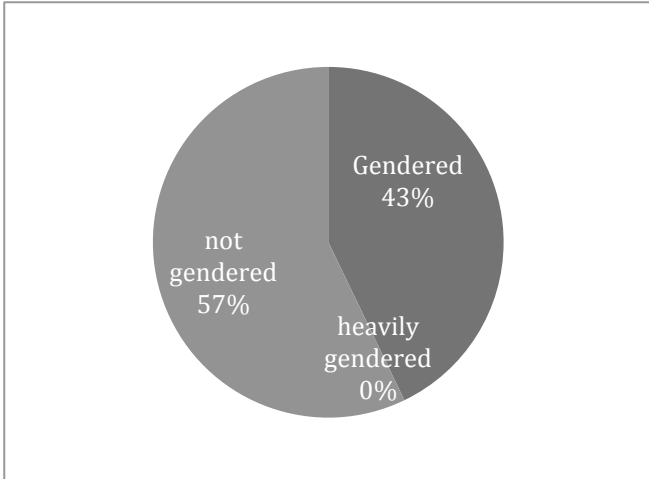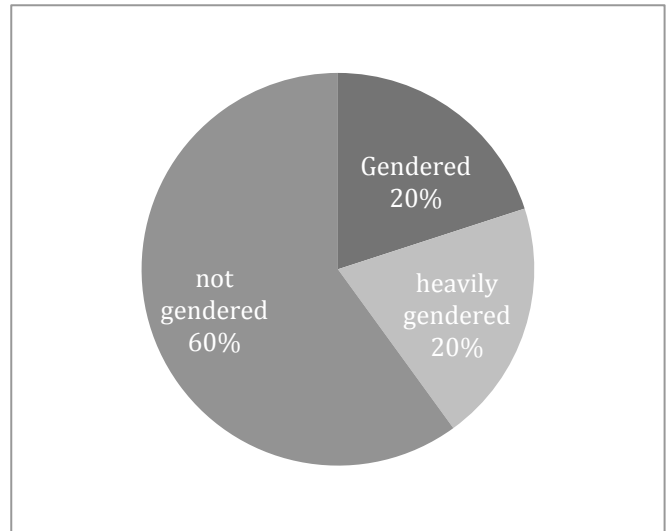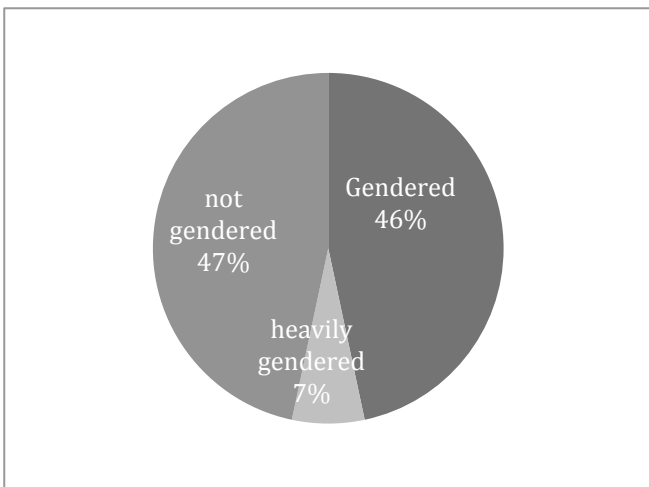
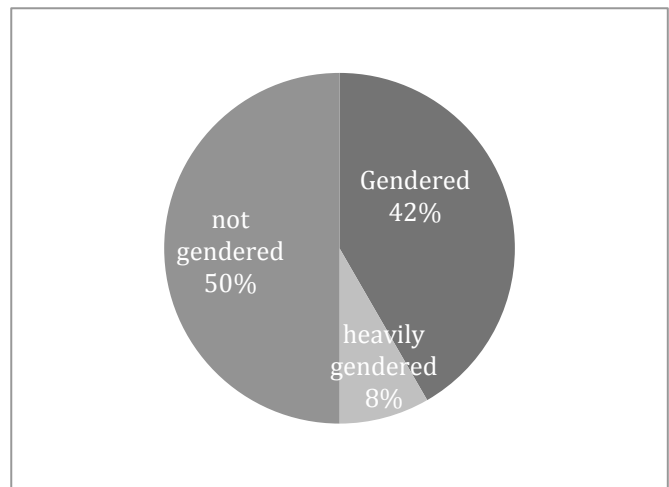Figure 7.1: The New York Times
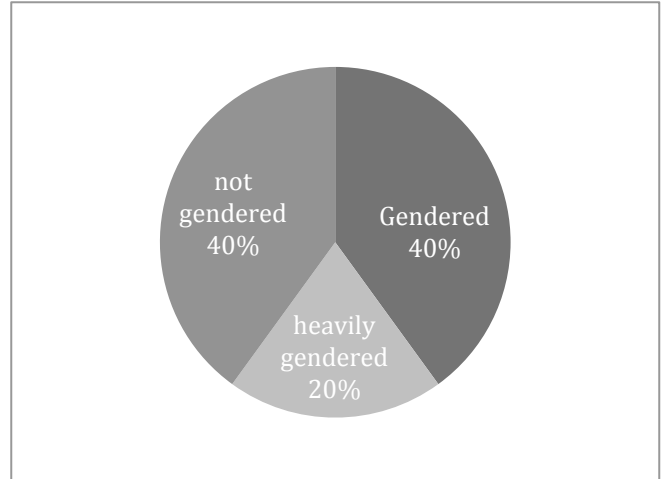
Figure 7.2: The Wall Street Journal
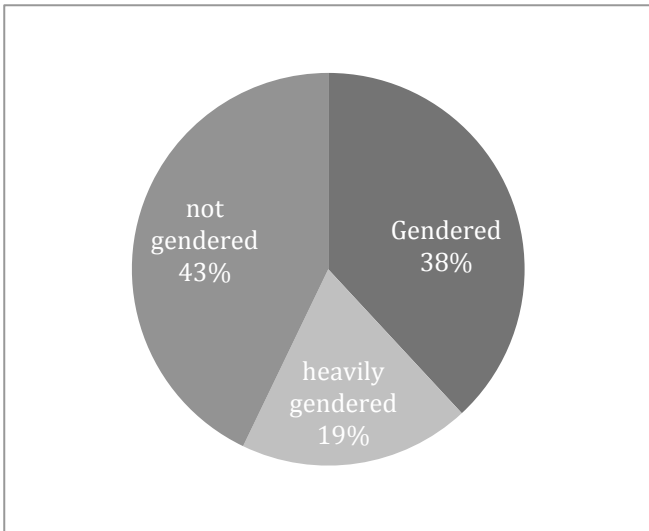
Figure 5: Dallas Morning-News

Figure 7.4: The Houston Chronicle

Figure 7.5: The Boston Globe

Figure 7.6: The Boston Herald

In addition to coding the article as a whole, the researcher examined trends in the nature of gendered terms related to each candidate. For Davis, references to abortion were the most common reason a paragraph was coded as gendered. It was mentioned both in reference to her filibuster months before she became a candidate and the fact that she did not make the issue a big part of her campaign. In some cases the specific issue wasn't referenced but phrases like "a celebrity among liberals" or "a champion for women's rights" hinted heavily at it. Gendered references in articles about Martha Coakley were more likely to be related to her need to be more personable and friendly, mostly in comparison to her 2010 campaign when she was seen as unlikeable. Another common gendered reference, which appeared in almost 14 percent of all articles in the sample, was descriptions of the candidate's relationship to "women" as a single group or voting block. This occurred only a few times more in reference to Davis than Coakley.
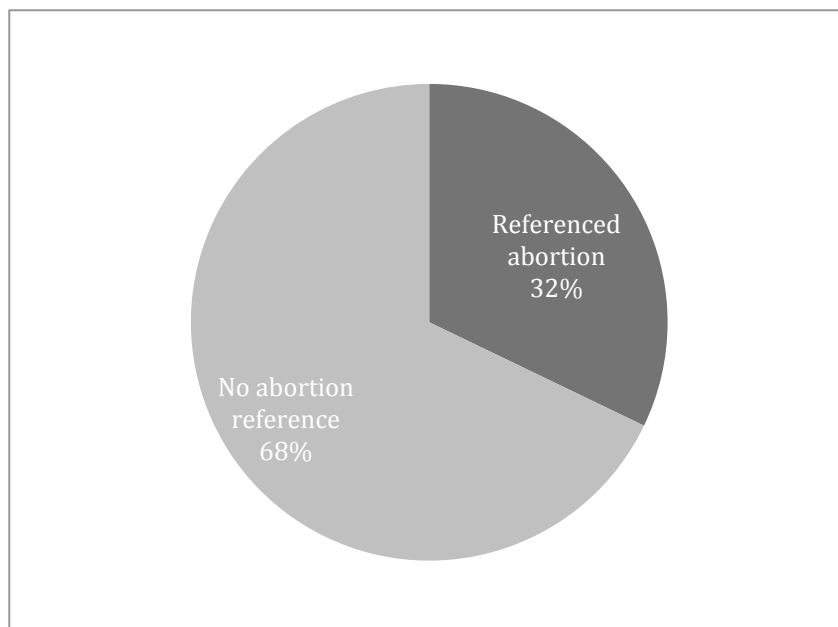
Figure 8.1: Davis, references to abortion issue or filibuster
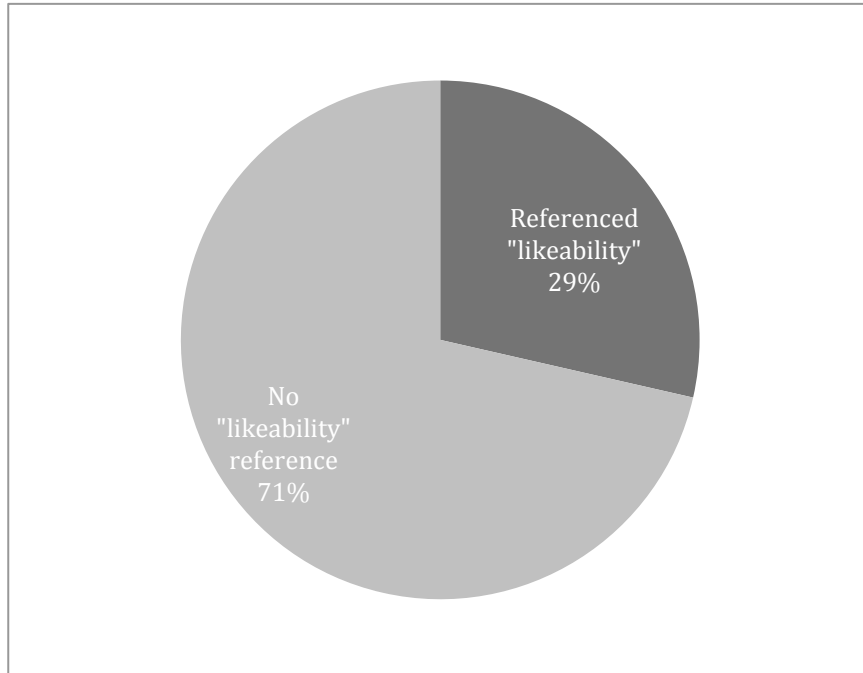
Figure 8.2: Coakley, references to personality or "likeability"

The underdog narrative was persistent and several articles referenced Davis'
personal backstory as well as her small chance of success in the campaign. Notable
phrases in this regard included "underdog status," "rose from teenage parenthood to
Harvard law school," and "suddenly a viable statewide candidate" as a reference to her
filibuster. The theme around Coakley focused more on likeability, due partly to the
perceived distance during her last campaign. In the last election she was heavily criticized
for not being approachable or friendly enough, so coverage often focused on her social
interactions. Phrases included "charisma-challenged," "cloistered, enervated campaign,"
and "needs to be willing to show more of her personality."

Conclusions

This study found that, in this care, the coordinated social media effort led to a higher level of gendered framing. It does not appear that coverage that would otherwise lack a gendered slant became gendered, but a larger portion of coverage had a more gendered frame in coverage of Wendy Davis than coverage of Martha Coakley. This supports the idea that the social media activity contributed to this difference because the frequency of references to abortion in coverage of Wendy Davis was the reason many of these articles were assigned a gendered code, and the references to abortion would not have been present if Davis was not heavily associated with a filibuster on abortion rights. This association was strongly enforced by the narrative of the social media conversation, which then became part of the narrative surrounding her candidacy in traditional news media.

The research also identified some common practices in political reporting that could lead to a gendered frame, regardless of the candidate. For example, a good portion of the articles referred to women as a block of voters. Both men and women candidates were described in terms of their "appeal to women." It appeared more common for women candidates to be described in terms of the "women's vote," though this study did not look extensively at coverage of male candidates. This practice oversimplifies the views of any social group, not just women, into "supports candidate" or "doesn't support candidate." With this lack of subtlety it's easy to see why the support of women as voters could lead to an association of the candidate with women or the issues like abortion or equal pay that are commonly associated with them.

Some factors that influence the gendered frame of a text are outside the individual journalist's control. Sources will choose language and frame narratives in a way that fits their own understanding on a person or topic. Candidates and political sources are always working to convey a frame through their word choice and there are often situations that the journalist cannot avoid repeating some of that language. For example, in the sample texts where a reporter was covering a candidate's speech the primary purpose of the article was to convey the frame used by the campaign to tell the story of the candidate. In one of Martha Coakley's speeches she focused on education and used language about her personal life to make herself relatable. The article, in one of the local papers, paraphrased a lot of the language and used several direct quotes from the speech. (Though this researcher coded the issue of education and references to family as gendered, the writer merely reflected decisions made by the candidate to focus on those topics.

Journalistic and linguistic style must also be considered when examining the frame of a text. The style of publications like The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal is to use courtesy titles, meaning that the candidates were referred to as Mrs. Coakley and Ms. Davis. This use of traditional labels not only reminds readers of a person's gender but could subtly convey information about their personal life, such as whether a woman is married. The use of separate titles for women while all men are called "Mr." reveals one of many gender constructs in the English language that change the way simple writing is interpreted. Another such construct is the use of pronouns instead of repeating an individual's last name, which instantly remind the reader of the gender associated with that person.

Another element of writing style that seems to play a role is tone. More gendered references seemed to be inserted into a piece when the writer was trying to add color through clichés or more descriptive language. Many of the articles that were not noticeably gendered were the straightforward reports on poll numbers, fundraising or recounting what a candidate said. When the writer worked to include more descriptive language they were more likely to include gendered clichés such as "tug at the heartstrings." This could be partially attributed to lazy writing or a lack of creativity, writers who rely on gendered tropes or commonly used visual language instead of painting a picture of their own. It could also be due to the pervasive gender associations in the English language. Despite all conscious effort by journalists to rid their writing of bias, the reader will still understand certain words or phrases to have a gendered connotation.

Another major theme is the gendered nature of certain issues and the connection between those issues and a political party. Many issues that are considered big for the Democratic Party, such as women's rights, equal pay, abortion, education or health care, are also associated with feminine ideas. The public often associates the Republican Party, on the other hand, is more likely to be associated with issues such as national security, the economy and crime. These topics are not necessarily mutually exclusive, especially as the Republican Party is known for it's faithfulness to traditional family values. However the public's automatic response to these associations does not often embrace the full nuance of these issues. This is not always the case, but future research could examine what issues are associated with a female Republican candidate to see if gender or party is a more dominant factor.

One of the important takeaways from this study is that a gendered frame cannot always be avoided, but it also isn't required. This will be a heated issue in 2016 as Hillary Clinton once again enters the public consciousness. She has become a contentious figure to both the public and the media. Online communities of women do have an impact on how a candidate is viewed, even if that community fails to achieve the positive impact they desire. Journalists and others working in media need to be aware of how to best represent an objective view of the situation and avoid the subtle influence of pervasive narratives supported by social media activity. This has already become part of the 2016 election cycle; one group of volunteers has threatened to police coverage of Clinton for "sexist language" and protest reporters they see as treating her unfairly (Blake). This story is an example of how an online narrative can cycle into traditional news media, especially in the short attention span of the political press. Political journalists were drawn to the story online and then translated it for their respective platforms. The "second day" story found that the group wasn't exactly how the initial stories described it, but the window for attention was closing (Reeve). While this particular group might not be legitimate, communities of "internet outrage" will continue to play a role in political conversation. The ability for online activist communities like this to gather means that even the subtle elements of journalism and language are part of politics now. Journalists need to be vigilant that their work stands up to the highest possible standards.

In hindsight, some of the results of this study are limited because the coding system cannot be exactly replicated. It might have been improved with the use of a second coder to create a more uniform system to identify gendered language that could be replicated by another researcher. A coding system for future work could also be more

nuanced to account for the different types of content that the researcher encountered. Some articles in the sample were not labeled strictly as news or opinion. Since they were written by reporters and appeared in the news section the researcher included them, but pieces with an opinionated voice might be better analyzed in a separate category from straight news writing. The presence of very short articles with less than five paragraphs also presented a problem. Some of the articles coded "highly gendered" were very short, so one gendered reference easily resulted in a high percentage of paragraphs with gendered references. These short articles appeared in national news outlets where they carry a heavy weight as the audience's only introduction to the candidate, so if that one paragraph is gendered it could have a big influence. However, the sample size in this study presents the problem that one such article coded "heavily gendered" could change the percentages enough to affect the conclusions. Future work should consider how to examine these short articles in a way that can better compare them with longer articles.

There are a few practical ways to be aware of this influence from online conversation. Journalists should treat online conversation with the same thoughtfulness as any other source; it is necessary and important but also must be put into perspective. The most obvious is not to rely too heavily on social media for reporting and to continue to keep in touch with sources directly involved in the campaign. The speed and condensed narratives of social media make it very tempting to latch on to a specific narrative right away, but thorough reporting could help reporters identify the reality. Awareness is also key; journalists must be made aware of gendered bias in a noncritical way so they can identify it and make a conscious decision to write with a more impartial frame. A better

understanding of language could avoid creating a gendered frame through cliché and the

subtler slant introduced with the use of pronouns or courtesy titles.

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