

EJ

Elon Journal
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Issue

School of Communications
Elon University

Joining the World of Journals

Welcome to the nation's first and, to our knowledge, only undergraduate research journal in communications.

We discovered this fact while perusing the Web site of the Council on Undergraduate Research, which lists and links to the 60 or so undergraduate research journals nationwide (<http://www.cur.org/ugjournal.html>).

Some of these journals focus on a discipline (e.g., Journal of Undergraduate Research in Physics), some are university-based and multidisciplinary (e.g., MIT Undergraduate Research Journal), and some are university-based and disciplinary (e.g., Furman University Electronic Journal in Undergraduate Mathematics).

The Elon Journal is the first to focus on undergraduate research in journalism, media and communications.

The School of Communications at Elon University is the creator and publisher of the online journal. The first issue was published in Spring 2010 under the editorship of Dr. Byung Lee, associate professor in the School of Communications.

The three purposes of the journal are:

- To publish the best undergraduate research in Elon's School of Communications each term,
- To serve as a repository for quality work to benefit future students seeking models for how to do undergraduate research well, and
- To advance the university's priority to emphasize undergraduate student research.

The Elon Journal is published twice a year, with spring and fall issues.

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Celebrating Student Research

This journal reflects what we enjoy seeing in our students -- intellectual maturing.

As 18 year olds, some students enter college wanting to earn a degree, but unsure if they want an education. They may question whether communication theory has anything to do with real life. Ready to start their media careers, many would rather focus on workplace skills than analyze issues and concepts.

In Elon's School of Communications, we strive for a balance among concepts, writing and production. All are important.

Student media and organizations are terrific venues for the practice of journalism, broadcasting, public relations, advertising and cinema.

In turn, this journal celebrates the life of the intellect through undergraduate research. It represents the intellectual maturing that occurs by the senior year.

These published articles make us aware of the solitary hours that students spend in research and the untold hours in which student and teacher-mentor work together to revise a paper for public consumption. It's exciting to see students conducting research in such arenas as social media and press freedom.

By focusing attention on undergraduate research, this journal helps reinforce all that we think a university should be.

Dr. Paul Parsons, Dean
School of Communications

Editorial Board

Twenty-six faculty members in Elon's School of Communications served as the Editorial Board that selected the nine undergraduate research papers appearing in the 2013 spring issue.

From more than 100 research papers written in advanced School of Communications classes, 18 papers were submitted to the journal by communications students through the encouragement and mentoring of capstone teachers and other professors in the school.

Professors who served as the Editorial Board were Janna Anderson, Lucinda Austin, Vanessa Bravo, Lee Bush, Naeemah Clark, David Copeland, Vic Costello, Michelle Ferrier, Michael Frontani, Kenn Gaither, Mandy Gallagher, Jessica Gisclair, Don Grady, Anthony Hatcher, Derek Lackaff, Julie Lellis, Harlen Makemson, Barbara Miller, Phillip Motley, Sang Nam, Thomas Nelson, George Padgett, Paul Parsons, Glenn Scott, Michael Skube, Amanda Sturgill, Frances Ward-Johnson and Qian Xu.

Thanks should also go to Bryan Baker, who videotaped student introductions to their projects, and Colin Donohue, who uploaded the PDF version of this issue and student videos.

Editor's Note

This issue has manuscripts covering a wide gamut of topics. 2012 was a presidential election year, so many students were especially interested in how the media covered elections. Other research topics covered included advertisements in men's magazines and public service announcements on kids' health; popular rap/hip-hop lyrics and students' response to the lyrics; media use of images in framing minority groups; and the portrayal of the American legal system in prime time television crime dramas.

In her paper, "Social Media and Politics: Twitter use in the Second Congressional District of Virginia," Julia Caplan content analyzed tweets to find how two state politicians in Virginia used Twitter. She found that they primarily used the social media site to post information and tweet about their current activities. Through an examination of media coverage of the presidential debates, Rachel Raymond checked whether candidates Barack Obama and Mitt Romney told the truth in the three debates. She also surveyed Elon students' perceptions of the candidates' debate performance and lies. Stephanie Petrich analyzed CNN, ABC and Fox News to find out how they assessed presidential campaign advertisements. She found the three news outlets used political analysts and anchors to critique negative or popular campaign advertisements. Mariah Irvin investigated how women were used as broadcast reporters and sources in hard news stories in the 2012 presidential election. The study found that "male reporters were assigned more hard news than female reporters, and they were a little more likely to assigned to hard news than soft news. Male sources were used more as experts in hard news by both male and female reporters."

Joseph Ziembra analyzed textual and visual messages in advertisements for dietary supplements in men's fitness and lifestyle magazines. He found that advertisements appealed to viewers' emotions or sense of self rather than information on products. Maria Georgiadis found that the *Let's Move!* campaign urged children to increase physical activity and to eat healthy food. She found that the public service announcements in the campaign employed "a series of separate but cohesive PSA ads that displayed consistency in messages, logos and themes, ultimately creating a brand for the campaign that was easily recognizable to publics." Gretchen Cundiff found that popular rap/hip-hop music has misogynistic lyrics, such as violence against women, which, scholars worry, might desensitize individuals to harassment of women and degradation of women. But most male students in the survey "held negative views about rap/hip-hop music compared to most women holding neutral views of the genre." Caitlin O'Donnell wrote a paper on how minorities—native Americans, Women, African Americans, Japanese Americans and Muslim Americans—were visually portrayed in the mass media. Sam Parker's article investigated the portrayal of the American legal system in prime time television crime dramas. Her study suggested "though suspect treatment is portrayed fairly accurately in prime time network television crime dramas, tendencies of exaggeration and inaccuracy exist through the case building process and trial length." I hope these papers on diverse topics would inspire students to find a topic they have a passion for.

Dr. Byung Lee
Journal Editor

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Social Media and Politics: Twitter Use in the Second Congressional District of Virginia

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Abstract

With social media recently evolving as a platform for social, informational, and political exchanges, it comes as no surprise that in the last few years several politicians have integrated Twitter into their campaigns. The goal of this study was to gain insight into how Republican Congressman Scott Rigell and Democratic candidate Paul Hirschbiel—candidates in the 2nd Congressional District of Virginia—cultivated Twitter to attract voters in the 2012 election. A content analysis of the characteristics and tactical strategies of these Twitter posts revealed that the two congressional candidates primarily used Twitter to post information and tweet about their current activity. It was also found that Rigell posted more direct communication tweets—internal and external—than Hirschbiel, while Hirschbiel used personal messages to attract followers. The tactical strategies employed by Rigell and Hirschbiel were determined to be calculated methods by which the candidates hoped to motivate citizens, activate voters and differentiate themselves from their competitor.

I. Social Media and Politics:

With social media recently evolving as a platform for social, informational, and political exchange, it has become an influential tool used to effectively target numerous sectors in American society. It comes as no surprise that politicians are using these channels of mass communication and marketing to influence attitudes about themselves, set agendas, and even shape outcomes of campaigns (Gale Opposing Viewpoints, 2010). The recently evolved “micro-blogging” social media site, Twitter, is the ideal vehicle for this kind of self-promotion, giving politicians the ability to inform mass numbers of people about their political activities almost instantaneously (Aharony, 2010). Twitter’s short posts, called “tweets,” enable users to share updates with friends, colleagues, and in a politician’s case, potential voters, giving users the ability to influence, inform, and engage each other in topics across the board.

In the last few years, several politicians have integrated Twitter into their campaigns; 577 politicians have opened Twitter accounts, three quarters of them in 2009 (Anonymous, 2010). With its recent popularity, Twitter’s relationship to politics has been the subject of numerous research studies (Aharony 2012; “International: Sweet to Tweet,” 2010; Budak, 2012; Smith & Brenner, 2012). Politicians are using social media as a new tool to increase interaction and exchange with the public. By using a social media device like Twitter, politicians can easily connect to their voters and vice versa (International: Sweet to Tweet, 2010). As social media emerges more and more as a means of daily chatter, conversations, sharing of information, and political debate, politicians are no longer only responsible for their outgoing tweets, but also for the responses and dialogue they create with potential voters (International: Sweet to Tweet, 2010).

* **Keywords:** Politics and Twitter; 2nd Congressional District of Virginia election 2012; Social Media and Politics; Congressman Scott Rigell and Twitter; Candidate Paul Hirschbiel and Twitter
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Although social media is used across the country, this study will focus on a specific region in Virginia, a swing state in the 2012 general elections. In an article in *The Washington Times*, Luke Rosiak (2012) discussed the region in Virginia that is most saturated with political media of all forms, Hampton Roads. This 2nd Congressional District of Virginia, is one of the most influential areas in the current elections and is, therefore, one of the top-most regions saturated with political advertisements. “The reason for the intensity here is as much geographical as political: Hampton Roads is an amalgamation of demographics, sometimes starkly at odds with one another and all of which use the same airwaves” (Rosiak, 2012). Divided by high population of black communities that lean toward the Democrats, suburban and rural areas that lean toward the Republicans, and the largest naval base in the world with high investment in politics, Hampton Roads has become the target for much political propaganda.

With this high influence, the 2nd District of Virginia is receiving more political advertisements than any other major district in the other battleground states. Rosiak (2012) opened with the words, “Rep. E. Scott Rigell, a Republican, is in the toughest battle for re-election of any of the state’s 11 congressmen” (Rosiak, 2012). In an area of such high political influence, it is safe to assume that the candidates of this congressional election—Rigell and Hirschbiel—are cultivating a social media tool like Twitter as a part of their campaign strategy. This study conducted an analysis of the characteristics of high intensity use of the social networking site by these candidates in Virginia’s 2nd Congressional District election, 2012. This study strived to collect insight into how Republican Congressman Scott Rigell and Democratic candidate Paul Hirschbiel cultivated Twitter to attract voters in the 2012 election by analyzing the characteristics and tactical strategies employed in the candidates’ Twitter posts.

II. Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The importance of influential, informational social exchange between politicians and users of social networking sites is implied by some of the tenants of Gerardine DeSanctis’ and Marshall Scott Poole’s (1994) Adaptive Structuration Theory (AST). A core premise of the AST is the idea that advanced information technologies, like social networking sites, enable multiparty participation and exchange in organizational activities through sophisticated information management (DeSanctis and Poole, 1994). More simply, it suggests that in order to nurture human interaction and communication, different society groups (systems) adapt information technologies (structure).

The AST proposes that this relationship between society and technology, or system and structure, is a two-sided exchange that leads society to a response or “movement” (Turner, 1986). Structures are both the medium and the outcome of social action, and systems are the means by which this information is circulated. This exchange is not only about the technology, but also about how these technologies are used. It is the users who set the agenda for the kind of information they receive and respond to.

In its basic form, the AST shows that the advancement of technological devices changes an organizational structure. Accordingly, the AST applies itself as a way to analyze the use and penetration of new media technologies in our society (DeSanctis and Poole, 1994).

The AST specifically applies to this study in that it is a study of the interplay between three distinct elements: social structures, human interactions, and advanced information technologies. By directly applying these assumptions to social groups in terms of social media outlets (such as Twitter), a few customizable observations can be made. First, social media sites are a means of transferring information from one societal group to another. Second, this informational exchange is not one-sided but circulates from structure to system and system to structure. And finally, as this social networking device advances and there is an increase in “interpenetration of structure,” it can impact an entire social organization and inspire change (DeSanctis and Poole, 1994; Turner, 1986).

Social Networking by Politicians

The social media site, Twitter, and its use by politicians have recently emerged as the subject of many studies. According to Smith and Brenner (2012), 15% of Internet users used Twitter in February 2012, which

is a 3% increase from August 2011. And, of the 15% of users, 31% are between the ages of 18-24 years old. Twitter's increasing popularity has made it a platform through which politicians influence, inform, and engage their publics while gathering feedback.

The most relevant study to this research is a content analysis of how three political leaders—the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Britain, David Cameron, and the President of the United States, Barack Obama—used Twitter between August and October, 2010. This study indicated that Obama tweeted more than the other leaders, then Netanyahu, followed by Cameron. It concluded, “all three leaders use Twitter for transparency and outreach” (Aharony, 2012).

As is the case with this study, Aharony (2012) studied how this politician-to-public exchange is created, used, and managed. The researcher did so by conducting an analysis in two phases: a statistical analysis and a content analysis. For both phases, Aharony (2012) examined all tweets that appeared during the set period, August through October, 2010. The research was guided by questions like (1) Do the leaders differ regarding their number of tweets, and (2) Does the content of the tweets from the three leaders differ? This study used the same methodology that Dr. Aharony (2012) used with some modifications: content analysis as the sole means of analyzing the tweets, and only the second research question addressed.

To perform the content analysis, two themes were analyzed—content and language—and each was assigned categories (Aharony, 2012). The researcher used a clustering approach, creating new categories whenever a main emerging topic did not match any existing categories. At the end, the coder generated a total of 10 new categories according to the tweets' content. These categories, used as a model for this present study, include topics like general information, personal information, donation requests, events, general blessings, pictures, and so on. To analyze the language of the tweets, they were classified into two categories: formal and informal language. The latter included slang and abbreviations (Aharony, 2012).

Research conducted by Golbeck, Grimes, and Rogers (2010) about Twitter use by the U.S. Congress also shaped the data collection in this study. As Aharony (2012) did with her content analysis topics, the author separated “tweets by type,” such as inner communication, fundraising, requesting action, personal message, external communication, location/activity, and information. Aharony's (2012) process and Golbeck et al.'s (2010) coding were replicated to shape the protocol and process of content analysis in this present study.

Twitter Use by Politicians

The structure of Twitter is designed to allow for a kind of dissemination of information, just as DeSanctis and Poole (1994) suggested in their research. With a 140-character maximum, Twitter is used to send out small bursts of information to large groups of people. The PEW Internet Project conducted in 2012 found that 66% of adults who are online use social networking sites. In this study, 75% of these adult users say their friends post at least some content related to politics, and 37% of users post political related material on these sites at least occasionally (Smith and Rainie, 2012). This real-time information network allows for politicians to connect to users almost instantaneously and gives them the ability to share information with people while gathering feedback.

Ultimately, Aharony (2012) suggested, “As the political leaders use Twitter, they use a channel that is not filtered by local or national media, thus they are able to convey their own unique agendas without being censored or filtered.” With a free means of expressing their own personal, independent opinions concerning various topics, political leaders connect to voters on a more personal level, bypassing the media. “There is a significant amount of direct communication taking place between Congresspeople and users who send them questions or comments” (Golbeck et al., 2010). A study done by Ingenito (2010) indicated that “today, tens of thousand of political discussions currently populated on [social networking sites] allow members from around the corner and across the globe to discuss and debate issues, trends, and topics they find most interesting and immediate (2).”

Research Questions

This research, propelled by the past studies reviewed, looked at the characteristics and tactical strategies of high intensity use of Twitter by incumbent Scott Rigell (R) and candidate Paul Hirschbiel (D) in Virginia's 2nd Congressional District election, 2012. Based on this discussion, this paper posed the following questions:

- What is the content of incumbent Scott Rigell's and competitor Paul Hirschbiel's social
-

media usage of Twitter in the election?

- How does each candidate distinctively cultivate Twitter to attract voters?

III. Method

As Hampton Roads, the 2nd Congressional District of Virginia, is one of the top-most regions saturated with political advertisements during this upcoming congressional election, this study analyzed the congressional Twitter strategies of this district's Republican incumbent Scott Rigell and Democratic candidate Paul Hirschbiel.

Content analysis is described as a means of "sorting messages into different categories according to some set of classification criteria" (Rosenberry and Vicker, 2009). This methodology was an effective way of analyzing Twitter user accounts, sorting through the user's mass amounts of posts, and organizing them in a clear, concise manner. The aim of using a content analysis approach was to attain a big picture understanding of a phenomenon by looking at the underlying concepts or categories describing the phenomenon (Elo and Kyngas, 2007). Its efficient coding methodology allows for a swift analysis of information.

Data Gathering

In order to conduct this content analysis, the researcher collected the 200 most recent posts, or tweets, from both Congressional candidates-- incumbent Scott Rigell and candidate Paul Hirschbiel. For most congressional Twitter accounts, the number of tweets by each candidate is dependent on how long they have used Twitter (Golbeck, Grimes, and Rogers, 2010). This was the case with Rigell, who was an early adopter of Twitter and had gained a following throughout his past term in Congress. With this in mind, only the most recent 200 tweets from each candidate's user account were evaluated. The tweets were analyzed to provide insight into the content and types of posts Rigell and Hirschbiel were producing.

Coding

Each tweet was classified into as many classes as was appropriate. The classes for this coding scheme were developed based on previous research (Aharony, 2012, and Golbeck et al., 2010) in addition to using a clustering approach, creating new categories whenever a main emerging topic did not match any existing categories. Classification labels and descriptions were drawn from the methods section of Golbeck et al.'s research conducted in 2010.

- DC-- Direct Communication: A message directed at a specific person with the @id convention. Direct Communication was divided into the following two mutually exclusive subclasses:
 - * IC-- Internal Communication: This included messages from one candidate to another politician or from a candidate to a staff member.
 - * OC-- External Communication: All other messages, such as those to constituents, were marked as external communication.
 - PM--Personal Message: These are non-business oriented messages or notes, such as holiday greetings or other personal sentiments.
 - Activities: A message reporting on the candidate's activities. This was divided into two mutually exclusive subclasses:
 - * OB-- Official Business: This included any official business including voting, committee meetings, or making speeches on the house floor.
 - * LA-- Location or Activity: This code was used when a candidate was describing non-official activities including trips, meetings with constituents, lobbyists, or non-Congressional organizations, or activities in the home district.
 - IN-- Information: This code describes a message that provides a fact, opinion, link to an article, position on an issue, or resource.
 - RA-- Requesting Action: When a candidate requests constituents to take some action like signing a petition or voting, the message is coded this way.
-

- **FU-- Fundraising:** Messages occasionally ask for donations and contributions, and were coded as fundraising.

Not all tweets had one code; in fact some fit into two or even three categories. Once coded, the most popular categories from Rigell's tweets were compared with those of Hirschbiel's. The coder started at October 20, 2012, on each candidate's Twitter feed and proceeded to look back at the past tweets until reaching the 200th post, excluding "reply" tweets. The coding was compiled in an excel spreadsheet and analyzed based on the number of times each tweet fell into each category. The resulting findings provide insight into how the Republican and Democratic candidates distinctly cultivate Twitter to attract voters.

IV. Findings

The goal of the current study was to analyze the tactical strategies and characteristics of incumbent Scott Rigell's and competitor Paul Hirschbiel's social media usage of Twitter in the election. To code the content of these tweets, the researcher used a number of categories (as described in the methodology): Internal and External Communication, Personal Message, Official Business, Location or Activity, Information, Requesting Action, and Fundraising. On several occasions, tweets were coded into more than one category. Tweets could be coded in several categories.

Overall Twitter Use

For congressional candidates, the number of tweets and followers is dependent on how long they have been using Twitter, the frequency at which they post. Congressman Scott Rigell, who was an early adopter of Twitter and has served a term in office, had a total of 1,058 tweets and 3,683 followers as of October 20, 2012. Hirschbiel, his competitor, had a total of 224 tweets and 236 followers on said date.

Tweet Types and Content

Informational tweets (IN), the majority, accounted for a little more than 30% for both candidates. The vast majority of these Information tweets had links to other articles or resources relevant to their campaign. Information posts often read like mini-press releases (Golbeck, Grimes, and Rogers, 2010). The following sample of tweets provides an accurate snapshot of the type of content posted.

- **RepScottRigell:** The Rigell Report: Changing Congress and Leading by Example.
- **RepScottRigell:** Today is the eleventh anniversary of Operation Enduring Freedom. Freedom and liberty are paid for by heavy sacrifice.
- **RepScottRigell:** Rigell supports & House passes National Security and Job Protection Act to stop sequestration:
 - **RepScottRigell:** Yesterday in Afghanistan we lost more courageous American service members. Let their sacrifice for our freedoms never be forgotten.
 - **PaulHirschbiel:** There has been a lot of false information out there about Medicare. Listen to Paul set the record straight.
 - **PaulHirschbiel:** Check out the Daily Press' story on Paul's Small Business Plan:
 - **PaulHirschbiel:** The Daily Press confirms what we have known all along: this is going to be a close race

Following these Information posts were Location or Activity posts, used when the candidate was giving updates about meetings, personal activities in the home district, visits with lobbyists, or non-Congressional organizations, or trips. These Location or Activity posts (LA) accounted for about 20% of the candidate's tweets. Again, the following posts from this category provide a representation of the kind of content found.

- **RepScottRigell:** Always love visiting
 - **RepScottRigell:** Great day to be in a parade!
 - **RepScottRigell:** Teri and I are so honored to be a part of tonight's Still Hope Foundation Gala! Learn about them here:
 - **PaulHirschbiel:** I posted 26 photos on Facebook in the album "Congressman Bobby Scott's 36th
-

Annual Labor Day Cookout”

- **PaulHirschbiel:** Pumped up crowd tonight! Enjoyed talking with great leaders like
- **PaulHirschbiel:** Had a blast this weekend at the new OFA Office in Norfolk! The crowd was as fired up as they come and ready to work!
- **PaulHirschbiel:** Great turnout at the Eastern Shore Harvest Festival today! Here with my good friend Senator Northam!

However, when Official Business (OB) activity-related posts are added to the Location or Activity tweets, the total number of activity posts takes a shift, and the percentage increases for both parties. Official Business tweets are similar to those shown above, but they are restricted to official business in Congress, including voting, committee meetings, or making speeches on the house floor (Golbeck et al., 2010). For example:

- **RepScottRigell:** It’s a good day! First, my
- **RepScottRigell:** I’ll be speaking on the House floor around 7:30 tonight. Topic - stopping
- **PaulHirschbiel:** Tonight Paul is participating in an AARP tele-townhall sharing his vision for creating jobs and protecting Medicare!
- **PaulHirschbiel:** Today Paul announced his Congressional Reform Agenda, which will help end the partisanship in Congress and bring...

A unique way of embodying both categories, Official Business and Information, can be seen in Hirschbiel’s frequent posts that led his followers to Facebook albums. Often, these posts gave links to images of the candidate at political events and Congressional functions. These messages were coded in Official Business Activity and Information categories since they gave insight into Congressional activity while serving as a resource for information on his political stance based on events attended. Examples of these tweets are as follows,

- **PaulHirschbiel:** I posted 4 photos on Facebook in the album “Education Roundtable #2”
- **PaulHirschbiel:** I posted 2 photos on Facebook in the album “Women’s Roundtable”
- **PaulHirschbiel:** I posted 4 photos on Facebook in the album “Congressional Reform Roundtable”

As seen in FIG 1, Congressman Rigell’s Official Business updates were found increasingly more often than candidate Hirschbiel’s, for a total of 47 tweets (making up 15% of his official business content) vs. Hirschbiel’s 18 tweets (5%). When added together, Rigell’s activity posts make up 37% of his Twitter content. Hirschbiel’s activity posts, official business (OB) and location or activity (LA), total 26%.

Rigell and Hirschbiel posted few quotes requesting action (RA) from their followers, both equaling 6%. These posts sent followers to outside sources for volunteering, registering to vote, and applying for various forms of service, as seen in the following tweets.

- **RepScottRigell:** NOTICE! Application materials for service academy nominations are due 11/1/12.

• **RepScottRigell:** What would you most like to hear from President Obama? Vote here:

- **PaulHirschbiel:** TODAY IS THE VOTER

REGISTRATION DEADLINE IN VIRGINIA! Make sure your voice is heard!

- **PaulHirschbiel:** Watch Paul’s new ad and then share it with 5 friends.

Divided into two mutually exclusive categories—Internal (IC) and External Communication (EC)—Direct Communication refers to messages directed at a specific person with the @id convention. Direct Communication (DC) posts were in Congressman Rigell’s posts more often than candidate Hirschbiel’s. Rigell posted a combined 14% of tweets that directly communicated with other twitter users; this includes congressman, staff members, friends and constituents. Hirschbiel’s direct communication, however, made up only 5% of his Twitter post content, for a total of 14 tweets directed to other Twitter users.

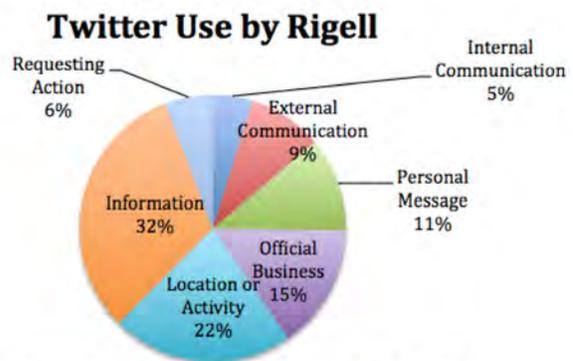


FIG. 1. The types of content posted by Congressman Scott Rigell.

External Communication posts are messages sent directly from the Congressman to another Twitter user outside of Congress. These connections (@) were typically found at the beginning or end of the message as a way of recognizing a constituent. These posts were also coded in other categories including Location or Activity or Official Business.

- **RepScottRigell:** Honored to be recognized by
- **RepScottRigell:** It was great to speak with the hard-working men and women
- **RepScottRigell:** Looking forward to visiting
- **PaulHirschbiel:** Thanks for the follow
- **PaulHirschbiel:** Happy 7th Anniversary to all the staff over at

As seen in the above posts, Hirschbiel used external communication to thank constituents for following his page, as well as recognizing friends who have helped with his campaign. Rigell used this type of post differently, however, communicating (@) with organizations rather than individuals.

Internal Communications posts, referring to Congressman to Congressman or Congressman to Congressional staff communication, occurred rarely. Messages tweeted internally looked like:

- **RepScottRigell:** Pleased to be here w/
- **RepScottRigell:** Happy Birthday
- **RepScottRigell:** So grateful to have support of

Making it Personal

The most dramatic change in content between Democratic candidate Paul Hirschbiel and Republican Congressman Scott Rigell is in the use of Personal Messages (PM). As seen in FIG 2, Hirschbiel's personal message posts accounted for more than double the number of Rigell's. These posts are non-business oriented, more informal messages or notes such as greetings, appreciations, or other personal sentiments. With a total of 28%, Hirschbiel's personal messages account for the second highest category of his tweets, coming second to information posts (35%). Rigell's personal messages make up 11% of his posts.

As previously mentioned, on several occasions tweets were coded in more than one category. These personal messages often fell into other categories, such as Location or Activity, Official Business, or Information. The following posts provide a snapshot of the kinds of tweets in this category.

- **RepScottRigell:** Excited to play the drums at YouthBand's Ultimate Summer Jam tonight in
- **RepScottRigell:** Great way 2 start Mothers Day! Daughter Shannon made cinnamon rolls from scratch this morning 4 her amazing mom, Teri.
- **PaulHirschbiel:** I posted 6 photos on Facebook in the album "Meet and Greet with my Mom"
- **PaulHirschbiel:** Looking forward to cheering on former Hampton University track sprinter Francena McCorory in the 400 meter sprint today!
- **PaulHirschbiel:** I posted 11 photos on Facebook in the album "Memorial Day Weekend"
- **PaulHirschbiel:** Happy Valentines Day. I am so thankful for the love of my life Susan and my two amazing children Anna and Matt.

Unlike Congressman Rigell's personal messages, Hirschbiel's posts often contained references to Facebook albums he had posted from family events. These tweets were coded in Personal Message and Location or Activity categories since they gave followers personal insight into his private activities. An interpre-

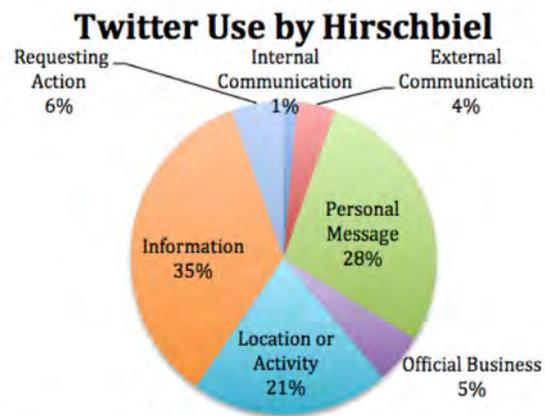


FIG. 2. The types of content posted by candidate Paul Hirschbiel.

tation of this Twitter use is put in the next section.

V. Conclusion

The primary goal of this study was to define the tactical strategies of incumbent Scott Rigell and competitor Paul Hirschbiel's social media use of Twitter in the 2012 Congressional election. Past research indicated that congressmen on Twitter in 2010 primarily used it to disseminate information, particularly links to news articles and blog posts, as well as updating the public on current activity (Golbeck, et al., 2010). Until now, research in this area has been broad—focusing on all Congressmen using Twitter—and has not been confined to a specific congressional district during a political race. This study sought to narrow it to two individuals running in the 2012 general election in the 2nd Congressional District of Virginia. As the election is in November 2012, only one month away from the date of gathered research, this study is timely and a strong indicator of how these candidates are using Twitter to inform and engage their publics.

To conduct this study, the researcher used content analysis to collect, categorize, and code the 200 most recent Twitter posts, or tweets, shared by each candidate starting October 20, 2012. The resulting findings provided insight into how Scott Rigell and Paul Hirschbiel distinctively cultivated Twitter to attract voters.

At its most basic level, the findings of this study are consistent with past research and findings about congressional posts. The two candidates, Scott Rigell and Paul Hirschbiel, used Twitter to (1) post information and (2) tweet about their current activity, making up over 60% of each candidate's posts. Gerardine DeSanctis' and Marshall Scott Poole's (1994) Adaptive Structuration Theory (AST) mentioned in the literature review supports this idea that social media sites are a means of transferring information from one societal group to another and that this informational exchange is two-sided and circulates from structure to system and system to structure. The AST also makes the assumption that as this social networking device advances and there is an increase in "interpenetration of structure," it can impact an entire social organization and inspire change (DeSanctis and Poole, 1994). In the case of this study, the social networking device is Twitter, and Rigell and Hirschbiel used it as a means of attracting voters in a social structure.

In the political realm, Twitter creates opportunities for politicians to motivate and activate their followers and differentiate themselves from their competitor. Although the research showed that both candidates use Twitter to post information and update followers about their current activity, there are differences in the direct communication and personal messages posted by the candidates.

Motivate, Activate, and Differentiate

Motivate. The top-most employed tactical strategy used by Hirschbiel and Rigell in their Twitter posts is informational tweets. The vast majority of these informational tweets have links to other articles or resources relevant to their campaigns. By sharing information, the candidates provide their Twitter followers with facts, figures, and incentives to side with their campaign. This kind of political information effort arouses citizens and gets the candidates one step closer to their desired goal: more votes. Since Twitter is being used to aggregate and disseminate information to the broad population of the candidates' Twitter followers, leveraging its power can reconnect citizens to the voting process and inspire political excitement.

Activate. Following the use of information posts are activity posts—both official business and location updates—used when the candidate informs followers about congressional meetings, personal activities in the home district, visits with lobbyists, or non-Congressional organizations, or trips. By tweeting about current activity to followers, the candidates excite political participation and activate volunteers. For example, Hirschbiel tweeted: "Had a blast this weekend at the new OFA Office in Norfolk! The crowd was as fired up as they come and ready to work!" One might notice in Hirschbiel's post that he mentions volunteers are already at the event "ready to work." A tweet like this informs followers about the volunteer work that citizens are doing for Hirschbiel's campaign, while instilling excitement about potential volunteer opportunities for his followers in the future.

Twitter has the power to influence attitudes about politicians, set agendas, and even shape outcomes of campaigns (Gale Opposing Viewpoints, 2010). After opening up the door to this kind of social media interaction with the public, politicians are smart to use Twitter to their advantage. As previously mentioned, the Adaptive Structuration Theory asserts the idea that a social media device can influence an entire social

structure and inspire change in behavior. Effective use of location and activity posts is an important means of inspiring citizens to take a more active role in their preferred candidate's campaign.

Differentiate. Content analysis reveals that Republican candidate Scott Rigell posted more direct communication tweets—internal and external—than Democratic candidate Paul Hirschbiel. These kinds of tweets were directed at a specific person with the @id convention and intentionally created a connection between Rigell and his followers. With Twitter's increasing popularity, organizations and individuals are striving to separate themselves from the many social media users around them. Using direct communication likely reflects the way in which Congressman Rigell differentiates himself from his competitor.

While Congressman Rigell uses direct communication to target his followers, candidate Paul Hirschbiel takes the more informal, non-business oriented approach, posting personal messages about his daily routine, personal sentiments, and family updates. Although Rigell tweeted personal messages on his Twitter feed, the percentage of Hirschbiel's tweets coded as personal messages (28%) was more than double that of Rigell's (11%). Candidate Hirschbiel engages with his Twitter followers by making himself more "human," perhaps in hopes of seeming more accessible to the public. This pattern has significant implications for voters' understanding of how Hirschbiel distinctively cultivates Twitter to attract them.

Seen in the two political candidates' Twitter campaigns, Twitter is an influential tool that if used correctly, can activate and motivate supporters. Twitter and other forms of social media provide a direct link from the candidates to the public, enabling them to differentiate themselves from their competitor, target a specific audience, increase their financial base of support, and attract new voters. By their very nature, "social" media outlets help a candidate reach the public through a more personal and intimate avenue than through the television and radio ads that have previously limited their direct contact with potential supporters. Candidates can post videos and tweets from campaign stops, put up testimonials, share their political views, state their parties' platforms, and show their involvement in the community using the friendly, personal, and immediate avenue of social media. If harnessed effectively, Twitter, and social media as a whole, has the unprecedented potential to create grassroots support for a candidate never before seen in American politics.

Future Study

Although this study was concise and timely, a future study might analyze outgoing tweets from congressional candidates as well as the responses, re-tweets, and discussions these posts stimulate with their followers. Also, a future study of politics and Twitter could analyze the impact of different kinds of tweets and their potential relationship with the outcome of the political election.

For this study the researcher excluded "reply" tweets on the candidate's account. Originally, the researcher wanted to collect data more extensively; however, with limited time the research was capped. In addition, there was only one researcher conducting the content analysis of the tweets. If two or more researchers had been involved in coding, the results might have been more reliable.

Both candidates had two Twitter accounts—one personal and one political—and, although similar tweets were posted on both the candidates' accounts, the findings in this study were gathered only from the congressional Twitter accounts of these particular candidates, not from their personal accounts.

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Truth and Context in the 2012 Presidential Debates

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Abstract

Today's modern age has led to a plethora of information available at the fingertips of all voters. During the 2012 presidential election cycle and specifically, during the three presidential debates that occurred in the fall, candidates Barack Obama and Mitt Romney spewed facts and political rhetoric, often seemingly with little regard for the truth or context of those facts. An overabundance of information available to today's voters could not help them to separate the truth from the lies told by the candidates, especially as they seemed far more interested by buzz-worthy moments and personal digs than actual facts. Through media analysis of three presidential debates and three surveys, this study found out that presidential debates are tools to reinforce old messages rather than convey new ones.

I. Introduction

Since the mid-20th century, the televised debates that precede presidential elections have become a staple of the campaign season. In what has become traditional debate format, there is little room for live fact-checking on stage and many moderators neglect to challenge candidates in their responses, so media pick up the slack, both during and after, fact-checking and providing background and context on statements made within the debates. Without such context, the average viewer may have little to no concept of how the given fact or statistic actually fits in to the larger policy, economic or social issue and is left only with the perception the candidate gave, rather than the complete picture. This paper sought to prove that in the widening gap between conservatives and liberals in the United States, 2012 candidates Barack Obama and Mitt Romney resorted to using facts and figures at will, often incorrectly or out of context, in an attempt to win voter favor and capitalize on polarizing viewpoints.

II. Literature Review

In the 1960 election season, the United States was introduced to a new, radical campaign tool: a televised debate between the presidential candidates from the nation's main political parties.¹ The importance of the introduction of this highly visual medium as a critical tool in the presidential race was affirmed when next-day polling of the first televised debate between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy concluded that those who had listened to the debate on the radio thought Nixon had won, while those that had watched considered

1 David S. Birdsell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. *Presidential Debates: The Challenge of Creating an Informed Electorate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 5.

* **Keywords:** Debates, politics, media, election, president
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Kennedy the victor.²

Since the 1960 debate, eleven general campaigns in the United States have included televised debates.³ Rhetorical scholar J. Jeffery Auer identified six major characteristics of every debate: “1) a confrontation, 2) in equal and adequate time, 3) of matched contestants, 4) on a stated proposition, 5) to gain an audience decision” and 6) rule governance.”⁴ The debates offer a unique opportunity to see the candidates side by side on an even playing field, for an extended period of time (90 minutes is the traditional length) and with the opportunity for more spontaneous statements and interaction (as opposed to scripted, rehearsed speeches and interviews).⁵

Some scholars argue the debates play an important role in the election process. Debates can assist undecided voters in making decisions, prevent possible partisan ship-jumpers from voting for the other party, cause increased turnout on Election Day and most basically, provide any and all voters with more information, regardless of whether they pick their candidate based partly or solely on the debate at all.⁶ But still, others point to studies that suggest the presidential debates have had very little effect on the ultimate election result; the candidate leading at the time surrounding the debate goes on to win.⁷

In other words, there have been no significant occurrences of “game-changers” (race upsets) as a result of debates, a phrase so often used by modern media to describe debate performances. While the debates are popular television events and they do teach new information, that new information is unlikely to change the minds of any viewers.⁸ When talking about truth and lies, in some cases, as in an 1976 debate between Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, the viewing audience is incapable of even noticing when a candidate is making a gaffe, or incorrect statement, until the news media bring it to their attention. In the 1976 debate, Ford famously said there was no Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe, clearly an incorrect statement.⁹ However, despite this egregious error, there was no huge flip-flop in polling numbers and the downward slide of Carter continued at the same pace it had before the debate.¹⁰

By looking at studies of past presidential debates, it can be seen that the activities that occur during televised debates are predictable, and while many argue, can be significant, no televised debate in modern history has proved to be a “game-changer” in the trend of the election. Before the first presidential debates of 2012, columnist Peggy Noonan said, “It is true that the debate has the potential to alter the dynamic of the election. A good or great one, followed up by an improved, more serious campaign, could make everything new again. A bad one would do damage indeed.”¹¹ Noonan was echoing the sentiments of Benoit and his co-authors,¹² although this paper would prove that the debates really turned out as Sides concluded,¹³ having very little impact on the ultimate outcome of the election.

2 Sidney Kraus, “Winners of the First 1960 Televised Presidential Debate Between Kennedy and Nixon,” *Journal of Communication* 46, no. 4 (1996, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1996.tb01507.x/abstract>).

3 William Benoit, et al., “A meta-analysis of the effects of viewing U.S. presidential debates,” *Communication Monographs* 70, no. 4 (2003), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0363775032000179133>.

4 *Presidential Debates*, 10.

5 “A meta-analysis,” 336.

6 *Ibid.*

7 John Sides, “Do Presidential Debates Really Matter?” *Washington Monthly*, September/October 2012, http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/septemberoctober_2012/ten_miles_square/do_presidential_debates_really039413.php (October 21, 2012).

8 *Ibid.*

9 M.J. Stephy, “Top 10 Debate Flubs: Gerald Ford, 1976,” *Time*, June 13, 2011, http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2077515_2077516_2077513,00.html (October 21, 2012).

10 “Do Presidential Debates Really Matter?”

11 Peggy Noonan, “2012 Debates: This is it, Mitt,” *The Wall Street Journal*, September 28, 2012, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390443916104578022811751382342.html> (November 15, 2012).

12 “A meta-analysis,” 336.

13 “Do Presidential Debates Really Matter?”

III. Methods

Two main methods were used to gather information for this paper. The first method used was a combination of media and debate analysis. Media outlets (both television, print and online) focused on certain points in the debate where the candidates told lies or gave facts out of context. By looking at these facts and their own context within the debate transcripts, a more comprehensive framework can be found with which to analyze these moments. In other words, topics specified by media outlets indicate what moments within the debate are worth closer examination.

The second was the use of exit surveys at three debate-watching events at Elon University. At each of these events, which were co-hosted by College Republicans, College Democrats and the Political Forum, a nonpartisan group, all students were invited to come and watch the televised debate in a common space on campus. At the conclusion of each of the debates, the attending students were asked to complete a two-page survey that contained a variety of questions about each of the candidates' performance and their perception of the lies told or facts given out of context. However, it should be noted that there were inherent problems with the results of this method. The respondents and thereby, results, were very skewed to the Democratic Party and Obama. But, despite this flaw, there are still a few interesting conclusions to be drawn.

IV. Debate and Media Analysis

Debate 1: October 3, 2012

The first debate took place at the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado. It was moderated by Jim Lehrer of PBS's *NewsHour* and was intended to consist of six individual segments on domestic policy. Instead, the segments merged into one and Lehrer struggled to get a word in edgewise, let alone challenge any affirmation made by either candidate.

FactCheck.Org, a project by the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, said both candidates uttered "exaggerations and false claims" in their first meeting.¹⁴ Much of the first debate was focused on the economy, or the candidates managed to bring the thread of conversation back to the economy. In even his opening statement, Barack Obama began with facts on the economy, stating that five million jobs had been added to the private sector in the past 30 months.¹⁵ While that fact may be true as stated by preliminary revisions of a report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, it is the first example of a statement removed from context, in this case, historical perspective. In the recovery from the 2001 downturn, during George W. Bush's presidency, five million jobs were added in the 30 months following the lowest point of that economic slump, just like the recovery from 2008. The two economic downturns before 2001, however, saw faster recovery than did the '01 and '08 events, making both Bush and Obama's numbers off historic pace.¹⁶ Obama then told an outright lie about Republican candidate Mitt Romney's tax plan, which he said called for a \$5 trillion tax cut.¹⁷ While Romney has proposed cutting numerous taxes and extending the Bush tax cuts, the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center estimated this would only result in a \$480 billion cut in the year 2015. The figure Obama gave was an extrapolation of the cut over ten years, not just in one. Romney also said he wanted to broaden the tax base, which could make up for that lost revenue.¹⁸ The use of this extrapolation is an ideal example of the use of context as manipulation. By using this much larger sum of \$5 trillion, Obama sought to paint Romney as an irresponsible budgeter and someone who would greatly increase the

14 "Dubious Denver Debate Declarations," *FactCheck.Org*, October 4, 2012, <http://factcheck.org/2012/10/dubious-denver-debate-declarations/> (November 15, 2012).

15 "2012 presidential debate: President Obama and Mitt Romney's remarks in Denver on Oct. 3," *The Washington Post*, October 3, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/decision2012/2012-presidential-debate-president-obama-and-mitt-romneys-remarks-in-denver-on-oct-3-running-transcript/2012/10/03/24d6eb6e-0d91-11e2-bd1a-b868e65d57eb_story.html, (November 15, 2012).

16 Paul Davidson, et al., "Debate fact check: 2nd look at taxes, job gains," *USA TODAY*, October 4, 2012, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2012/10/03/fact-checking-the-debate/1612241/>, (November 15, 2012).

17 "2012 presidential debate."

18 "Dubious Denver Debate Declarations."

country's deficit.

On the other side of the stage, Romney told an outright lie when he said Obama had doubled the deficit during his time in office. This is not true. The fiscal year of 2009 actually began in October 2008, when Bush was still president. The Congressional Budget Office had already estimated that the deficit for 2009 would top \$1.2 billion, before Obama was even elected or took office. To the uneducated observer, it would appear that the dates indicate the deficit's increase took place under Obama's tenure, but in fact, it hardly did at all.¹⁹ Romney also repeated a false claim that he said several times throughout the campaign. He said Obama's health care law cuts \$716 billion from Medicare. This is unsubstantiated. The health care law cuts payments to health care providers and insurers; it doesn't take funds from Medicare recipients. *USA TODAY's* fact checking team pointed out another curious point about that false statement: Romney's vice-presidential candidate actually did propose a \$716 billion cut to Medicare recipients in his 2012 budget proposal. By using this false \$716 billion figure as an attack without mentioning that his running mate proposed a real cut of the same magnitude indicates Romney was relying on the average viewer and voter to be unfamiliar with Washington politics and will latch on to the "Obama will de-fund healthcare for senior citizens" concept, something that is untrue.²⁰

The candidates exchanged various other jabs throughout the night, on energy, health care and several other elements of the economy including tax cuts for the wealthy, a main point of contention throughout the campaign. Polling by both CNN and CBS right after the conclusion of the debate showed that the majority of debate-watchers thought Romney "won," by a nearly 3-to-1 margin in CNN's study²¹ and 2-to-1 margin in CBS's.²²

Debate 2: October 16, 2012

Nearly two full weeks after the first debate, CNN's Candy Crowley moderated the second in Hempstead, New York, at Hofstra University. This one was "town hall style," quite different from the first as it was attended by a group of undecided voters, all of whom had come up with their own questions to ask of Obama and Romney. Crowley and her team selected the questions, which the voters themselves asked. Crowley provided some, but not much, direction beyond that. This debate was also much different than the ones that came before or after because the candidates were allowed to stand while giving responses, and move about the small stage, creating a far more hostile air.

It was also in the second debate that Romney offered a third category to the truth and context classification: reversals of previous statements. Romney offered up several statements that could be declared lies if held up against previous assertions.

Like the first debate, many of the challengeable statements made by both candidates came back to the economy, or some facet of it. In the first question posed by one of the audience members, Romney stated that he wanted to keep the nation's federal Pell Grant program "growing."²³ Previously, Romney had called the program "unsustainable." His running mate, Paul Ryan, again, had called for massive cuts to the program.²⁴ Romney had a similar reversal of opinion when he stated he wouldn't cut taxes for the wealthy. What Romney probably meant was that he wouldn't cut taxes for "just" the wealthy, since he called for cuts for all. Romney also gave incorrect facts about the number of women who had lost their jobs since Obama took office (it's only 93,000 as factored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, not Romney's stated 580,000).²⁵

Obama had a similar number of fact gaffes, mostly when discussing his opponent's position on issues

19 Ibid.

20 Davidson, et al.

21 "CNN Poll: Most watchers say Romney debate winner," *CNN*, October 3, 2012, <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2012/10/03/cnn-poll-romney-wins-debate-by-big-margin/>, November 15, 2012.

22 "CBS News Instant Poll: Romney wins first presidential debate," *CBS News*, October 3, 2012, <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7424218n>, November 15, 2012.

23 "Transcript and Audio: Second Presidential Debate," *NPR*, October 16, 2012, <http://www.npr.org/2012/10/16/163050988/transcript-obama-romney-2nd-presidential-debate>, November 15, 2012.

24 Michael Stratford, "In Debate, Romney Voices Support for Expanding Pell Grant," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 17, 2012, <http://chronicle.com/blogs/decision/2012/10/17/in-debate-romney-voices-support-for-expanding-pell-grant-program/>

25 "FactChecking the Hofstra Debate," *FactCheck.Org*, October 17, 2012, <http://factcheck.org/2012/10/fact-checking-the-hofstra-debate/>, November 15, 2012.

like immigration and new energy. He incorrectly stated that Romney called Arizona's immigration law a "model" for the nation and that Romney said jobs in the wind industry were "imaginary."²⁶ In both cases, Obama was manipulating quotes made by Romney on those topics. He had indeed called a part of Arizona's immigration law a "model," but just a part.²⁷ Romney had also not called jobs in wind energy "imaginary," but had said Obama had a vision of an "imaginary world where government-subsidized windmills and solar panels could power the economy."²⁸

But the largest fact-check of the night occurred on stage when Obama publicly challenged a statement made by Romney and was then backed up by moderator Crowley, resulting in audible applause from the audience, something that was not supposed to happen. Romney thought he was catching the president in a lie, challenging him about his debate statement that he called the attacks on the American embassy in Benghazi, Libya an "act of terror," the day after the event in a speech in the Rose Garden of the White House.

"I want to make sure we get that for the record, because it took the president 14 days before he called the attack in Benghazi an act of terror," Romney said, to which Obama replied, "Get the transcript."²⁹

The overall nature of the debate was more offensive as opposed to defensive than the first. Both candidates seemed to be on the attack. There was a reversal in the polling numbers on which candidate "won," although there was a far narrower margin between the two. In both the CNN³⁰ and CBS News³¹ post-debate poll, Obama beat Romney by seven points.

Debate 3: October 22, 2012

Just six days after the Hofstra debate, Bob Schieffer of CBS's *Face the Nation*, moderated the final debate at Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida. Although it was divided into six segments like the first debate, this one was on the topic of foreign policy, although it sometimes veered off track.

This was also the first debate in which one of the candidates (Obama) got truly catty and seemed to be stepping outside of the bounds of respectful debate discourse. The first occurrence happened when Romney said the United States Navy had less active ships than any time since 1917. This is a lie. According to the Naval History and Heritage Command, the number of active duty ships hit at all-time low since the 19th century in 2007 under Bush's second term, when just 278 vessels were active. There are now 285 active vessels (2011 figure).³² But in response to this claim, Obama retorted:

Well, Governor, we also have fewer horses and bayonets, because the nature of our military's changed. We have these things called aircraft carriers, where planes land on them. We have these ships that go underwater, nuclear submarines. And so the question is not a game of Battleship, where we're counting slips. It's what are our capabilities.³³

Obama also had a sarcastic comment about statements Romney made on Russia several months before the debates.

Throughout the debate, most of Obama's misrepresentations were about Romney's positions, not just on foreign policy, but also on education and health care, despite the intended focus of the debate. A verbal altercation about Romney's position on bailing out the American auto industry occurred as Obama said Romney didn't support giving funds to these companies.³⁴ Romney insisted that he did not support letting the auto in-

26 Ibid.

27 Paul Davidson, et al, "Debate fact check: 2nd look at taxes, job gains," *USA TODAY*, October 4, 2012, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2012/10/03/fact-checking-the-debate/1612241/>, (November 15, 2012).

28 "FactChecking the Hofstra Debate."

29 "Transcript and Audio: Second Presidential Debate."

30 "Poll: CNN Poll: Who won the second presidential debate?" *CNN*, October 16, 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/POLITICS/pollingcenter/polls/3274>, (November 15, 2012).

31 "Poll: Obama edges Romney in second presidential debate," *CBS News*, October 16, 2012, <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=50133279n>, (November 15, 2012).

32 "U.S. Navy Active Ship Force Levels, 1886-present," *Naval History and Heritage Command*, June 10, 2011, <http://www.history.navy.mil/branches/org9-4.htm#2000>, (November 15, 2012).

33 "Transcript: Presidential debate, Oct. 22, 2012 (text, video)," *Politico*, October 22, 2012, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1012/82712.html>, (November 15, 2012).

34 "Transcript: Presidential debate."

dustry go bankrupt, but his own words are in direct contrast to that fact. In a November 18, 2008 op-ed piece in the *New York Times* titled "Let Detroit Go Bankrupt," Romney said "If General Motors, Ford and Chrysler get the bailout that their chief executives asked for yesterday, you can kiss the American automotive industry goodbye."³⁵ However, it is clear that Romney supported federal loan guarantees for car companies.³⁶

On education, Romney restated a fact he commonly brought up throughout the campaign that students in Massachusetts were very highly ranked during his governorship. While this is true, these rankings were just as high before Romney took office and remained there after he left the governorship, an important point of context he left out.³⁷ Obama also had a dramatic out-of-context fact, saying that unemployment among veterans of the United States military is lower than that of the general population. While this may be true, Obama neglected to mention that this doesn't include veterans of wars started since 2003, Iraq and Afghanistan. They actually have an unemployment rate that is higher than that of the general population and peaked at 15.2 percent during Obama's first term.³⁸

The third and final debate had the most on-stage fact checking between the two candidates of all three matchups, and the margins of victory were even wider than the second debate. The CBS post-debate poll showed that Obama "won" the debate 2 to 1.³⁹ The CNN poll was narrower, with just an eight-point lead for Obama over Romney.⁴⁰

Exit Surveys

Three exit surveys were held to ask questions on their demographics and their perception of candidates, along with one open-ended question. (See Table 1 for full survey results from this section of analysis.). In a survey after Debate 1, there were 20 Democrats, 1 Republican and 12 in the Independents/Other category. In the second survey, there were 6 Democrats and 4 in the Independents/Other category. In the third survey, there were 20 Democrats, 2 Republicans, 6 in the Independents/Other category, and 1 with no answer. The participants were composed of 38 females and 28 males in these surveys combined. One did not indicate his or her gender.

Obama was their chosen candidate for 23, 8 and 23 participants in each of three surveys respectively. Romney was chosen as their favored candidate by 3, 0, and 2 participants in each of three surveys. There were three participants who favored the other candidate.

Including responses from all three debates, 77 percent of respondents said the debate did not influence for whom they intended to vote. This supports Sides' theory that presidential debates don't actually matter in determining the outcome of an election. Just four respondents across all three said the debate performance changed their mind about their candidate selection. Across all debates, the respondents, who said they were moderately to extremely politically aware, also ranked the performances of both candidates in terms of truth with little variation. They gave Obama a "truthfulness ranking" of 3.8 out of 5, while giving Romney just 2.6 out of 5. More respondents also said Obama was either "straightforward" or "somewhat straightforward" far more often than they did Romney, who was more often ranked "somewhat straightforward" or "not straightforward."

The opinions and preferences of the survey-takers were very skewed towards the Democratic Party and President Obama (65 percent identified as Democrat and 76 percent said they were going to vote for Obama). At all three events combined, just three people identified as Republican. Within the surveys, there were also several contradictory answers (respondents who identified as voting for a specific candidate also said the debate had left them still undecided). Several respondents also left questions unanswered.

35 Mitt Romney, "Let Detroit Go Bankrupt," *New York Times*, November 18, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/19/opinion/19romney.html?_r=1&, (November 15, 2012).

36 "False Claims in Final Debate," *FactCheck.Org*, October 23, 2012, <http://factcheck.org/2012/10/false-claims-in-final-debate/>, (November 15, 2012).

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 "Poll: Decisive win for Obama in final debate," *CBS News*, October 22, 2012, http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-250_162-57537795/poll-decisive-win-for-obama-in-final-debate/ (November 15, 2012).

40 "CNN Poll: Nearly half of debate watchers say Obama won showdown," *CNN*, October 22, 2012, <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2012/10/22/cnn-poll-who-won-the-debate/>, (November 15, 2012).

Table 1. Demographics and Numerical Measurements of Debate Performance

	Debate 1 (33)	Debate 2 (10)	Debate 3 (29)	All debates
Amount debate influenced candidate choice				
Didn't affect	25	8	22	55
Changed mind	2	0	2	4
Did influence but still undecided	6	1	4	11
Blank	0	1	1	1
Level of political awareness (1-5 scale)				
1	1	0	0	1
2	2	0	2	4
3	7	1	10	18
4	15	4	12	31
5	8	5	5	18
Average	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8
Obama's truthfulness (1-5 scale)				
1	1	0	0	1
2	2	0	0	2
3	9	1	9	19
4	19	8	17	44
5	2	1	3	6
Average	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7
Romney's truthfulness (1-5 scale)				
1	2	1	5	8
2	10	7	9	26
3	13	2	13	28
4	7	0	2	9
5	1	0	0	1
Average	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.6
How straightforward was Obama?				
Straightforward, told accurate facts	13	5	14	32
Somewhat straightforward, sometimes misrepresented facts	19	5	14	38
Not straightforward, manipulated facts	1	0	1	2
How straightforward was Romney?				
Straightforward, told accurate facts	2	0	2	4
Somewhat straightforward, sometimes misrepresented facts	23	3	18	44
Not straightforward, manipulated facts	8	7	9	24

The second half of the exit survey included qualitative answers about the candidates' debate performances. Respondents were asked to identify the topics about which the candidates had been truthful or untruthful. In the three debates, the greatest percentage of respondents ranked Obama "truthful" about "health care" for Debate 1 and "foreign policy" for Debates 2 and 3, as shown in Table 2. When another question was asked, on which topic was the candidate not truthful, most people chose "Don't know," followed by "economy."

Obama's opponent, Romney, had the greatest percentage of respondents say he was "truthful" about the "economy" for Debates 1 and 2. For Debate 3, the largest number of respondents said "don't know." When they were asked on which topic was the candidate not truthful, the greatest percentage of respondents said he was "not truthful" about the "economy" for Debate 1 (curiously the same topic about which he was also "truthful"). For Debate 2, there was not a dominant category. For Debate 3, it was "don't know," followed by "foreign policy."

It is worth noting that the "economy" is highly ranked as a "truthful" and a "not truthful" topic for both Obama and Romney in debates, perhaps indicating that the respondents are unable to identify when a candidate is telling a truth or lying about the economy, despite the fact that they consider themselves to possess a moderate to high level of political awareness. The alternative interpretation is that both Romney and Obama told truths and lies about the economy and that the respondents just focused on those that fit the framework they had already established about a particular candidate.

Table 2. Topics of Truth and/or Fact Manipulation

	Econ- omy	Health care	Repro- ductive rights	Foreign Policy	Same-sex marriage	Every- thing	Don't know	Noth- ing	Other	Blank
On which topic was the candidate truthful?										
Obama										
Debate 1 (33)	5	15	1	0	0	5	2	2	1	2
Debate 2 (10)	1	2	0	6	0	1	0	0	0	0
Debate 3 (29)	8	0	0	17	0	1	3	0	0	0
Romney										
Debate 1 (33)	10	0	0	1	0	2	8	4	2	6
Debate 2 (10)	3	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	1	1
Debate 3 (29)	4	1	0	9	0	0	9	1	1	4
On which topic was the candidate not truthful?										
Obama										
Debate 1 (33)	9	0	0	0	0	1	11	2	3	7
Debate 2 (10)	3	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	1
Debate 3 (29)	4	1	0	3	0	0	16	1	1	3
Romney										
Debate 1 (33)	9	6	0	1	0	3	6	0	2	5
Debate 2 (10)	2	0	1	3	0	3	1	0	0	0
Debate 3 (29)	7	3	0	8	0	1	9	0	0	1

The Debates' Impact on the Election

By examining polling numbers from before and after each debate, it can be seen that none caused a dramatic shift in numbers for either Obama or Romney (see Table 3).

Table 3. Gallup Poll Numbers Before and During Debate Season⁴¹

	Pre-Debate 1	Post- Debate 1	Post- Debate 2	Post-Debate 3	Actual outcome of election (popular vote)
Obama	49	49	48	48	51
Romney	45	46	47	47	48

It can be seen that Romney increased (marginally) in popularity among all voters polled as Election Day approached, while Obama decreased (by a single point), again, not dramatically. At no point during debate season did Romney surpass Obama in polling numbers, and was unable to unseat the incumbent president on November 6, 2012. No media outlet of significance said any debate was a “game changer” or likely to affect the election.

In fact, with the incumbent winning the presidency, with the Republican Party retaining control of the House and the Democratic Party keeping their majority in the Senate, the 2012 election was a “status quo” one, meaning nothing changed. Arguably, all three debates could have been skipped altogether without affecting the outcome whatsoever. This is, of course, disputable. Perhaps Romney might have experienced a late surge had he not had the debates to limit his growth. Or, maybe Obama would have won by a far wider margin if he hadn't had the debates to tarnish his image at all. This is all speculation, of course.

V. Conclusion

Despite the immense number of lies and the manipulation of facts told by both candidates, the real sticking points of this debate season weren't Obama's misleading the public about veteran unemployment or Romney trying to take credit for Massachusetts excellent education record over two decades. No, instead, the memorable moments were found in the quips and humorous moments, however unintentionally. Viewers will remember Obama telling Romney, “The 1980's called. They want their foreign policy back,” long before they remember that Romney called Russia the United States' greatest geopolitical foe. Romney's statements that he loves Big Bird, but wants to defund PBS will stick in the public memory much longer than his statements that he never opposed bailing out the auto industry despite clear evidence to the contrary. And Romney's “binders full of women” comment will mean more than Obama's false assertion that he'll reduce federal taxes to Clinton-era levels.

Viewers don't seem to latch on to truth and lies that the candidates tell, or if they do, perhaps they only hear the lies they can disagree with and only hear truth where they seek it. It is plausible that debate viewers are victims of the “false consensus effect,” meaning they assume certain statements are correct or incorrect because it is what they and the people that surround them think.⁴² Psychologist Drury Sherrod said people seek out candidates with whom they already agree.⁴³ This would mean that debate viewers already know who they intend to agree with while watching, and it is unlikely any number of truths, lies, or manipulations of fact will influence their opinions and perceptions.

The candidates, Obama and Romney, seemed to fall in line with this theory. Both only made statements that would please the voters they were trying to woo, both trying to appear more moderate (in Romney's case) or more successful in his first term (in Obama's case) than might be found if facts alone were taken at face value in full context. Exit polling and the election outcome indicate that neither candidate was

41 “U.S. Presidential Election Center,” *Gallup*, November 8, 2012, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/154559/US-Presidential-Election-Center.aspx>, (November 15, 2012).

42 Robyn M. Dawes, *Insights in Decision Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 179.

43 Drury Sherrod, “Selective Perception of Political Candidates,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (1971), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2747672>.

able to do anything differently to “shake up” the race, so to speak, and so another debate season passed without actually having any major impact on the election. The results suggest that debates are tools of message reinforcement, not new message conveyance, and as long as truth and lies fit into that framework, they’re fair game for use by candidates.

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Assessing Network TV *Ad Watches* in the 2012 Presidential Election

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Abstract

In today's election atmosphere, Americans are inundated with campaign advertisements during the election cycle. Much research has been done on campaign advertisements, but not much about ad watches. Ad watches are critiques or commentary of political campaign ads, often performed by mass media organizations. This study sought to determine the factors that best explain why media outlets picked up certain political advertisements during the 2012 presidential election. To make this assessment the ad watches of CNN, ABC and FOX News were analyzed. Results revealed that the ad watches by these major networks often involve a specific type of campaign advertisement, feature analyst and anchor critiques, often fact check the campaign advertisements, and use advertisements that do not feature war imagery.

I. Introduction

Everywhere voters turn, it seems they see political advertisements during an election year. The American electorate are constantly plagued by messages from candidates causing voters to tire of the election long before they go to the polls to cast their ballot. The 24-hour news cycle has also played a significant role in contributing to campaign and election news long before election season takes place. With this influx in campaign messages and the 24-hour news cycle have come *ad watches*. Print or broadcast news outlets typically perform ad watches, in which they fact check and analyze campaign commercials.

Ad watches provide an outlet for the media to discuss key campaign advertisements and provide a check on the factual information presented to voters. In recent elections ad watches have been gaining ground and are more prevalent in the media. There are key ethical practices that many news outlets use when conducting ad watches, such as placing a running announcement along the bottom of the ad to alert viewers that it is being used for an *ad watch* segment. Ethical practices such as this provide more credibility to the news sources performing the ad watches, and also provides clarity for voters who may be interested in learning about a particular advertisement.

Much research has been done in the effectiveness of campaign advertisements in general, and there is a growing area of research into the analysis of ad watches. This paper highlights some of the key research studies already performed on this area of study as well as adds to this discussion by providing additional research. Prior studies have not provided much attention on the evaluation of the advertisements themselves that major media outlets choose to cover. Therefore, this study analyzed and provided a discussion of similarities found between the ads. Performing this study during an election year provided a perfect environment for this study. The study should be beneficial to media outlets as a critique of the advertisements that they chose

* **Keywords:** Ad watches, politics, 2012 presidential election, agenda setting and television news outlets
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to spotlight. Overall, the goal of this study was to provide further insight and encourage future research into this area of study.

II. Literature Review

Ever since the first presidential election, advertising has been an integral part of the campaign process. As media technologies have advanced, the number and importance of advertisements has also grown. In today's presidential elections, voters are plagued by a plethora of advertisements for each candidate. Over the years scholars have debated the impact these promotions have on voters, and many studies have been done to assess this question. More recently, scholars have examined the role that ad watches play in elections. In this paper, ad watches were limited to assessments of political advertisements performed by media organizations.

After much debate, current scholars agreed that presidential campaign advertisements have a significant impact on voter turnout and political mobilization. Scholars have also come to the conclusion that negative campaign advertisements are more effective than positive advertisements (Brooks, 2006; Cho et al., 2009; Cho, Gotlieb, Hwang, Nam-Jin, & McLeod, 2007; Clinton & Lapinski, 2004; Freedman & Goldstein, 1999, 2002; Lau, Rovner, & Sigelman, 2007; Ridout & Smith, 2008). This research has set the foundation for other scholars to study the effectiveness of ad watches.

The following sections analyzed the evolution of this debate and provided clarity about scholars' current conclusions on the topic of ad watches. Throughout the sections the author also defined key terms, introduced the theory needed for this research, and reviewed the prior literature.

The Theory of Agenda Setting

Agenda setting theory commonly grounds several studies in communications research. The theory of agenda setting deals with the examination of the role media outlets play in shaping the public's views and/or opinions about a situation. McCombs and Shaw were some of the first scholars to study this and paved the path for other scholars to further study agenda setting. This study found that the media play a critical and independent role in determining the political issues people think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). As a result of further studies three categories of agenda setting have developed; public agenda setting, media agenda setting, and institutional agenda setting. In this study the author focused on media agenda setting, which examines why and how the public receives the coverage that it does. It deals with everything that affects news coverage, taking into account profit considerations, professional values of reporters, and organization routines. While this study analyzed the media outlets' choice of campaign advertisements to use for *ad watch* segments and the characteristics of the ads chosen, the theory of agenda setting was a driving force.

Role of Ad Watches in Agenda Setting

Several scholars have studied the role *ad watches* play in agenda setting (Bennett, 1997; Fowler & Ridout, 2009; Kaid, McKinney, Tedesco, & Gaddie, 1999; O'Sullivan & Geiger, 1995; Ridout & Smith, 2008; Sweetser, Golan, & Wanta, 2008; Tedesco, Kaid, & Melton McKinnon, 2000). Bennett's study revealed that "the media's examination of candidate advertising is selective and strategy focused," (Bennett, 1997, 1181). Results showed that as ad-related coverage decreased, the cynicism strategy increased; as the format of *ad watches* changed to include more ads highlighting the campaign process, the types of ads using this strategy decreased; and as ads condemning an opponent increased, the ad watches were increasingly used to counteract false claims (Bennett, 1997). Simply put, ad watches were strategically selected and used to shape the campaign and voters' attitudes towards candidates. Building on Bennett's study, Geiger and O'Sullivan found that voters evaluated candidates more positively when an ad watch confirmed their attack ad, and when an ad watch disconfirmed their opponents ad (O'Sullivan & Geiger, 1995). This further proves the effectiveness of media agenda setting through the use of ad watches. In another study researchers found evidence that "media continue to drive the agenda by telling the public and campaigns what to think about," (Sweetser et al., 2008, 210). Lastly, several studies have discovered that specific components of ad watches impact agenda setting. Common results across these studies include the following: Negative ads were used more frequently than positive ads; general election ad watches appeared within the first ten minutes of the news; if ads were

mentioned in a print article, the ads were the sole focus of the article; the more ads aired, the more likely the media was to have an ad watch on them; a larger market size led to more coverage; and Republicans were more likely than Democrats to get ad watch coverage (Fowler & Ridout, 2009; Kaid et al., 1999; Ridout & Smith, 2008; Tedesco et al., 2000). Clearly, ad watches are important and vital to media agenda setting.

Biases Presented in Ad Watches

Since the media are using ad watches to set the agenda, scholars decided to test if there are any biases presented in coverage of presidential election campaigns, including ad watches (D'Alessio & Allen, 2000). Overall, D'Alessio and Allen found no statistically significant correlation between media coverage of presidential elections and gatekeeping bias, coverage bias, or statement bias. However, there were two interesting patterns that emerged. First, there appears to be some difference in coverage of Republicans versus Democrats in news magazines and on TV news, but not statistically significant. Second, newsmagazines are often pro-Republican and TV news is often pro-Democrat (D'Alessio & Allen, 2000). These patterns are worth examining more closely in future studies, and this study's results would aid this discussion by charting the common characteristics of ad watch coverage.

Content of Ad Watches

Lastly, many scholars have examined the various content of ad watches, and these studies helped guide the author's study (D'Alessio & Allen, 2000; Fowler & Ridout, 2009; Kaid et al., 1999; O'Sullivan & Geiger, 1995; Ridout & Smith, 2008; Tedesco et al., 2000). Scholars have examined several aspects of ad watches including time it was aired in relation to Election Day, ad tone, the competitiveness of the race, gender of the candidate, presentation of the candidates, and ideological orientation of the ad watch. Results revealed that the closer it was to Election Day, the more ad watches there were, but the number only increased mainly because there was an increase in election coverage overall (Ridout & Smith, 2008). Overall, negative and contrast ads appeared the most frequently in ad watches (Fowler & Ridout, 2009; Kaid et al., 1999; Ridout & Smith, 2008; Tedesco et al., 2000). When campaigns became more competitive there were more ad watches (Fowler & Ridout, 2009; Ridout & Smith, 2008). In regards to the gender of the candidate, a study showed that male candidates received more ad watches than women (Kaid et al., 1999). When it came to presentation of candidates, several studies reveal that Republicans received more ad watch coverage; candidates presented first in the ad watch were more likeable; the focus was more on campaigns during primaries and on candidates during the general election; and challengers received more ad watches than incumbents (Kaid et al., 1999; O'Sullivan & Geiger, 1995; Tedesco et al., 2000). The results of this study would add to this discussion by either further supporting previous studies or adding a nuanced insight if results differ.

Putting it All Together

In conclusion, all of the studies examined set out to explore the role that ad watches play in election cycles and the agenda media outlets set. Together, all the prior studies build on each other, creating a dynamic discussion about the influence and role of ad watches. The replication of these studies would prove vital to this field of study by further supporting prior research or introducing new findings. As ad watches and communication technology have evolved, the agenda setting of media outlets through these ad watches may have also evolved. Base on the review of previous research, one research question was asked in this study: What factors best explain why media outlets picked up certain political advertisements in the 2012 presidential election campaign?

In this study the dependent variable is political advertisements in the 2012 presidential election campaign. The independent variables examined are content of the advertisements chosen by the media outlets, the content of the media outlets' discussions of the advertisements, and political affiliation of the media outlets (if provided). To perform the study this research analyzed the advertisements themselves as well as of the news outlets' coverage of the advertisements.

III. Research Method

To best analyze the ad watches from the presidential election of 2012, this research relied on content analysis. Content analysis is often used when researchers are trying to analyze framing techniques. Since this study is based on the political communications technique of framing, content analysis is one of the best methods for analysis. Bernard Berelson, a researcher who is often cited for the classic definition of this method, defines a content analysis as “a research technique for objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (as cited in Stempel, 2003). To develop an effective content analysis Neuendorf has defined a nine-step process that takes the researcher through different steps, such as developing a research question to tabulating and reporting the results (Neuendorf, 50-51). To develop an effective quantitative content analysis, the researcher must have a topic, a unit of analysis, a sample, a method of operationalization, and a findings and/or analysis section (Rosenberry & Vicker, 74-75).

Sample

To systematically analyze and compare political advertisements in ad watches this study coded and analyzed a variety of ad watches. This study compared candidates’ advertisements and developed a deeper analysis for certain ad watches in the 2012 presidential election. Ad watches typically occur on broadcast news networks, so this study focused on three major news networks’ ad watches, CNN, ABC and FOX News (see Appendix B). These three networks were chosen for their distinctive news styles. These news outlets also have the most up to date databases of ad watches from the 2012 presidential election.

Steps of Analysis

Each ad watch was systematically coded to analyze the content of the ad watches and the advertisements critiqued by the ad watches. Both the ad watches and the advertisements themselves were coded for the following: tone (positive or negative), patriotic imagery, family images, war images, attacks at opposing candidate, policy, and sponsor of advertisement. In order to code the ad watches and advertisements used in them, this study employed a code sheet to track the specific characteristics of the ads. The researcher simply marked a “yes” or “no” on the code sheet (see Appendix A) for each characteristic. Once ad watches and associated ads in it were coded, the researcher compiled and evaluated all the coding together to identify trends and divergences in the data set. Taken together the coding of this data revealed new insights into this field of study.

IV. Findings

Coding ad watches of the 2012 presidential campaign advertisements from CNN, ABC, and FOX News resulted in several findings. *Figure 1* shows how these three networks compare in terms of the number of ad watches they performed. Each ad watch was analyzed for different variables and the advertisements used in each ad watch were also coded for different variables.

The major components of ads emerged through content analysis: attacks on the opposition, sponsor

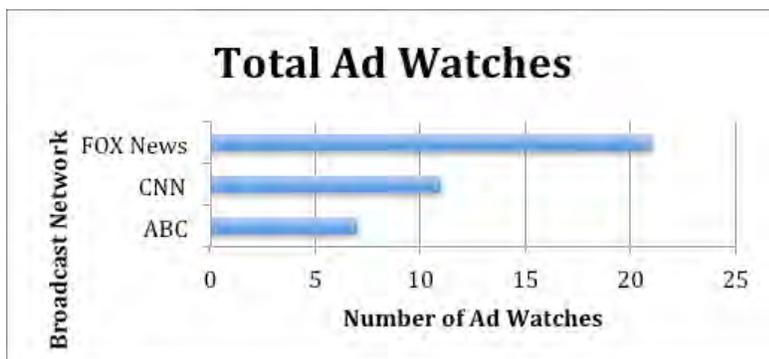


Figure 1: The total number of Ad Watches on each broadcast news network

of the advertisement, focus of the advertisement, tone of the advertisement, and the presentation of war, patriotic or family imagery. The ad watches also revealed the following variables of importance: fact checking, an identifier of the campaign advertisement presented on the screen during the ad watch, the role the anchor and analysts played in ad watches. *Figure 2* shows all the variables selected in analyzing the advertisements that were used in the

ad watches across the three networks.

Figure 3 shows all the variables analyzed to study the ad watches across the three networks. Each variable will be discussed individually later on. Below is a discussion of the findings for each of these variables and trends that emerged.

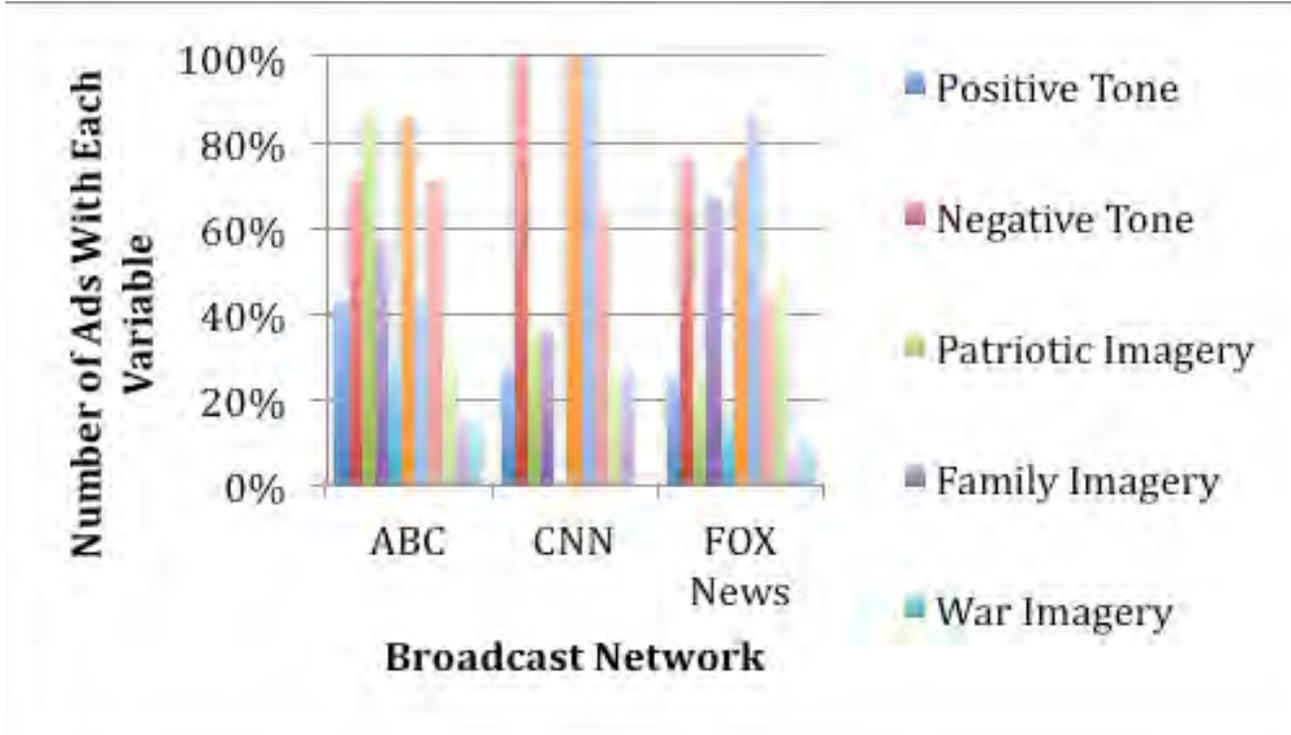


Figure 2: Variables selected when Ad Watches were analyzed

Variable 1: Attacks on the Opposition

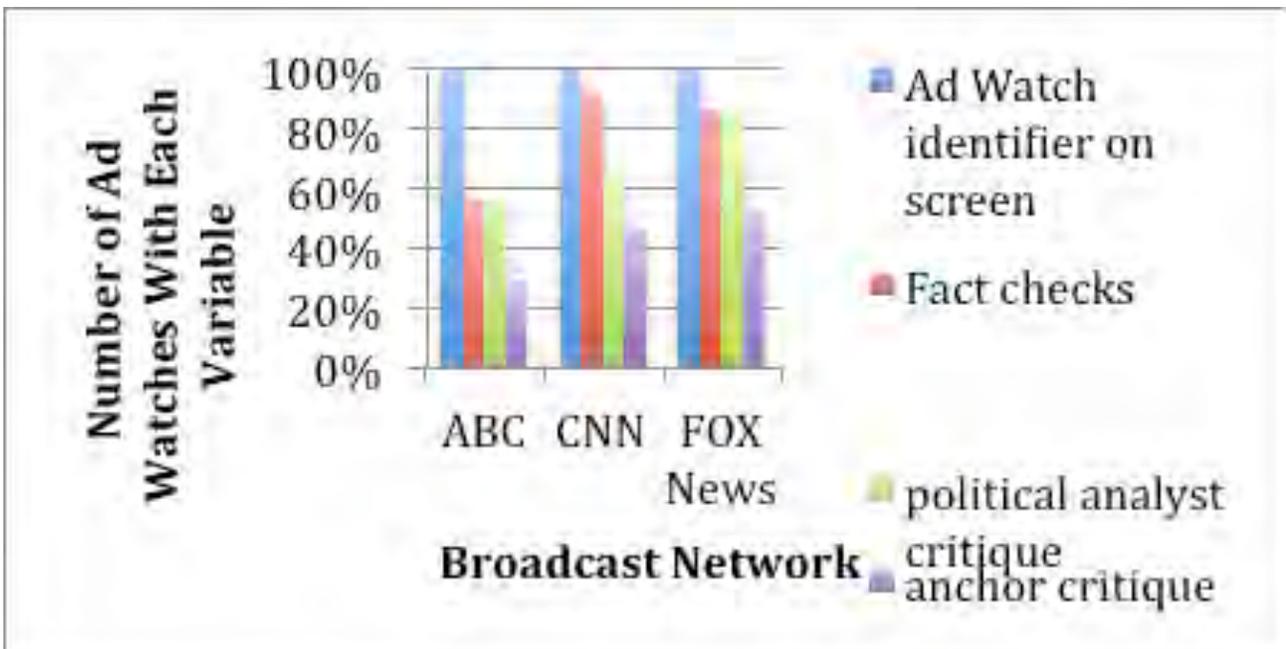


Figure 3: Variables used when Ad Watches were critiqued

The first trend showed that the campaign advertisement used in ad watches attacked the opponent. When coding this characteristic, the campaign advertisement was classified as an attack on the opposition if it mentioned the opponent’s name, referenced the policy or characteristic of the opponent, or if it contrasted the candidate with his opponent. All but one of the ad watches aired on ABC used campaign advertisements where the candidate in the ad attacked the opposition. One ad watch used a non-campaign advertisement that attacked the opposition, “Chrysler Superbowl ad pro-Obama?” This ad watch was an anomaly because it was an analysis of a Superbowl ad that the Obama campaign latched onto. However, Chrysler released a statement that the advertisement was not an endorsement for Obama and had nothing to do with the Obama campaign. All ads that CNN chose for the ad watches were those that attacked the opposition. FOX News ad watches used 16 ads that attacked the opposition out of a total of 21 the network aired.

Variable 2: Advertisement Sponsor

This variable covered the sponsor of the campaign advertisement used in the ad watches. An advertisement used in an ad watch was coded based on its sponsor: the candidate, PAC, interest group, or others. The majority of the ABC and CNN ad watches used campaign advertisements that the candidate sponsored. The only CNN ad watch that did not use candidate-sponsored advertisements was “Truth about Romney welfare attack ad.” This ad watch used campaign advertisements that PACs sponsored. The majority of FOX News ad watches used campaign advertisements the candidate or PACs sponsored. Refer to *Figure 4* for more details.

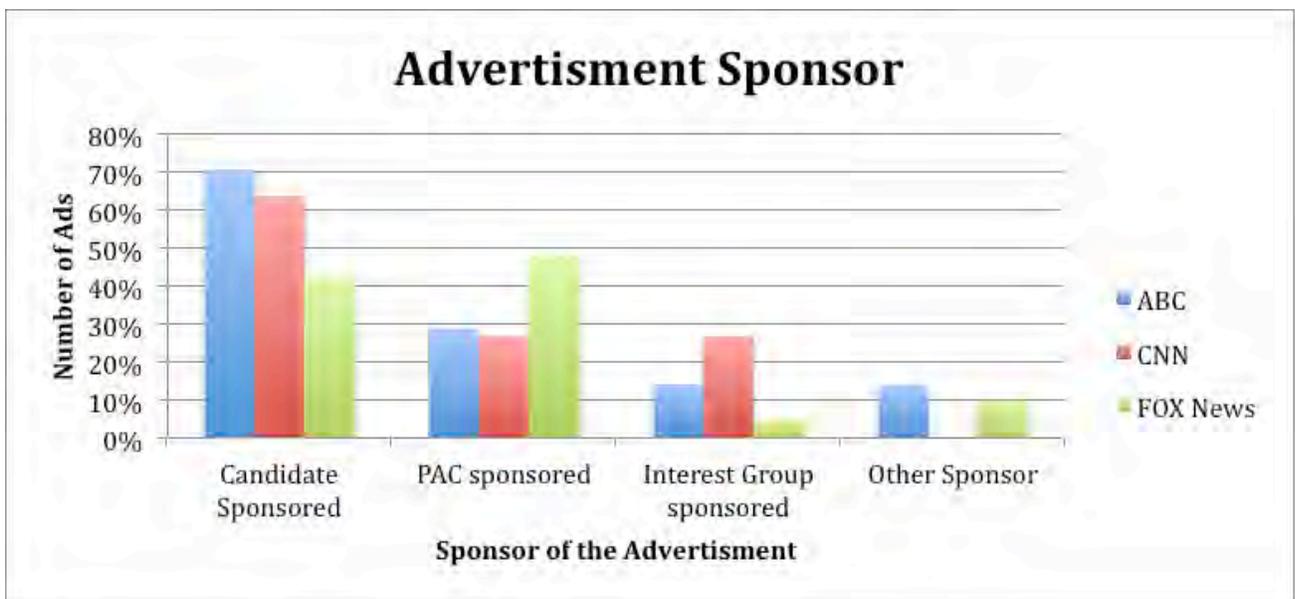


Figure 4. Advertisement sponsors

Variable 3: Focus of the Advertisement

This variable covered whether the campaign advertisement used in ad watches was policy centered. A campaign advertisement was coded as policy centered if the advertisement presented the opponent’s policy. ABC ad watches were more likely to use campaign advertisements that were not policy centered. On the other hand, all of the CNN ad watches used campaign advertisements that were policy centered. FOX News was also more likely than ABC to use advertisements in ad watches that were policy centered. Out of 21 advertisements, only three were not policy centered.

Variable 4: Tone of the Advertisement

The tone of the campaign advertisement used in ad watches was also examined. A campaign advertisement was coded for a positive or negative tone. A campaign advertisement was coded as having a posi-

tive tone if the rhetoric in the advertisement was uplifting, hopeful or overall upbeat. It was coded as having a negative tone if the rhetoric in the advertisement was accusatory, downtrodden or overall disconsolate. ABC ad watches used a mix of positive and negative toned campaign advertisements. Four of the ABC ad watches used campaign advertisements with a negative tone, and three of them used campaign advertisements with a positive tone. Overall ABC used almost an equal number of advertisements with each tone. All of the CNN ad watches used campaign advertisements with a negative tone, but some of those ads had positive tones as well. The majority of FOX News ad watches used campaign advertisements with a negative tone, 16 of the 21 ads. Based on this information, FOX News and CNN were more likely to use advertisements with a negative tone. Please refer to *Figure 5* for more details.

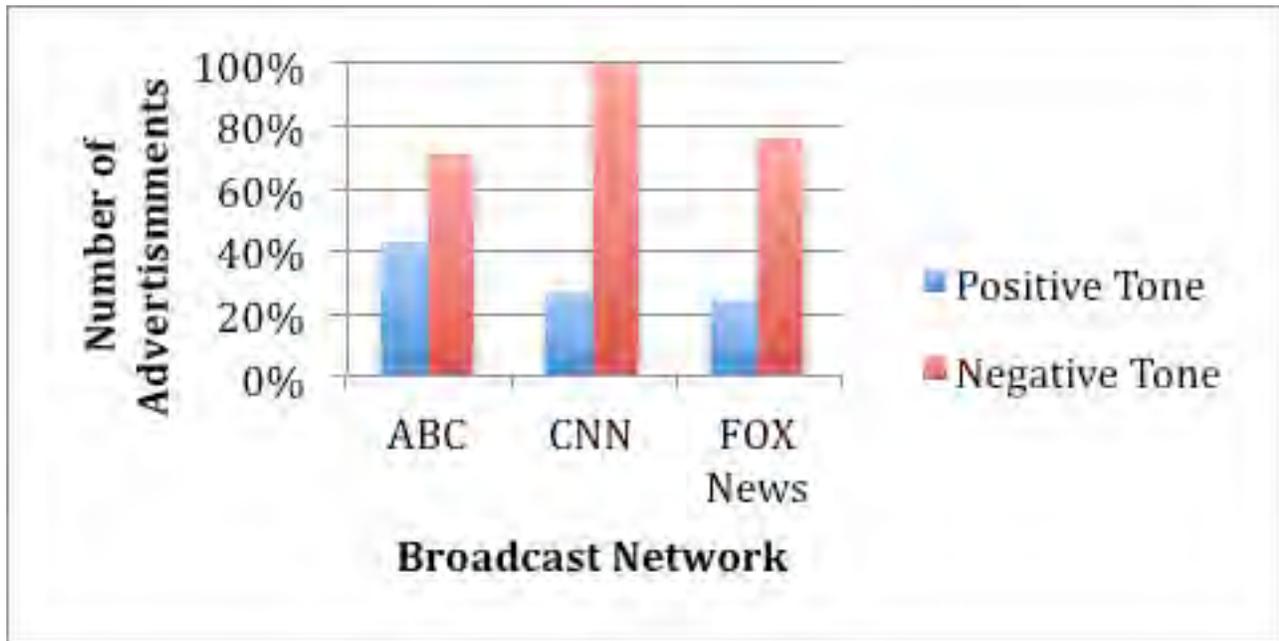


Figure 5. Tones of the advertisements

Variable 5: Types of Imagery Utilized in the Advertisements

The last variable examined for the advertisements used in ad watches was what was presented: the presentation of war, patriotism or family imagery. ABC ad watches had campaign advertisements that featured all three types of imagery with patriotic imagery being the most prevalent in ads. Very few campaign advertisements selected in the ad watches featured war imagery, and CNN ads never featured war imagery. The majority of CNN ad watches featured campaign advertisements with patriotic or family imagery, both of which were about evenly used. FOX News overwhelmingly used ads that featured family imagery. (Please refer to *Figure 6* for more details.)

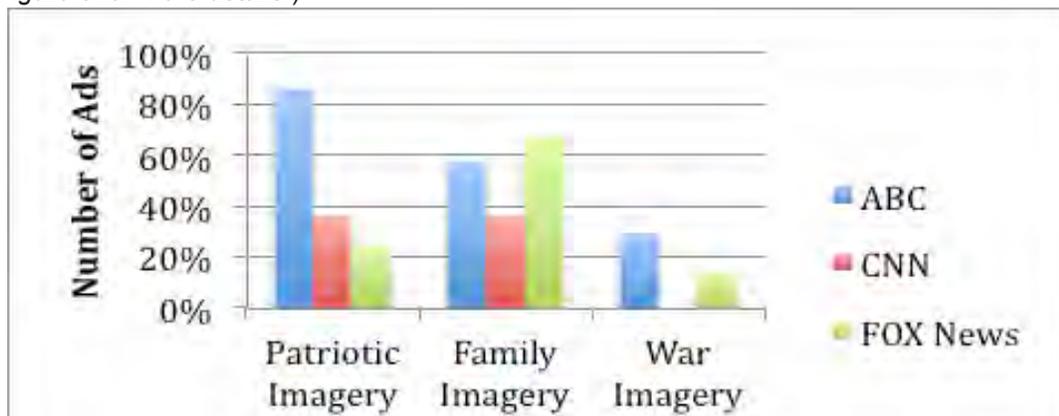


Figure 6. Types of imagery utilized in the advertisements

Variable 6: Fact Checking in Ad Watches

Based on three variables, the ad watches were examined. The first variable is fact checking of the ad watches. An ad watch was coded as performing a fact check if the ad watch pointed out inaccurate facts, presented the actual facts that were mentioned in the campaign advertisement or presented fact checking results from other media outlets. Results showed that ABC’s ad watches did fact checking in four ad watches, not in three remaining ad watches. CNN ad watches performed fact checking in all but one. FOX News performed fact checks in all but three ad watches. Overall, this shows that most ad watches feature some sort of fact checking component. (See Figure 7)

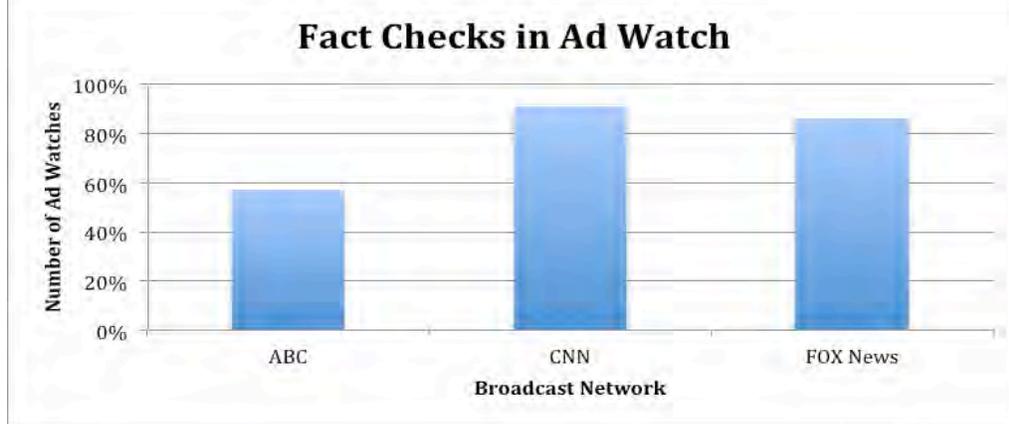


Figure 7. Fact checking in Ad Watches

Variable 7: Presentation of Campaign Advertisement Identifier on Screen

The next variable examined was an identifier of the campaign advertisement that was presented on the screen during the ad watch. An ad watch was coded as having an identifier if the anchor introduced the campaign advertisement or the campaign advertisement was clearly identified as such when it was shown on the screen. All the ad watches across the three networks had identifiers on the screen or the anchor introduced the campaign advertisement during the ad watch.

Variable 8: Role of the Anchor and Political Analysts in Ad Watches

The final variable covered who critiqued each campaign advertisement: the anchor or political analysts. If the anchor or analyst simply stated the facts of the campaign advertisement or presented a response from either candidate, the ad watch was not coded as having an anchor or analyst critique. ABC ad watches had either analyst or anchor critique comments of the campaign advertisements. All CNN ad watches had either analyst or anchor critiques of the campaign advertisements shown in the ad watches, and most had both anchor and analyst critiques in one ad watch. FOX News was the only network that had both anchor and political analyst critiques during each ad watch.

Overall, these results show that the ad watches by these major networks often involve a specific type of campaign advertisement, feature analyst and anchor critiques, often fact check the campaign advertisements, and use advertisements that do not feature war imagery. (See Figure 8 for more details)

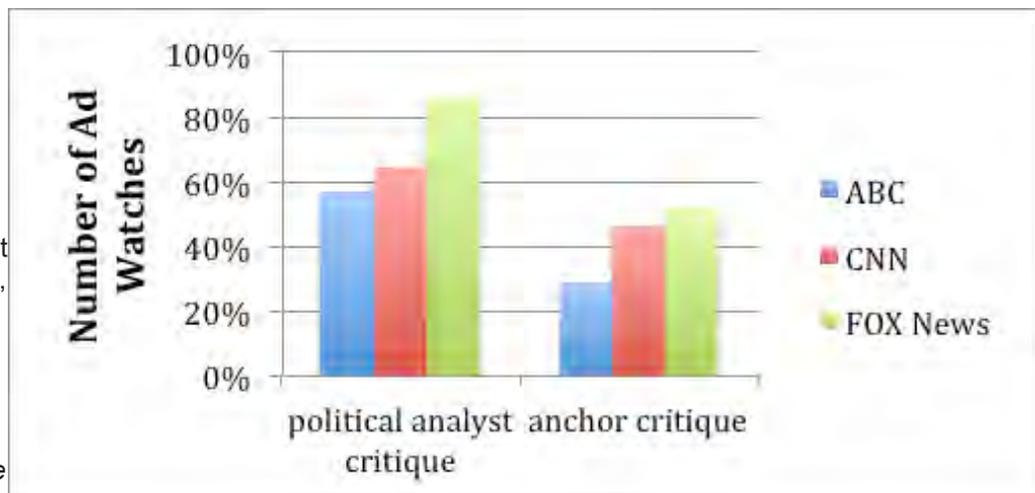


Figure 8. Who critiqued ads in Ad Watches

V. Conclusions

This study sought to learn about how major broadcast media outlets use presidential campaign and ad watches during the 2012 presidential election.

Based on the analysis of the ad watches of the 2012 presidential campaign advertisements, the following conclusions were drawn. All ad watches featured campaign advertisements that attacked the opposing party, most ad watches contained fact checking, and most ad watches featured candidate sponsored ads. Overall, these results show that the ad watches by CNN, ABC and FOX News often involve negative or popular campaign advertisements, feature political analyst and anchor critiques, often involve fact checking the campaign advertisements, and use advertisements that do not feature war imagery.

These results are significant for the theory of media agenda setting because they reveal how the media shape public perception of political events. Watching ad watches on a major news network drastically influences how an individual might perceive certain candidates and even an election. Based on the results researchers can see that media outlets are more likely to use campaign advertisements with certain characteristics in their ad watches. This leads the viewers of these ad watches to receive specifically crafted messages and thus form a biased view of a candidate or election. The media, through these ad watches, are setting a specific political agenda that may ultimately influence the way the American electorate perceive a candidate when they see ad watches. Simply, the results show that the broadcast networks are analyzing and filtering campaign advertisements at their own discretion, and the audience is receiving a new, filtered message about these advertisements. The original campaign advertisement message would not be the same as the message the audience would finally get through an ad watch.

Additionally, this study tried to provide insight into why media outlets picked up certain political advertisements in the 2012 presidential election campaign. The majority of the ad watches in this study were for campaign advertisements that a candidate sponsored, attacked the opponent, and used patriotic and family imagery. Most ad watches typically occurred in the beginning months of an election cycle and very few, if any, occurred as the months progressed closer to Election Day. In the beginning of the campaign season, media outlets may have been struggling to find campaign news to report, whereas closer to Election Day, the plethora of campaign news may crowd out ad watches. Also, as Election Day approached, the networks may focus more on fact checking campaign debates and speeches instead of the campaign advertisements.

Overall, this study contributed to the field of ad watches by finding the typical variables that may change the meaning of advertisements used in ad watches. However, this study only examined a small group of media outlets and ad watches, so the results cannot be generalized. Further research should be done on the media outlets' political leanings, the analysts they chose to use for the ad watches, and how the ad watches of the 2012 presidential election compare to past presidential election ad watches. Perhaps, with this further research some general conclusions can be made about the reasoning behind why media outlets chose specific campaign advertisements. However, even without this additional research, this study contributed to the current research on ad watches in the 2012 presidential election. All in all, there is still a need for future research on this topic, but this study has added to the discussion of ad watches and political communication.

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Appendix A: Coding Sheet

Positive tone	Yes	No
Negative tone	Yes	No
Patriotic imagery	Yes	No
Family imagery	Yes	No
War imagery	Yes	No
Attacks on opposition	Yes	No
Policy centered	Yes	No
Candidate sponsored	Yes	No
PAC sponsored	Yes	No
Interest Group sponsored	Yes	No
Other sponsor	Yes	No
<i>Specific for Ad Watches</i>		
Ad Watch identifier on screen	Yes	No
Fact checks	Yes	No
Analyst critique	Yes	No
Anchor critique	Yes	No

Appendix B: List of Links for the Ad Watches Analyzed

CNN (search term campaign ad)

1. <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/bestoftv/2012/10/09/exp-early-hamby-obama-big-bird-ad.cnn>
2. <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/bestoftv/2012/10/16/tsr-moos-naked-politics.cnn>
3. <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/politics/2012/09/19/tsr-dnt-yellin-obama-redistribution.cnn>
4. <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/politics/2012/10/15/erin-intv-reiner-moveon-org-ad-johanson-longoria-washington.cnn>
5. <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/bestoftv/2012/08/20/exp-early-lothian-romney-attack-ad.cnn>
6. <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/bestoftv/2012/10/19/ac-kth-romney-obama-abortion-stance.cnn>
7. <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/bestoftv/2012/08/08/exp-point-andrea-saul-one.cnn>
8. <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/bestoftv/2011/11/22/tsr-johns-romney-obama-attack-ad.cnn>
9. <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/bestoftv/2012/08/08/exp-point-steph-cutter-two.cnn>
10. <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/bestoftv/2012/08/09/ac-kth-romney-welfare-ad.cnn>
11. <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/bestoftv/2012/05/15/nr-ben-labolt.cnn>

ABC (search term campaign ad)

1. <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/obama-ad-super-pac-back-16974192>
2. <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/obama-romney-aim-early-voters-debate-17343494>
3. <http://gma.yahoo.com/video/gma-foulest-ads-campaign-season-080000372.html>
4. <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/video/president-obamas-abortion-attack-ad-17036500>
5. <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/fact-checking-obama-romney-campaign-ads-16744194>
6. <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/obamas-osama-bin-laden-ad-attacks-romney-16231795>
7. <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/chrysler-super-bowl-ad-pro-obama-15526038>

FOX News (search term ad watch)

1. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1642688653001/2012-ad-wars/>
 2. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1617989208001/then-and-now-bush-2004-ad-vs-obama-2012-ad/>
 3. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1367630205001/watch-gingrich-no-longer-playing-nice-in-new-ad-targeting-romney/>
 4. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1780360620001/carney-we-do-not-control-the-ad/>
 5. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1781717281001/super-pac-pack-of-lies-ad/>
 6. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1777328300001/coulter-this-is-a-repulsive-despicable-ad/>
 7. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1777146099001/controversy-over-obama-super-pac-ad/>
 8. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1686382884001/is-obamas-african-american-voter-ad-offensive/>
 9. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1778681624001/rnc-releases-ad-in-response-to-super-pac-ad-attacking-romney/>
 10. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1776144516001/attack-ad-a-new-low-for-the-obama-campaign/>
 11. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1778783862001/pressure-mounts-on-white-house-to-denounce-super-pac-ad/>
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12. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1778516930001/firestorm-over-super-pac-ad-against-romney-grows/>
 13. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1777680796001/did-obama-campaign-lie-about-anti-romney-ad/>
 14. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1439439047001/rove-obama-campaign-co-opting-chrysler-super-bowl-ad/>
 15. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1892816352001/new-ad-hammers-obama-administration-for-bin-laden-raid-leaks/>
 16. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1757923226001/obama-ad-on-romney-its-a-scary-time-to-be-a-woman/>
 17. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1942536920001/bias-bash-calling-out-political-ad-double-standard/>
 18. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1932663259001/singing-children-warn-of-romneys-america-in-pro-obama-ad/>
 19. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1922530961001/hollywood-nation-clint-gets-political-again/>
 20. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1919886387001/president-obama-holding-campaign-event-in-fl/>
 21. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1887738563001/big-bird-ad-mocks-romneys-call-for-federal-spending-cut-at-presidential-debate/>
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Women in TV Broadcast News: Reporters and Sources in Hard News Stories

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Abstract

This study, conducted during a two-week period leading up to the 2012 Presidential Election, analyzed three prime time news broadcasts to determine whether male journalists reported more hard news stories than female journalists throughout a segment of increased political activity and whether male and female sources were used equally in said stories. The results showed that male reporters were assigned more hard news than female reporters, and males were a little more likely to be assigned to hard news than soft news. Male sources were used more as experts in hard news by both male and female reporters. Actually female reporters relied on males as expert sources more than male reporters. The implications of the results of this study include female underrepresentation as reporters and sources, probably continuing a perception of women as being in a lower social status than men.

I. Introduction

Women journalists initially had difficulty breaking into the broadcast news field and did not begin to make real strides towards equality until the 1960s and 1970s (Hosley & Yamada, 1987). However, today women still struggle to earn the same advantages men are granted in the newsroom. Women reporters are frequently relegated to soft news stories, like health and entertainment news, whereas their male counterparts are given stories of political and international importance. Supposedly, this is because “the nature of the genre . . . allows for a masculine or feminine style of journalism,” but that should not be a permitted excuse to prevent women from being assigned the same, important stories that men are assigned (Carter, 1998, p. 14).

Women have also been underrepresented as sources on news programs. Most news stories need to feature an interview with a person discussing the topic of the story, and reporters contact expert sources for their opinions on that topic. Traditionally, male experts are used as sources more often than female experts, and female experts are used less in hard news stories than men. A study of 159 stories broadcast on major news networks showed that female sources were more likely to appear in stories reported by women and that women reported on 53% of social issues. Male reporters, on the other hand, had five and a half male sources for every one female source and they reported on 86% of the foreign policy stories (Liebler & Smith, 1997). If women sources are unable to be considered professionals or experts in stories of national or international importance, viewers could be led to believe that women do not deserve leadership roles. As women reporters continue to be assigned soft news stories, women sources will continue to be inadequately utilized in hard news stories (Armstrong, 2004).

One of the biggest hard news stories of this year has been and will continue to be the 2012 Presiden-

* **Keywords:** Gender equality, 2012 Presidential Election, national broadcast news, expert sources, hard versus soft news

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tial Election. The news cycles on most big news channels continue to be politically heavy, which, in theory, could give women journalists ample opportunity to work on hard news stories if there are more to report. What this study aimed to find was whether, with so many hard news stories to go around, women are still being pushed into the traditionally “feminine” human-interest stories, or if the political climate will give them a greater opportunity to match their male counterparts. Although the political field provides fewer female than male pundits, not to mention fewer females in government positions, will female sources be portrayed professionally in news stories as male sources usually are?

II. Literature Review

A majority of studies showed that women are generally considered less capable of relaying news and events than their male colleagues, which could be seen as backward considering that today more females consume news than males. Personal views are continually shaped through consumption of mass media, which could lead one to assume that society will reinforce a “lower public status for women relative to men” (Armstrong, 2004, p. 140) as fewer women journalists or sources are shown in news coverage.

Women have been fairly successful in breaking into the news business. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, only 13% of reporters were women, whereas today about half of reporters are women. However, women are still far from equality as they face professional barriers of appearance and age. One study found that although female reporters presenting news stories were perceived as being more credible than male reporters presenting similar stories, male reporters were seen as being more credible persons overall. However, the gender of the news viewer also has to be considered; generally, recipients find reporters of his or her same gender to be credible. Another noticeable finding from this study was that although young reporters’ credibility was not influenced by age, the older, male reporters were considered to be the most credible reporters (Weibel, Wissmath, & Groner, 2008). Other research found that age impacts the length of news segments: younger women are often in shorter news segments than other, more experienced female journalists. When comparing older women reporters to males in the same age range, one can see the trend that men are able to have longer careers because women become “too old, too unattractive . . . not sufficiently deferential to men” (Armstrong, 2010, p. 83).

Another disparity between male and female journalists is the level of sexuality they must display in order to be a featured newscaster. A study of cable news programs found that 62% of segments analyzed contained predominately female journalists with high sex appeal. “Specifically, these journalists were physically attractive, suggestively dressed (e.g., open blouses, tight-fitting skirts), and filmed in ways that accentuated these features” (Nitz, Reichert, Aune, & Velde, 2007, p. 14). The fact that news networks use these tactics to appeal to viewers suggested that said networks are more interested in entertaining and marketing than news. Another result from the study showed that, despite being overtly sexualized for viewer entertainment, female journalists still reported hard news stories, proving that “sexualization was present in all types of news, regardless of the topic’s seriousness” (Nitz et al., 2007, p. 23). But, again, this study showed that women are unequal to men. Out of all of the news stories considered to have a sexually appealing reporter, 94% of those reporters were female. When studied through an audience perspective, these journalists had the potential to influence attitudes about sexuality and gender, but it shouldn’t be that a woman’s value is reliant on her sexual appeal (Nitz et al., 2007).

These obstacles are partially to blame for the mindset that female journalists should be relegated to reporting on soft news only. Another determinant of the type of news a female journalist covers is whether she works for a local or network news program; female journalists on local newscasts are able to cover hard and soft news stories more often than those on national broadcast programs (Armstrong, 2010). Although women are on air on local programs more often than women on network programs, they still are responsible for 48% of soft stories and only 28% of hard stories. Comparatively, at networks, women present 16% of hard stories and 14% of soft ones; overall, both percentages are still low compared to the amount and type of stories men report (Hosley & Yamada, 1987). A study in 1987 on network television news found that, out of 216 stories, males covered 191 of those stories and the remaining 25 went to females. During the same time period, males reported 369 stories regarding government officials, eight times as many stories as females on the same topic (Ziegler & White, 1990).

Roger Desmond and Anna Danilewicz (2010) identified another gender discrepancy in terms of news

sources. Female reporters were more likely to report on human interest and health stories, while males reported on politics. Within those stories, males were more often cited as experts and sourced more frequently than female experts, while there were no major differences between male and female non-experts. Reporters were often more likely to choose a source of their own gender, which therefore gave male sources more prominence as there were more male reporters addressing hard news issues (Craft & Wanta, 2004). It could also be said that female reporters seek out female sources because they are typically underrepresented, except for in human interest and similar soft news stories presumably written specifically for their gender.

For this research, the author established two hypotheses:

H1: During this season of increased political activity, male reporters will continue to be assigned more hard news stories than female reporters.

H2: Male reporters will rely on male sources more heavily during the political season and female reporters will seek out female sources.

III. Methods

Content analysis is the systematic, objective, and quantitative collection and analysis of messages taken from media, typically through category assignment. In mass communications research, content analysis has exploded over the past 20 years to become the fastest-growing technique, due to “the rapid advancement of content analysis software, with a corresponding proliferation of online archives and databases . . . it has never been easier to perform at least basic analyses with computer-provided speed and precision” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 1-2). Content analysis must be rigorous and systematic in nature (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009). In any study, research techniques are expected to be reliable and replicable, meaning “researchers working at different points in time and perhaps under different circumstances should get the same results when applying the same technique to the same phenomena. Replicability is the most important form of reliability” (Krippendorff, 2012, p. 24). Content analysis should be able to support the validity of a study’s results.

This study has collected data on the association between the gender of broadcast reporters and the type of story they are assigned, as well as whether male sources are cited as experts and used more often than female sources. The purpose of this data is to confirm the theory that, during a season of increased political activity, male reporters will continue to be given more hard news stories than their female colleagues, and that male reporters will rely heavily on male sources.

This study has analyzed the evening newscasts of the “Big Three” commercial broadcast, non-cable networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC. Over a two-week period of weekday broadcasts, totaling to ten programs studied per network, this study analyzed three similar news programs broadcast from 6:30 to 7:00 P.M. These three news shows were ABC World News with Diane Sawyer, CBS Evening News with Scott Pelley, and NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams. All three shows cover a variety of international and domestic news, as well as hard and soft news, which made them optimal programs to evaluate in this study.

Between October 8 and October 19, 2012, all three shows were analyzed each weekday night, except for the October 8 broadcast of CBS Evening News with Scott Pelley, as no data was available. While coding for these news programs, this study focused the coding parameters to meet the specific research questions proposed. This study created precise rules to determine who qualified as a reporter: anchors did not count. Also, this study was concerned with the gender of a reporter and the type of story he or she was reporting, thus making it necessary to define what qualifies as a story. In this study, a full news package counted as a story. A news package is a pre-recorded, self-contained report in which a reporter is shown talking on camera, often filmed on location, that runs for about 1:15 to 2:00 minutes long. Defining a story as a news package ensured that the stories coded in this study were roughly the same length and that reporters had a similar level of involvement in delivering and developing the story. This eliminated news anchors from the coding process, as a news anchor typically read the short news pieces, while a reporter was afforded more time to cover a story in depth and refer to multiple sources.

The terms “hard news” and “soft news” also had to be defined more clearly. It was decided that hard news would include stories of political and international nature, especially stories that were time-sensitive, like the story about a would-be bomber in New York. Soft news included health and feature stories, or stories that could be reported at any time of the week without altering their message. The case of the meningitis out-

breaks were at first soft news stories, as not much time or many resources were dedicated to developing the stories, until multiple people began to die of meningitis, thus making the issue timely and concerning to the public, so hard news.

The second part of this study analyzed whether male or female sources were used more frequently, and whether those sources should be considered experts or non-experts. Experts were considered to be experts in the field of the news being reported, when their expertise was related to the type of news. Non-experts included men and women asked, largely out of context, his or her opinion on the topic of the news story. Children were not included as sources in this study, nor were political candidates, sources from press conferences or sources filmed for or broadcast on other networks.

IV. Findings

Table 1 shows that all three networks had a similar number of stories broadcast, 55 or 56, which helped to show the differences between the networks in terms of the gender of reporters and the type of stories they covered.

Table 1. Breakdown of Story Type By Gender Across Networks

News Network	Hard News Male Reporter	Soft News Male Reporter	Hard News Female Reporter	Soft News Female Reporter	Total Stories
ABC	50.0%(22)	50.0%(22)	9.1%(1)	90.9%(10)	55
CBS	58.3%(21)	41.7%(15)	85.0%(17)	15.0%(3)	56
NBC	66.7%(18)	33.3%(9)	51.7%(15)	48.3%(14)	56
	57.0%(61)	43.0%(46)	55.0%(33)	45.0%(27)	167

During this time of heightened political activity, as the United States prepared for the presidential elections, most of the broadcasts analyzed had a story relating to the candidates as the lead story, or even broke coverage into two stories. These stories were often considered to be hard news, except in the instances when the stories were presented with elements of soft news stories. Other hard news stories during this time period included the investigation into the Benghazi, Libya, terror attack and the recovery of a young girl, Malala Yousufzai, who was shot by the Taliban in Pakistan for demanding education for girls. As shown in Table 1, the number of hard news stories reported by men was almost double those stories reported by women (61 vs. 33 stories). When three networks were analyzed individually, CBS and NBC did not show much difference in terms of the assignments of female reporters to hard news. The difference was caused by ABC, which only had one hard news story reported by a woman during that study's time frame, compared to 17 and 15 for CBS and NBC, respectively. Considering that this study was over a short time period, the one female hard news reporter from ABC could be out of the norm; conceivably, there are more women working as reporters for ABC than were featured on the nightly news. In terms of coverage of soft stories, there were more male reporters than their female colleagues (46 vs. 27 stories). However, out of the stories the female journalists did cover, 55% were hard news stories, like male counterparts (57%). This shows that, although female reporters cover fewer hard news stories and stories in general compared to male reporters, they still report more hard than soft news stories. In terms of number of stories rather than percentages, the only category in which women reporters had a higher number of stories than men was in the soft news category for NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams. Overall, women covered 60 total stories while men covered 107, which came to 78% more stories for male reporters.

This study demonstrated that men were used as sources more frequently than women on the broadcast news programs during this short time frame characterized by heavy election coverage. Table 2 shows that, out of the 259 sources used over the specified time period, 136 sources were for hard news. Among them 93 sources were male sources (68%) and 43 were female sources (32%). When it comes to soft news, 72 out of 123 sources were male sources (59%) and 51 from females sources (41%). This suggests that depen-

gency on male sources is higher in hard news than soft news.

Table 2. Breakdown of sources by gender

Sources	Count
Total Male Sources Hard News	93
Total Male Sources Soft News	72
Total Female Sources Hard News	43
Total Female Sources Soft News	51
Total Number of Sources	259

To analyze how male and female reporters used the sources differently, Figure 1 was created. In hard news, female reporters relied on expert males in 66% of the cases while male reporters relied on expert males in 52%. This shows that females relied more heavily on male sources as expert sources (See the first two bars in Figure 1). Even in non-expert sources for hard news, female reporters relied on males far more than male reporters (60% vs. 29%).

When it comes to soft news, male reporters relied more heavily on male experts than female reporters did on male experts (73% vs. 50%). On the other hand, male reporters more heavily relied on female non-experts as sources in their soft news than female reporters (69% vs. 45%).

One hypothesis of this study was that women reporters would seek out and rely more heavily on female sources; on the other hand, men would do the same with male sources. A breakdown of a male reporter's sources by gender, news type, and expertise level in *Figure 1* showed that both male and female reporters relied more on male sources than female sources in most categories. Even the female reporters relatively more heavily relied on male sources in three categories than their counterparts, except for when they covered soft news and used expert sources. Male reporters used male sources more heavily than female counterparts only when they covered soft news and used expert sources.

By network, ABC used a total of 78 news sources, CBS used 71, and NBC used the most, coming in at 110. Broken down by gender, female reporters from ABC World News with Diane Sawyer used the least number of sources, only 16. However, female reporters at NBC Nightly News with Brian Wil-

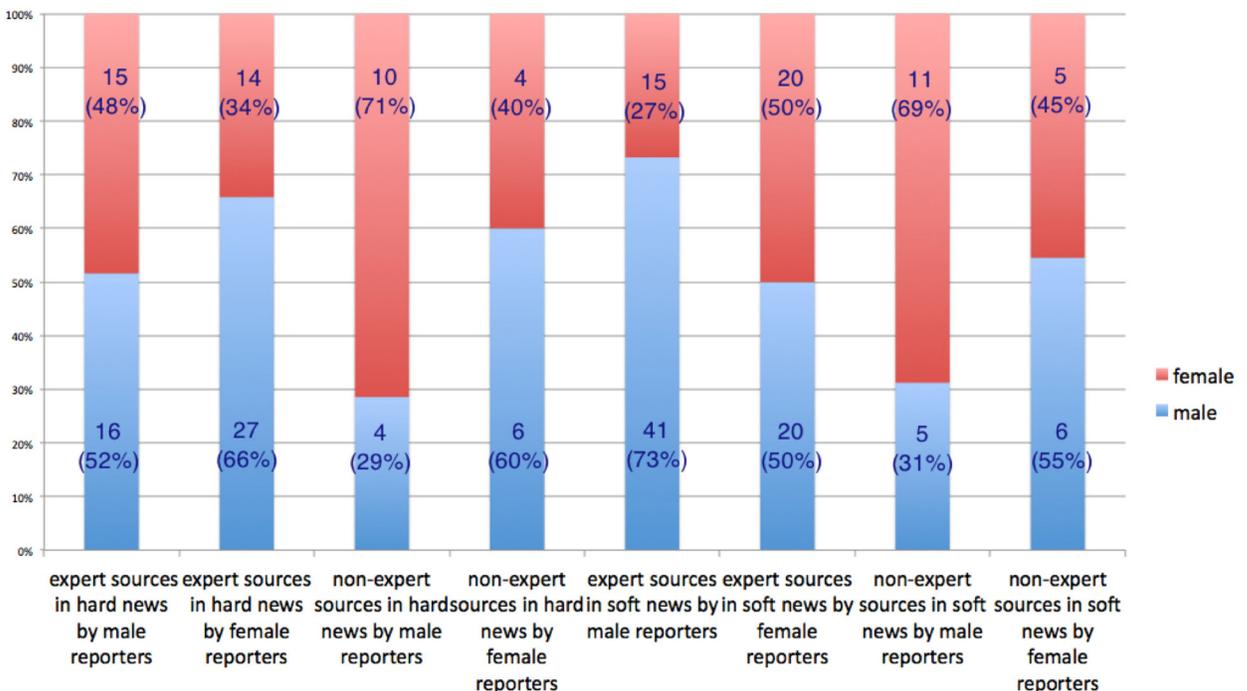


Figure 1. How male and female reporters used sources in different types of news

liams used the most sources for either gender at any news program, 64. The male reporters from ABC were a close second with 62 sources (See Appendix for more detail).

V. Analysis and Conclusion

This study aimed to determine whether male reporters were given more hard news stories than female reporters during a period preceding the 2012 presidential election. Male reporters covered more stories (107 stories) than female counterparts (60 stories). First, viewers would more likely to have viewed the hard news stories that were covered by male reporters than female counterparts.

At the same time, viewers' exposure to the gender of reporters was also determined by the relative number of stories each gender of reporters covered. While female reporters covered 33 stories out the 60 stories they covered (55% as shown in Table 1), male counterparts covered 61 hard news stories out of the 105 stories (57.0%). There were variations among the networks. For example, at CBS, hard news accounted for 58.3% of all the stories males reporters covered, while the percentage for female reporters reached as high as 85.0%. But On ABC World News with Diane Sawyer, only one female journalist reported a hard news story during the entire study. Excluding ABC Network, female reporters covered 65.3% out of all the stories assigned to them, while male reporters did 61.9%.

Less assignment of female reporters to glamorous hard news as well as the unequal ratio of male to female journalists featured on the news could discourage women interested in becoming broadcast news professionals from pursuing careers in the field. During this study, male journalists covered more hard and soft news stories than female journalists not necessarily because of the story content, but because there were more male journalists.

The second purpose of the study was to determine whether male reporters relied on male sources, and female reporters would behave otherwise. An underrepresentation of female sources the study found could hinder women from seeking important, expert positions and deprive society of the female perspective. Especially now, during an election season that hinges crucially on the female population, women involvement in news is more important than ever.

Every four years, presidential candidates and their messages dominate the news cycles of almost every news outlet. They claim to rely on the votes of every citizen of age. So why are women often not shown in the context of these stories? During the study period, each of the three news network shows analyzed for the presence of female reporters and sources had only one or two stories dedicated to female voting issues. Some of these stories focused more on the wives of the presidential candidates than the issues average women consider to be important in the 2012 election, like reproductive rights, for instance. One of the reasons is that there are more men currently holding and running for political offices, which leads networks to assume that women are not as interested in hearing hard news stories of political nature because they are not as politically involved.

Of the hard news stories examined, men reported 61 stories and women reported 33, but out of the stories women covered, 55% were hard news stories in comparison with 57% for male reporters, as seen in Table 1. These stories, mostly about politics or international news, also typically featured male sources as experts. Men were used as expert sources in hard news by male and female journalists more than women sources -- more so by female reporters than their counterparts-- showing that female journalists did not necessarily favor female sources as hypothesized.

Women are more likely to be used as non-experts than experts, except for when female reporters cover soft stories. The fact that more male sources were featured on television during this study raises the question: If men are more comfortable seeing themselves represented on television, wouldn't women be more comfortable seeing themselves represented as well? Women today consume news more than men, but if they are still not shown on television as often as men, will this trend continue? It could be predicted that, as long as women are kept out of the news as reporters and sources, women will continue to hold a lower status compared to men (Armstrong, 2004). This could continue to project the perception that men are more credible than women (Weibel et al., 2008), and that women need to be sexualized objects in order to gain male attention (Nitz et al., 2007). This study showed that men were used as expert sources more often than women on many subjects. When women are excluded from hard news stories as both reporters and sources, their

viewpoint is short changed and thus is easily ignored. To thoroughly understand a breaking hard news story, for instance, it could be beneficial for the audience to hear the female viewpoint and ultimately have a fuller, more complex perception of the story.

The argument that soft news stories are written for women is one that remains as a reason to relegate female reporters to said stories in the future (Carter, 1998). However, this old stereotype must be broken in order for women to feel that they deserve to hold leadership roles and feel equal to men. This study has followed in the path of many previous studies that aimed to pinpoint why men seem to have an advantage in the broadcast world. The implications of such studies, given the current, heightened political awareness in the United States, will bring to light other characteristics of female underrepresentation in broadcast news.

At the network level, most journalists are not working alone to cover news stories; research could be done to determine whether the producers and staff working on a news program affect not only who is assigned what story, but also the presentation of the story itself. A study that focused solely on ABC World News with Diane Sawyer to discover the ratio of female to male journalists could help explain why only one woman reported a hard news story during this study.

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**Appendix:
Sources Used by Reporters by Network, News Type and Source**

Sources of Male Reporters

News Network	Male Sources Hard News		Male Sources Soft News		Female Sources Hard News		Female Sources Soft News		Total
	<u>Expert</u>	<u>Non-Expert</u>	<u>Expert</u>	<u>Non-Expert</u>	<u>Expert</u>	<u>Non-Expert</u>	<u>Expert</u>	<u>Non-Expert</u>	
	ABC	25	2	17	2	6	6	4	
CBS	15	1	13	2	4	2	6	6	49
NBC	16	1	11	1	5	2	5	5	46
	56	4	41	5	15	10	15	11	157

Sources of Female Reporters

News Network	Male Sources Hard News		Male Sources Soft News		Female Sources Hard News		Female Sources Soft News		Total
	<u>Expert</u>	<u>Non-Expert</u>	<u>Expert</u>	<u>Non-Expert</u>	<u>Expert</u>	<u>Non-Expert</u>	<u>Expert</u>	<u>Non-Expert</u>	
	ABC			6				7	
CBS	10	3	1		5	2	1		22
NBC	17	3	13	6	9	2	12	2	64
	27	6	20	6	14	4	20	5	102

Pumping Steel and Sex Appeal: Message Strategies and Content in Dietary Supplement Advertisements

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Abstract

Existing in a regulatory gray area as neither a food nor a drug, dietary supplements have fierce controversies over safety and regulation. This regulatory state can create a problem if the persuasion of supplement ads convince consumers to purchase harmful products. Using Taylor's Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel, this study analyzed the relationship between informational print ads for dietary supplements and transformational message strategies. Transformational strategies, appeals to viewer's emotions or sense of self, were used more frequently in ads than their Informational counterparts, revealing that supplement manufacturers may be selling their products based on a better body image than actual health benefits. A lack of information about supplement ingredients and effects in ads also revealed an imbalance between information and persuasion.

I. Introduction

Pressure to conform to increasingly unrealistic societal definitions of beauty and physical fitness is constantly increasing, and to meet that goal people take a variety of measures. A quick glance inside a fitness magazine quickly reveals that dietary supplementation is an immensely popular method of achieving a better physique. It seems as if every other page of these magazines is an advertisement for a pill or powder that can make users run faster, lift heavier, or drop weight effortlessly.

In the fitness world, countless supplements make promises of better performance and faster results, but their ingredients and efficacy are largely unregulated. Some companies conduct third-party tests and clinical studies to reinforce their claims, but there are no major dietary supplements (DS) that are approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The FDA does not require supplement manufacturers to register their products or obtain approval prior to releasing them on the market. In lieu of official registration, the FDA has strict guidelines on what can and cannot be sold as a dietary supplement and regulates "product information, such as labeling, claims, package inserts, and accompanying literature" (FDA 2012) to protect consumers from harmful products. DS manufacturers are responsible for ensuring the safety of their products, adhering to guidelines of quality control and packaging, and reporting major adverse effects, but the FDA does not check that all products meet the guidelines. Because of this, potentially harmful side effects may occur from products that were not thoroughly tested.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the regulatory body for advertising of dietary supplements.

* **Keywords:** Dietary Supplements, Advertising, Message Strategy, Fitness, FDA

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The FTC ensures that claims made by supplement advertisers have proper substantiation to protect the public from misleading or false advertising, and those familiar with dietary supplements will know the phrase “this claim is not supported by the FDA” contained in many DS ads and labels. But neither the FDA nor the FTC provides regulations on the amount of information manufacturers and advertisers need to provide for their audiences through advertising. No standing guidelines require advertisements to tell consumers the ingredients of a supplement or how that supplement works, so many ads neglect to do so.

Even with the knowledge that the government does not substantiate claims made by supplement producers, consumers are still willing to pay for the possibility of a better body. The desire to achieve an ideal physique is strong enough to sell supplements even with no guarantee of results and the accompanying risk of harm. This research aimed to study the relationship between the egotistical or social desire to be physically fit and dietary supplement advertisements. Using content analysis of magazine advertisements for dietary supplements, this study compared the type of appeal used in advertisements, as defined by Taylor’s Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel, with the amount of quality information regarding effects and ingredients of the supplements.

II. Literature Review

The Dietary Supplement Industry and Advertising Regulation

The dietary supplement industry in the U.S. has grown steadily over the past 20 years with 49% of the population reporting they have used at least one supplement. In 2010, DS industry revenue was estimated to be \$27.9 billion and the same source predicted that its revenue in 2016 would reach \$34.7 billion. There are approximately 30,000 different DS products available in the U.S., with 1,000 more being introduced every year. Despite the prominence of this industry and frequency of DS use by a majority of people, 52% of users are unaware that these products are not government approved or evaluated, according to a survey by Ashar and others (as cited in DeLorme, Huh, Reid & An, 2012).

Dietary Supplements are defined as “any product designed to supplement the diet that bears one of the following ingredients: a vitamin, a mineral, a herb or other botanical agent, an amino acid, weight-loss supplement, or herbal remedy” (Main, Argo & Huhmann, 2004, p. 29). These supplements fall under their own regulatory area under the United States Food and Drug Administration as they are not subjected to the same standards of medical drugs or food products. The 1994 Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA) redefined the classification of DSs, putting them into a unique category as neither a food nor a drug. Under DSHEA, the safety and efficacy of DSs didn’t have to be approved or evaluated by the FDA before being marketed to the public and it became the responsibility of the FDA to demonstrate a product is unsafe before taking action against a manufacturer. The FDA is also charged with regulating the labeling of DSs, ensuring the claims on labeling fall within one of three allowable categories: health, nutrient content, or structure/function (DeLorme *et al.* 2012).

While labeling is covered by the FDA, advertising for DSs falls under the jurisdiction of the Federal Trade Commission. The FTC’s regulations hold supplement advertising to the same truth-in-advertising standard as it does all advertisements, requiring all claims to be supported by “competent and reliable scientific analysis” (US FTC, 1998). Guidelines put forth by the FTC in 1998 extensively describe the requirements for substantiating claims made in supplement advertising, but anything beyond ensuring the accuracy of claims is left up to self-regulation within the advertising industry (DeLorme *et al.* 2012).

Self-regulatory bodies such as the National Advertising Division and Council for Responsible Nutrition “review nationally disseminated advertising for truth and accuracy” (Villafranco & Lustigman, 2007) and have recently made increasing efforts to scrutinize DS advertising (DeLorme *et al.* 2012), but these organizations continue to focus on the same areas as the FTC. There are no regulatory bodies that monitor the message content of DS ads beyond the validity of the products claims.

Message Strategy in Supplement Advertising

The current study aimed to fill in the gap in research pointed out by DeLorme *et al.* (2012) “regarding the balance of information and persuasion” in DS advertisements. Previous studies have suggested that because dietary supplements have the potential to harm consumers, DS advertisements can pose a threat if they do not adequately or accurately inform consumers about the product. One study showed that 60% of regular DS users were likely to believe the ad claims, and many had such strong beliefs that they would continue taking them even if the products were demonstrated to be ineffective (Blendon, DesRoches, Benson, Brodie & Altman 2001; DeLorme *et al.* 2012).

Williams’ article in the Journal of Exercise Physiology (2004) gave a unique perspective on the health risks associated with the advertising of fitness supplements. She asserted that the over-idealized images used to advertise supplements and a lack of quality information about the products are a dangerous combination.

Another study by Main *et al.* (2004) compared message appeals in prescription drug advertising to that of over-the-counter medicines and DSs, classifying the ads visuals and headlines as emotional or rational appeals. A rational appeal was defined as “a factual presentation” of a product that tends to motivate consumers through informational and logical arguments while an emotional appeal is generally defined as attempting to evoke an affective response to influence consumer attitudes and choice behavior. They found that emotional appeals were used in 56.6% of DS ads, while rational appeals appeared in only 43.5% of the ads. Dietary supplements only appeared briefly for comparison to the medical drugs being studied in Main, leaving a gap in the research between DSs and their more regulated medical counterparts.

To more completely evaluate the message strategy in DS advertisements, this study utilized Taylor’s Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel as a theoretical model. Taylor’s model combines a multitude of psychological and communication theories to produce the most comprehensive model of its kind.

Taylor’s model (Chart 1) is based on a combination of Transmission and Ritual models of communication. It is also frequently referred to as informational and transformational models or stated previously as models based on rational and emotional appeals. Taylor took these theories further, breaking each down into 3 more segments. The ego segment of Taylor’s model is defined as advertising to the individual’s sense of self. The social segment appeals to a sense of belonging and social approval. The sensory segment focuses on a rewarding experience of one of the five senses. The ration segment contains the most logical appeals, often including the “reason why” copy. Acute Need refers to situations where consumers must purchase now and don’t have time to gather information before making a decision. In the routine segment, ads will provide a cue for how consumer needs can be met and try to create a habit or routine. For this study, the author formulated two research questions:

RQ1: What segment of Taylor’s Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel do dietary supplement advertisements fall under most frequently?

RQ2: What is the relationship between the main appeal of an advertisement and the amount of information provided in the ad?

III. Methods

Content Analysis

This study used content analysis in order to thoroughly analyze the textual and visual message strategies present in dietary supplement ads. Content analysis describes a flexible method of analyzing data ranging from impressionistic, intuitive, interpretive analyses to systematic, strict textual analyses (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Researchers using this method create customized coding processes to index the information relevant to their research questions or can

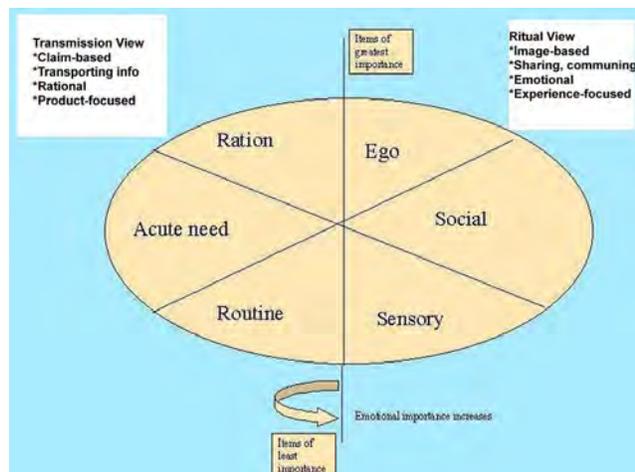


Chart 1. Taylor’s model

build upon coding schemes of others (Hwang, MacMillan, & Lee, 2003). Due to this versatility, the popularity of this research method increased drastically over the past few years, from only 76 studies reporting its use in 1991 to over 600 in 2002 (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Content analysis is applicable to both qualitative and quantitative studies. Both approaches using this method involve sampling relevant text and contextualizing the content using prior knowledge to answer predetermined research questions. The biggest difference lies in how data is collected and analyzed. Quantitative analyses begin from a research question or hypothesis determined before the research is conducted. Coding systems are created “a priori” or before the content analysis begins and are specifically designed to test or determine certain aspects of the content. In a qualitative analysis, the researcher will begin analyzing the content without a predetermined coding scheme and allow correlations in the content to form naturally. The data collected is then analyzed with the constant comparative technique based on emergent patterns, relationships and categories that are continually refined as new data are compared with old data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Sampling Process

This study used both a qualitative and quantitative approach to content analysis. Eighty-two print advertisements for fitness-related dietary supplements were selected to adequately analyze the relationship between the type of message appeal and the information provided about the supplement. Two publications with strong focuses on physical fitness and overall health were chosen to create a sample with a concentration on fitness. Popular men’s fitness and lifestyle magazine *Men’s Health* and bodybuilding magazine *Muscle & Fitness* were chosen to get advertisements geared toward men ranging from innocuous meal replacement supplements to the more intense bodybuilding supplements, which tend to contain a higher number of unfamiliar ingredients with possible health risks.

Advertisements were chosen based on the FDA definition of dietary supplements as any product “containing a vitamin, a mineral, a herb or other botanical agent, an amino acid, weight-loss supplement, or herbal remedy.” The study only used ads that were at least a full page in size. Fourteen ads from five issues of *Men’s Health* and 70 ads from 3 issues of *Muscle & Fitness* gave a total of 83 coded advertisements.

Coding Process

A coding scheme (Appendix A) was constructed based on the coding scheme from Hwang, McMillan & Lee and used to record the relevant components each advertisement contains (2003). The author coded the sampled ads for the type of supplement being advertised and the message strategy of three parts in advertisements: headlines, images, and body copy.

The headline was defined as the primary message of the advertisement and usually discerned by its placement and prominence on the ad. Headlines were coded for segments of Taylor’s Six-Segment Strategy Wheel. Each advertisement could be classified into more than one of the six categories on the wheel if it has multiple kinds of appeals. Headlines were then coded based for a General Message Strategy of transformational or informational based on a 5-point Likert scale from “Entirely Transformational” to “Entirely Informational” with “Both Informational and Transformational” in the middle. General Message Strategy was determined by which Taylor segments were present in each headline. If the headline contained only transformational segments, such as Ego, Social, or Sensory strategies, it was coded as Entirely Transformational; if only informational segments, such as Ration, Acute Need, or Routine, were present, it was coded as Entirely Informational. When an ad had more informational segments than transformational ones, it was coded as More Informational. When an ad had two segments evenly, it was coded as Both Informational and Transformational. For example, the headline “Pure Power. Raw Energy.” was coded as containing elements of Ego for its appeal to increasing one’s own power and Sensory for the physical sensations that “raw energy” is meant to evoke. The measurement of this headline on the General Message Strategy, therefore, was Entirely Transformational.

The same coding scheme was applied to analysis of images. Images were further coded with 4 dichotomous questions: if the supplement is shown, if the supplement is shown in use, if the image contains a person, and if the person or supplement is the main focus of the image.

The author evaluated the tone of the body copy for the general message strategy present in each ad’s copy. Body copy was further analyzed focusing on 7 variables that could be answered “yes” or “no.” These included references to a scientific study, price, taste, testimonials, specific ingredients, and health ben-

efits, with the presence of the FDA disclaimer as the final variable.

The coding results were analyzed for common trends among the advertisements.

IV. Findings

Message Strategies

By coding a total of 82 dietary supplement advertisements, this study tried to answer which type of message strategy as defined by Taylor's Message Strategy Wheel was most frequently used in DS advertising. Of the six segments, only Ego, Social, Sensory, and Ration appeared with any frequency in the headline, image, or body copy of advertisements as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Presence of Taylor Segments in the 3 Components of DS Advertisements

Segment	Headline (%)	Image (%)	Body copy (%)
Ego	68	62	44
Social	17	7	12
Sensory	24	28	18
Routine	0	0	0
Acute Need	0	0	1
Ration	55	48	82

Ego appeals were the most prevalent in the headlines and images of the advertisements, followed by Ration in both cases. Under body copy the relationship was reversed, with Ration appeals appearing more frequently than Ego.

It's important to remember that these numbers don't represent a mutual exclusivity of appeals. Most of the advertisements coded in this study contained multiple appeals throughout the headlines, images, and copy. Combining these numbers with the overall message strategies shown in Table 2 creates a more informative picture of how these appeals are being used.

Table 2 General Message Strategy in the 3 Components of DS Ads

Overall Strategy	Headline (%)	Image (%)	Body copy (%)
Entirely Transformational	44	52	11
More Transformational	12	9	23
Both	13	1	16
More Informational	17	13	10
Entirely Informational	13	24	32

Evaluating the overall message strategies in the advertisements' three main components revealed a strong tendency towards transformational appeals (Ego, Social, and Sensory) in both the headlines and images. Body copy was the only section where informational appeals were used more frequently than the transformational counterpart.

From the information presented in these two tables, it can be found that DS advertisers put stronger focus on transformational appeals to capture potential customers' attentions with headlines and images, rather than informational appeals. 34 of 82 ads (42%) featured predominantly transformational appeals in both the

Headline and Image, and 23 of those (68%) were balanced by a predominantly informational body copy.

Information and Content

The second research question of this study aimed to analyze the information given about supplements in their advertisements. One of the most important features the author looked for was the presence of the DSHEA disclaimer: “These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA. This product is not meant to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.” Exactly 50% (41 ads) printed this disclaimer on the advertisement. While this disclaimer isn’t legally required of all DS advertisements, its absence has potential to mislead uninformed consumers into believing that the product is government approved, effective, and safe. The guidelines for the disclaimer in DS advertisements from the FTC are not perfectly clear either, only requiring it if the ad gives evidence that the product has undergone FDA testing.

This study also evaluated 5 elements advertisements used to persuade consumers to purchase their product: scientific backing, price, taste, testimonials, and ingredients. About 14 ads(17%) made some reference to scientific studies or research to validate the efficacy of their product, and 21 ads (26%) touted taste as a reason for purchase. Only 4 ads (5%) made any reference to price, either specifically or just in reference to affordability, and 14 ads(17%) gave a user testimonial in some capacity. All of the DS ads listed some kind of benefit from taking their product. These benefits ranged from vague (“increase performance”) to more specific (“8x more weight loss than other trials”) but only 42 ads (51.2%) included any specific ingredients to support the claims made. For a majority of the ads, consumers must take it on the word of the advertiser that there is something in the product that actually delivers the promised results.

Overall, this research revealed a lack of quality information about supplements in their advertisements. This lack of important detailed information in addition to a larger presence of transformational message strategy shows an unpleasant trend erring on the side of deception in DS advertising. While it was noted that message strategies in the ads are somewhat balanced, a message strategy focuses more on how information is stated than what information is actually present. Even in the 13 ads (16%) that used a more or entirely informational strategy in all three categories, only 7 contained a benefit and specific ingredient associated with it.

To further analyze the informational content of the DS advertisements, the author broke down the ads into 12 categories of supplement types. Table 3 shows the distribution of 87 supplements over nine categories, with a final category labeled as “Other” combining three categories that contained only one supplement each. Four advertisements featuring more than one supplement caused a disparity between the total number of ads (82) and supplements(87).

Table 3 Categories of Supplements and Frequency in the Sample.

Supplement type	Frequency	Percentage of total ads
Protein	23	26.4
Pre-Workout	21	24.1
Thermogenic	15	17.2
Creatine	6	6.9
Amino	5	5.7
Testosterone	4	4.6
Mass Gainer	4	4.6
Meal Replacement	4	4.6
Multivitamin	2	2.3
Other	3	3.4
Total	87	100

Using these supplement categories, the data were analyzed for each type of supplement. Table 4 shows the percentage of ads in 6 of the categories that list a specific ingredient to substantiate their claimed benefit and the percentage using the FDA disclaimer. These two factors were found to be most relevant as they directly relate to safety and efficacy concerns.

Testosterone supplements were the worst offenders, with none of the ads featuring any specific ingredients and only 2 containing the FDA disclaimer. One ad for QNT TESTEK Testosterone & Anabolic Growth Optimizer listed “a cutting edge, patent pending ingredient” with no identification while claiming it will “raise the testosterone:cortisol ratio up to 184%” and increase “growth factor levels by up to 333%.” There were also no implications that the product was ever tested to validate those claims by any third party.

Table 4 Body Copy Attributes by Supplement Type

Supplement type	Frequency	# Listing ingredient	% Listing ingredient	# with FDA disclaimer	% with FDA disclaimer
Protein	23	19	82.6	10	43.5
Pre-Workout	21	5	23.8	13	61.9
Thermogenic	15	4	26.7	7	46.7
Creatine	6	2	33.3	2	33.3
Amino	5	3	60.0	5	100.0
Testosterone	4	0	0.0	2	50.0

Pre-workout supplements and Thermogenics didn't show a marked improvement over testosterone either. Only 23.8% of pre-workout supplements and 26.7% of thermogenics listed ingredients, and in many of the ads the only listed active ingredient was caffeine for energy. When specific active ingredients were listed, it was generally a scientific title, such as “NOSPEP, a unique NOS Activating Bioactive Peptide Fraction” from a pre-workout supplement Vasotropin ad.

V. Conclusion

The rapidly growing dietary supplement industry has brought on fierce controversy over safety and regulation in recent years. The FDA has a specific category for dietary supplements that allows manufacturers of these products to market them without the FDA testing or approval required of drugs and medications, so these supplements can be said to exist in a regulatory gray area as neither a food nor a drug. The regulations in place require manufacturers to disclose their ingredients and provide an adequate amount of documentation to support and substantiate any major claims made of health benefits, but the qualifications for what claims require substantiation is somewhat loose and subjective, leaving gaps in the system that prevent consumers from fully understanding products.

The FDA's regulations apply mostly to product labeling, while regulation of the advertising for dietary supplements falls to the Federal Trade Commission. The FTC guidelines focus on truth in advertising more than whether the product is safe, creating opportunities for DS advertisers to manipulate the information. As long as DS advertisements make no false claims, the FTC has little restriction, but there are no guidelines on how much information about the product should be given to the consumer in an ad.

Due to the lack of required information or detail about a product's contents or safety, this study investigated the message strategies and informative content present in dietary supplement advertisements in fitness magazines. Using Taylor's Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel, the research found that DS ads lean more to a transformational message strategy, most often with an appeal to the consumers' sense of self fulfillment, in the headlines and especially images. Only the body copy of ads balanced the transformational appeals with what Taylor calls Ration appeals, which focus more on showing why this product is the rational

choice over other options. Through the stronger presence of transformational appeals, it is clear advertisers try sell their supplements based on a better body image to consumers over any actual health benefits.

Evaluating the information present in DS ads revealed a strong disregard for informing consumers about the product, especially in pre-workout and weight loss supplements, which are controversial due to potential health risks. Less than a quarter of these products list any active ingredients to support the benefits they claim on their ads. The transformational message strategies, such as pictures of extremely muscular men, link the claims to impressions of effectiveness when in reality there are no substantial reasons to believe most of the claims made in DS ads. Even in the body copy of the ads, where rational appeals are more common, there is a distinct lack of information with any substance. The Rational appeals consist mainly of promotions of taste over competitors and vague assertions that the product will “increase performance and workout intensity.” Some products rely on testimonials and quotes as evidence of the product efficacy but these can be misleading to consumers as the results shown in these testimonials are not typical of average users. Third-party scientific studies are another way advertisers garner credibility for their products, but only 17% of the ads made reference to them.

The results in this study somewhat echo the findings in Main *et al.* (2004). In that study, 56.5% of DS ads were found to use emotional appeals that evoke an affective response to influence customer behavior, with only 43.5% of ads featuring a rational appeal in either the headline or visual. The emotional and rational appeals in that study are comparable to transformational and informational appeals in this research, which found only 55% of ads contain an informational appeal in either headlines or images. The body copy data in this study, which was not present in Main’s study, slightly contradicts those statistics with 82% containing an informational appeal, but given prominence of headlines and visuals over body copy, the latter has less bearing on the ad as a whole.

Ultimately, this research revealed a strong imbalance between information and persuasion. These supplements are sold with promises of improving various aspects of people’s lives with little proof to their efficacy and no information about what users would be putting into their body and the adverse effects it may have on them. FTC regulations on advertising do not put enough emphasis on requiring manufacturers and advertisers to provide adequate information about a product and its ingredients for consumers to make an informed and safe decision.

Limitations and Future Research

The biggest limitation of this study is the limited number of ads in the sample. With only one researcher and a short period of time for coding, it was infeasible to increase the sample size to more than 82 ads. Expanding the sample size would provide much more accurate measurements of message strategies, reveal trends on a broader scale, and more completely fill the research gap mentioned earlier from DeLorme et al. (2012). Another limitation is the lack of an intercoder reliability measure.

The coding scheme constructed for this research can serve as a baseline for future research in this field, but requires some adjustment. For use with multiple coders, a detailed definition of some words may be needed for high intercoder reliability.

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Appendix A: Coding Procedure

Ad ID No. _____

Publication _____

Issue _____

Ad Size _____

Supplement Type _____

Headline: _____

Segment of Taylor's Message Strategy Wheel

Ration	Ego
Acute Need	Social
Routine	Sensory

General Message Strategy:

Entirely Trans- formational	Mostly Transfor- mational	Both Info and Trans	Mostly Informa- tional	Entirely Infor- mational
--------------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------

Image

Shows Supplement	Y	N
Shows Supplement in use	Y	N
Person in Image	Y	N
Is person or supplement the main focus?		

Segment of Taylor's Message Strategy Wheel

Ration	Ego
Acute Need	Social
Routine	Sensory

General Message Strategy:

Entirely Trans- formational	Mostly Transfor- mational	Both Info and Trans	Mostly Informa- tional	Entirely Infor- mational
--------------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------

Body Copy

Segment of Taylor's Message Strategy Wheel

Ration	Ego
Acute Need	Social
Routine	Sensory

General Message Strategy:

Entirely Trans- formational	Mostly Transfor- mational	Both Info and Trans	Mostly Informa- tional	Entirely Infor- mational
--------------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------

References Scientific Study	Y	N
References Price	Y	N
References Taste	Y	N
Testimonials	Y	N
Lists Specific Ingredients	Y	N
Health Benefits	Y	N
"Not evaluated by the FDA"	Y	N

Main points/Claims:

Appendix B: Message Strategy Definitions

Transformational
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associates the experience of using a brand with a set of psychological characteristic. • Focuses on the users of a brand and their life style, focuses on developing a communication about the brand
Informational
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides with factual product information about a brand or a company • Provides with relevant brand data in a clear and logical manner. • Show competing brands, focuses on claims of uniqueness, and provides nature of brands.
Ego
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appeal to vanity, self-actualization (Not corporate image but consumer image) - Emotional needs relating to self are fulfilled - Image based executions (visual dominance) with little or no factual information - Unstructured and ambiguous enough so each person can fit him/herself into the ad - Usual Strategy*: User image, communication about the brand - Example**: For the computer mania
Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Valuing on others' (thoughts, opinions, evaluations, etc.) - Stating to others, not to self - Showing social situation motivating consumers (Group identification) - Showing target market member as socially important to others - Usual Strategy: User image (in a social situation), Use occasion - Example: Share it with a friend / Sept. 11 Tragedy, our hearts and minds are burdened
Sensory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Five senses emphasized - Sensory gratification - Pleasurable moments - Usual Strategy: Moment of pleasure - Example: Yum! / Feel the speed
Routine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Habitual purchase / Don't need deliberation - Serving a cue or a reminder (brand name and package emphasized) - Appeal to convenience and trivial interests - Usual Strategy: Hyperbole, Preemptive, Brand Familiarity - Example: Future of memory / Welcome to Mesa Electronics
Acute need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited time to make decision (timely decision) - Serving a cue or a reminder in an urgent situation - Requiring immediate action - Strategy: Brand familiarity - Example: Fall/2001 fashion / Call now to process the claim
Ration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rational consumers assumed - Needs a large amount of deliberation (lots of corporate information) - Problem solving offered - Emphasizing the differences or competitive advantages - Usual Strategy: Comparative, USP, Generic - Example: Get the wider picture / Faster Pentium 4 with 256MB memory under \$1,500

* Usual strategies in each message strategy are not strictly fixed, since the Taylor's message strategy emphasizes the consumer motivation. These "usual strategies" are traditionally common in each cell.

** Examples here are text-based messages only, but coders should consider the visual as well as texts.

Motivating Behavior Change: A Content Analysis of Public Service Announcements From the *Let's Move!* Campaign

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Abstract

Childhood obesity is an important issue facing our country and as a result, public health programs including the Let's Move! campaign have been implemented to prevent this growing epidemic. The Let's Move! campaign released a series of print, TV, radio and outdoor public service advertisements meant to influence publics and motivate behavior change. Through a content analysis of the print and TV PSAs from the Let's Move! campaign, this study found that health messages were strategically communicated with a series of separate but cohesive PSA ads that displayed consistency in messages, logos and themes, ultimately creating a brand for the campaign that was easily recognizable to publics. Furthermore, messages were tactically targeted to parents and kids of different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds for appeal across a broader audience. PSAs used techniques drawn from the social cognitive theory and health belief model to increase self efficacy by showing rather than telling target audiences how to make the requested action, influencing attitudes towards childhood obesity, and ultimately motivating behavior change.

I. Introduction

Children in the United States are growing, and although we may want them to grow taller, they are also growing wider. Over the past 30 years, childhood obesity prevalence has tripled in the United States (Yaqubi, 2011). According to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey taken in 2008, approximately half (50.1%) of our youth ages 2-19 were considered obese (Yaqubi, 2011). These alarming numbers are due in part to an overall decrease in physical activity and an increase in unhealthy eating habits. Children spend countless sedentary hours consuming entertainment media and eating more than ever before. Childhood obesity is an important problem to address because adolescent obesity can lead to serious health and self-esteem problems later in life.

In 2010, the United States government launched the *Let's Move!* campaign, a program developed by First Lady Michelle Obama "dedicated to solving the problem of obesity within a generation, so that children born today will grow up healthier and able to pursue their dreams" ("First Lady Michelle Obama launches Let's Move"). To mark the one-year anniversary of the campaign, Let's Move! joined forces with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and The Ad Council to develop TV, radio, print, outdoor and web public service advertisements. These ads aim to educate parents and children about healthy eating and physical activity to ultimately motivate behavior change. This study analyzed television and print public service advertisements for the Let's Move! campaign with the goal of discovering

* **Keywords:** Public Health, Health Communication tactics, Let's Move! Campaign, Public Service Advertisements, Behavior Change

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how health messages are communicated to motivate behavior change. This research also aimed to evaluate the health communication theory and practices used in these campaign advertisements.

II. Literature Review

No specific studies have analyzed how health messages are communicated in the Let's Move! campaign public service advertisements to motivate behavior change. For the purpose of this study, academic literature was reviewed about public health communications campaigns, the effectiveness of public service advertisements in yielding behavior change and health communication theory. A case study about the success of the *VERB* campaign to increase physical activity among children was also reviewed.

Public Health Communication Campaigns

Public health communication campaigns are implemented to address health problems such as poor diet, inactivity, tobacco use and AIDS prevention. These campaigns use a variety of communication tactics and channels to reach publics and influence health behavior including in-school presentations, handouts, public service announcements and discussion groups (Snyder, 2007). Studies published about the effectiveness of health communication campaigns found that utilizing an appropriate channel and targeting a specific audience are helpful in motivating behavior change among publics. Abroms, Schiavo and Lefebvre conducted a study evaluating the successfulness of various health campaigns and found that by integrating new media such as the Internet, computer games, digital television and cell phones into public health campaigns, a larger number of people were reached and the length of the campaign was expanded (2007). Many of the tools that distribute new media are free via the Internet, which makes dissemination even easier and more cost-efficient, thus exposing the campaign to more people and overall increasing the motivation to change the requested health behavior (Abroms et al., 2008; Snyder, 2007). Although mass media campaigns reach a wide breath of people, when interventions were specifically targeted to a group of publics, they were even more effective in yielding behavior change (Marcus, Owen, Forsyth, Cavill, & Fridinger, 1998).

Health communications campaigns are faced with the constant challenge of reaching publics from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. A study analyzing media-based physical activity interventions conducted by Marcus, Owen, Forsyth, Cavill, and Fridinger found publics who were socially disadvantaged were harder to reach with a media-based intervention campaign than those who were not socially disadvantaged (1998). Furthermore, in an assessment of an adolescent physical activity campaign, Faulkner, Kwan, MacNeil and Brownrigg found that children from low-income families recalled less information about the campaign than children from high-income families (2011).

Social Cognitive Theory and Health Belief Model

Communications and public health theory are used to develop effective communications that drive behavior change in public health campaigns. The social cognitive theory and health belief model are useful in explaining behavior change among publics. For the purpose of this study, research about certain aspects of these theories was explored. The social cognitive theory is a learning theory developed by psychologist Albert Bandura, which explains how certain behavioral patterns are adopted. People are influenced by personal factors and environmental factors, which in turn affect the individual's behavior (2001). According to Bandura, the most important pre-requisite for a person to change their behavior is the existence of self-efficacy, which is the internal belief that the individual is able to implement the proposed behavior change (2001). With self-efficacy, one can make a behavior change even when obstacles are in the way.

Bandura's social learning theory asserts that individuals learn from observing the actions of others and the benefits of those actions (Bandura, 2001). The social learning theory evolved from the social cognitive theory, which is explained above. According to Bandura, individuals can learn through observing actions of others in three ways: when an actual person demonstrates the desired behavior, when a person verbally instructs them how to make the desired behavior change, and when they models themselves for a real or fictional character who demonstrates the desired behavior in the media (1977). Although they learn through observing, it is not guaranteed they will make a behavior change (1977).

The health belief model is from the public health discipline, and attempts to explain why people make

a health behavior change. The health belief model asserts that in order for individuals to think about making a behavior change, they must first recognize they are susceptible to the condition or disease. Next, the individuals must believe this is a serious condition, and they can reduce their risk if they take the advised action. The individuals also need to receive cues to action, such as how-to information, so they can initiate behavior change. Lastly, they must have self-efficacy in order to take action (Champion & Skinner, 2008). According to Champion and Skinner, self-efficacy can be achieved through verbal reinforcement and guidance in the recommended action (2008). It is important health campaign messages utilize the above theories by showing and telling the how-to and when to in order to help drive behavior change (Snyder, 2007).

Childhood Obesity Campaigns

Public health campaigns that were designed to increase physical activity and educate about nutrition began to appear in the mid-1980s due to an increase in overweight and obesity (Huhman, Potter, Duke, Judkins, Heitzler & Wong, 2007). In the 1990s, campaigns became more intently focused on nutrition, particularly “increasing consumption of fruit, vegetables and low-fat milk” (Huhman et al., 2007). Because of the recent increase in the prevalence of childhood obesity, many public health advocates see the promotion of youth physical activity as an even more pressing priority (Huhman et al., 2007). According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, more than half of adults believe the government should play a significant role in helping to reduce childhood obesity (2011). This is why the government has launched two childhood obesity campaigns within the past 10 years: The VERB campaign and the Let’s Move! campaign.

In 2002, the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention launched the VERB campaign, which used commercial marketing techniques to “sell” physical activity to tweens ages 9-13. Results found that this physical activity campaign had the largest effect on behavior change (Snyder, 2007). The campaign’s chief strategy was to create a brand, “VERB: It’s what you do.” In order to make the brand known, the VERB campaign associated “with popular kids’ brands, athletes and celebrities, and activities and products that are cool, fun, and motivating” (Parvanta, 2011). The VERB campaign used atypical messages to communicate to tweens about physical activity. Instead of presenting facts, the campaign showed tweens how to take action by using visuals in public service advertisements on TV and in print. Tweens featured in the advertisements were of various ethnic backgrounds, body weights and ability levels so they were easily identifiable for a large number of publics. Furthermore, communication tactics were targeted separately at parents and children so tweens would still associate VERB with a cool and young brand (Parvanta, 2011).

A study conducted by Wakefield, Loken, and Hornik found that campaigns using mass media to prevent childhood obesity showed significant improvements in weight loss (2010). Because the VERB campaign was mass media based, interventions reached a large number of target publics (Hihman et. al., 2007). Although these improvements were significant, long-term changes are difficult to maintain after a campaign ends (Wakefield et al., 2010). Therefore, in 2010 First Lady Michelle Obama launched the Let’s Move! campaign. This ongoing campaign promotes better nutrition information, increased physical activity, easier access to healthy foods, and personal responsibility. For the purpose of this study, public service advertisements from the Let’s Move! campaign were analyzed for communication tactics.

Public Service Advertisements

Mass media campaigns use public service advertisements to raise awareness and educate publics about an issue at hand with the goal of shifting attitudes and ultimately motivating behavior change (Atkin, 2001). PSAs communicate about health topics or social issues including alcohol awareness, environmental protection, obesity prevention and gun control (Atkin, 2001). Charles Atkin conducted a study in which he reviewed major health campaign PSAs, and analyzed their value in yielding behavior change. Atkin found “the effectiveness of public service advertising depends not only on the quantity and quality of campaign messages, but on the difficulty of achieving the intended outcome and the receptivity of the audience to the health behavior being promoted” (2001). Drawn from theory and research, Atkin proposes a PSA should contain three types of messages to motivate behavior change: Awareness, instruction, and persuasion. To generate awareness, campaign messages must inform publics about the health topic. Instruction messages should tell publics what to do and how to do it, and persuasion messages should give reasons why publics should adopt this particular health behavior. Atkin also discusses how to increase the effectiveness of PSAs by adding credibility, communicating in an engaging style to gain the attention of publics, creating a simple understandable message, and making the message personally involving and relevant (2001). Atkin advises it is important to

choose a messenger that is influential to target audiences. Through these strategies, public service advertisements will influence target publics to a greater extent and ultimately result in the desired health behavior.

Research Questions

RQ1: What types of communication messages are presented in the Let's Move! campaign to motivate target audiences to change their behavior and reduce obesity?

RQ2: To what extent do these messages follow health communication theories (Health belief model, social cognitive theory)?

III. Methods

In order to explore how health messages are communicated to motivate behavior change in the Let's Move! campaign, a content analysis was performed on all 13 print advertisements and six television public service announcements released in the spring of 2011, which marked the one-year anniversary of the Let's Move! campaign. Content analysis is a method of research for "making reliable and valid inferences from data to their context, with the purpose of providing knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action" (Krippendorff, 1980). By performing a content analysis, the researcher is able to analyze messages and make conclusions from data. To ensure accurate results, the researcher develops a coding sheet in which categories are created for what exactly the researcher looks for in the selected content. By creating categories and coding the content, certain characteristics of the message can be analyzed and interpreted for underlying themes and patterns. (Krippendorff, 1980).

Before research was conducted to explore how health messages are communicated to motivate behavior change in the Let's Move! campaign, the author developed a coding sheet modeled after Atkin's research of effective PSA strategies, which were drawn from the social cognitive theory and health belief model and research about successful health communication strategies (2011).

Each PSA was analyzed with the same coding sheet to keep findings consistent. The coding sheet consists of seven categories: Obesity reduction messages, messages of awareness, messages of instruction, messages of persuasion, content, mechanical and stylistic factors and messenger (see Appendix). PSAs were viewed a total of seven times by the researcher, each time to detect any element for each category. The researcher accessed these PSAs through the Let's Move! Toolkit, which is available on the Let's Move! campaign website.

First, the researcher identified what message(s) about obesity prevention were being communicated to publics. The PSAs were then viewed to explore the way messages were communicated based on Atkin's research about effective PSA strategies to facilitate behavior change; PSAs were studied based on the existence of messages of awareness, instruction, and persuasion (2011). Messages of awareness were considered to exist if the PSA defined the health topic, viewers were educated about what, how, when, and where to fix the health problem, and if viewers were prompted to explore the subject of obesity prevention and reduction to a fuller extent. Messages of instruction were considered to exist if the action to prevent childhood obesity was defined, positive effects of the action were clarified, encouragement and direction was provided to enhance self-efficacy, and if the ad referred back to the Let's Move! campaign website for further direction. Messages of persuasion were considered to exist if the messenger was credible, gave "how to" information, demonstrated the desired behavior, and gave verbal reinforcement to publics.

PSAs were also coded for their content, another factor Atkin deemed important to yield behavior change (2011). The author analyzed PSAs to see if they defined a target audience, if the requested action(s) were applicable in real life situations and if the overall message was understandable and could be summarized in one sentence. These factors were checked to determine the possible effectiveness or ineffectiveness in yielding behavior change among publics.

Mechanical and stylistic factors were also considered when analyzing PSAs to determine how the message was communicated through use of music, humor, continuity of symbols and theme. Lastly, the messenger was checked to identify who was delivering the message—a celebrity, ordinary person, minority, or cartoon character. The author also recorded qualitative comments for each PSA and was able to infer that she did not anticipate. By coding PSAs for the existence of the above factors, the author was able to draw

conclusions about how health messages are communicated in the Let's Move! campaign PSAs to motivate behavior change among publics.

IV. Findings

Results from the content analysis of print and television public service advertisements from the Let's Move! campaign yielded several findings. All 19 PSAs contained a salient obesity reduction message that was aligned with the Let's Move! campaign goals. Fourteen PSAs urged audiences to increase physical activity while 10 PSAs encouraged viewers to eat more fruits and vegetables. Findings indicated that health messages were communicated through a consistency of the campaign theme, by specifically targeting an audience and showing the requested behaviors to change rather than telling. The ways in which the Let's Move! PSAs communicates health messages are in align with the social cognitive theory and health belief model.

Let's Move! Campaign Consistency

The Let's Move! campaign shows consistency in its messages, logos and themes, therefore, creating a culture for the campaign that is constant and easy to recognize. The 19 PSAs can be grouped into different sets of ad campaigns, but all PSAs contain the same underlying message and theme: To stay active and eat healthy. Seven print and one TV PSA titled "On the Daily" are geared towards parents and children urging them to adopt a different healthy habit each day of the week. One print and one TV PSA called "Mom Was Here" urges moms to use unique strategies to take action and keep their kids active and eating healthy. One print and one TV PSA are part of the "T-shirt" campaign, which educates and encourages Spanish-speaking parents and children to eat healthy and stay active. Three TV PSAs titled "The Magic of Healthy Living" coordinated with the Disney Channel to encourage kids to engage in friendly competitions to eat healthy and get active. Four PSAs titled "Remember" were created specifically for those living in Indian Country, and they call on parents to get their kids active and eating healthy. In each PSA campaign grouping, the message and theme were consistent and easily recognizable. In all three "Magic of Healthy Living" TV PSAs, the messengers were the same, but in each PSA they were verbally demonstrating different ways to eat healthy and stay active. Although each separate ad campaign contains diverse messengers and situations, the inherent message about how to reduce childhood obesity is constant. Health messages are communicated with a consistent symbol in most of the Let's Move! PSAs: A logo with the Let's Move! webpage URL. The logo refers viewers back to the campaign website for more information, therefore motivating further exploration of the subject. The consistency in the campaign is carried out in both the print and television advertisements, creating a cohesive culture for the Let's Move! campaign. The only distinction in this consistency is in the four "Remember" print PSAs targeted to publics living in Indian Country. The logo on these PSAs include the Let's Move! symbol, but underneath it says, "In Indian Country." In these PSAs, the Let's Move! logo does not refer publics back to the website. Instead, the logo is surrounded by an image of two people playing with a ball. This overall logo is different from the rest of the Let's Move! logos displayed on campaign PSAs but it is still easily recognizable with the campaign because the same font and colors are used.

Specifically Targeted Audience

Findings indicate that all PSAs in the Let's Move! campaign targets a specific audience: Parents and kids. The PSAs titled "T-shirt" and "On the Daily" target both parents and kids in unique ways. The "On the Daily" PSA campaign appeals to kids because the children are shown doing fun and exciting activities with their friends. The messengers were children from diverse backgrounds and, therefore, have the potential to appeal across a broad audience. The "On the Daily" PSA campaign also appeals to parents: Moms and dads of diverse backgrounds are pictured in the print PSAs next to their kids with tips on how to encourage kids to adopt healthy behaviors. Other PSAs in the Let's Move! campaign are more specific and directly target a certain parent. The "Mom was Here" PSAs target mothers--they show what moms are doing to keep their kids healthy, and instruct moms how to communicate with their kids to keep them eating healthy and staying active. Two out of the four print PSAs created for Indian Country titled "Remember" target a certain parent: One PSA targets to mom and one PSA targets dad. These PSAs directly use the words "Mom" and "Dad" to communicate to a specific parent how to take action to keep their kids active. "The Magic of Healthy Living" Let's Move! TV PSAs specifically target children. These PSAs show kids playing and eating healthy with their

friends in real world situations that can be easy for a kid to mimic. To specifically target kids, the “Magic of Healthy Living” PSAs use appealing visuals, humor and music. Furthermore, the messengers of these PSAs are easily recognizable Disney Channel celebrities that are role models to kids.

Findings indicate that all Let’s Move! PSAs analyzed have a specific target audience, but they are also trying to appeal across a broad audience of publics with different races and socio-economic backgrounds. Every PSA campaign contains children and parents from minority races such as African American, Hispanic and Asian as well as Caucasian kids. Children in the PSAs also have different body heights, weights and ability levels to increase its universal appeal. Furthermore, the “Remember” PSA campaign is specifically targeted towards parents living in Indian Country, and the “T-Shirt” campaign is specifically targeted to Spanish-speaking Americans. The “T-shirt” PSA shows a young boy of Spanish decent wearing different t-shirts that have Spanish writing on them, instructing parents how to keep their kids active and eating healthy.

The PSAs are also attempting to appeal to publics from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds because the messages encourage parents and children to take part in activities that require little money and resources. In the TV PSA “On The Daily,” children from minority groups and from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds are shown playing and doing activities that are easy to do outside with little money and resources involved such as playing hopscotch and freeze tag. In the TV PSA “Magic of Healthy Living: Sandwich Star,” the PSA demonstrates how easy it is to make a sandwich healthy with little ingredients and money involved. The “Mom Was Here” PSAs encourage moms to do things such as turning off the power or connecting what their kids love to do with healthy eating. These activities do not require money or resources and, therefore, appeal to publics from all different socio-economic backgrounds.

Show Rather Than Tell

All PSAs analyzed in the Let’s Move! campaign show the requested health action rather than just tell target publics what to do. The PSAs use concepts from Bandura’s social learning theory to show publics through modeling, so individuals are more likely to make the requested behavior change (1977). These actions are shown through how-to examples and verbal reinforcement of the message. In the “Magic Of Healthy Living” TV PSAs, friends are shown playing basketball and competing in a healthy sandwich making competition. These activities are easy to imitate and provide specific how-to information so that target audiences are instructed with no guesswork involved. Furthermore, TV PSAs verbally reinforce the how-to messages shown. In the TV PSA “Magic of Healthy Living: Sandwich Star,” Michelle Obama congratulates both kids on a competition about how to build a healthy sandwich, giving verbal reinforcement and guidance, therefore, possibly increasing the likelihood that the requested behavior change will be made by the target audience.

In the TV PSAs that have corresponding print ads, the messages are reinforced with specific how-to information. The “On the Daily” TV PSA features a song instructing kids and parents about a healthy change to make each day. The lyrics begin with “Today is Saturday. Small plate Saturday, football Friday . . . walk it off Wednesday, touch your toes Tuesday lets move Monday swap a snack Sunday” (Ad Council, 2011). In the related print PSAs, each day is separated into a separate print PSA, and showed exactly what behavior change kids should be making or parents should be endorsing each day of the week with a detailed example, providing the audience with how-to information and reinforcement in writing.

The “Mom Was Here” PSAs show specific, how-to examples of how moms can keep their children healthy and active but also verbally reinforce the message to eat healthy and stay active. The “Mom Was Here: Blackout” TV PSA shows a mom briefly shutting off the power at home, turning off the video games her kids are playing so that they are forced to play outside. This specific how-to information provokes the viewer to perform the requested action because they are learning from example and the voice-over encourages moms to take action and visit the Let’s Move! website for more ideas. The “Mom Was Here: Cantaloupe” print PSA contains text that tells the story of a mom telling her daughter that astronauts like cantaloupe, connecting something her child loves with healthy food to get her to eat better. This specific how-to instructional message was present in every PSA analyzed. Verbal reinforcement of the instructional message was present in every TV PSA analyzed.

V. Conclusions

This study sought to analyze television and print public service advertisements from the Let's Move! campaign with the goal of discovering how health messages are communicated and if these messages use health communication theory and practices to motivate behavior change among target audiences. Through a content analysis, this study determined that health messages are strategically communicated and used ideas from the social cognitive theory and the health belief model to target specific audiences toward making behavior changes.

Findings indicated that health messages are communicated to target audiences by creating a series of separate but cohesive PSA campaigns that all had a unified theme, ultimately constructing a brand for the Let's Move! campaign similar to the brand in the VERB campaign (Snyder, 2007). By consistently displaying the Let's Move! campaign theme and logo on the PSA, it can be concluded that campaign materials are easily recognizable for any audience. The logo referred viewers back to the Let's Move! campaign website, which motivated further exploration of the subject and increased the effectiveness of the campaign message. A study by Abrams, Schiavo and Lefebvre found that by integrating new media into health campaigns, the result was more successful (2007). Because the Let's Move! campaign incorporates the web, results can be assumed to be more widespread, and help to motivate behavior change among target publics.

Each PSA campaign is geared toward a specific audience such as minorities, mothers and kids, but all contain the same inherent message to eat healthy and stay active. Previous research found when health communications campaigns were specifically targeted to a group of publics, the intended audience was asked to make the requested behavior change (Marcus et al., 1998). Similar to the VERB campaign, the Let's Move! campaign featured actors from various ethnic backgrounds, body weights and ability levels so they were easily identifiable for target publics (Paravanta, 2011). Although none of the PSAs featured disabled actors, which would have furthered the ad's ability to relate to target audiences. The PSAs used real-life situations that are easily applicable to audiences of all socio-economic statuses, increasing the chances of behavior change among viewers.

All PSAs from the Let's Move! campaign included messages of awareness, instruction and persuasion. According to Atkin, if a PSA contains these types of messages, individuals are motivated to make a behavior change (2001). The PSAs inform publics about obesity prevention, instruct publics by showing them how to eat healthy and stay active, and persuade publics by giving reasons why they should make this behavior change. It can be concluded that use of these messages influence target publics to a greater extent and will ultimately lead them to make the desired behavior change.

Messages in the PSAs and the campaign name "Let's Move!" demand an action from viewers. The social cognitive theory and health belief model assert that in order for an individual to make a behavior change, they must have self-efficacy. The health belief model emphasizes that for individuals to have self-efficacy, they should receive cues to action including specific how-to information and verbal reinforcement (Champion & Skinner, 2008). The reinforcement in the statement "Let's Move" supports the messages verbally communicated by kids, parents and Michelle Obama in the TV PSAs.

Furthermore, most of the PSAs analyzed show rather than just tell viewers exactly how to take action to prevent childhood obesity. The social learning theory, which is drawn from the social cognitive theory, states that individuals learn from observing the actions of others (Bandura, 2001). PSAs in the Let's Move! campaign use this theory to motivate behavior change by showing kids and parents taking action towards a certain obesity reduction message, furthering the viewers' motivation to make the requested behavior change. The "T-Shirts" PSA print and TV ads do not show messengers who take the requested action, it just tells in words what to do. Therefore, these PSAs can be concluded to be less effective towards motivating viewers to make the requested behavior changes. The use of concepts from the social cognitive theory and health belief model in the Let's Move! campaign PSAs indicate that health messages are drawn from communications and public health theory to make the message more effective for target audiences and yield behavior change.

The health belief model states that the viewer must first recognize he or she is at risk for a condition or disease before thinking about making a behavior change (Champion & Skinner, 2008). The PSAs in the Let's Move! campaign provide how-to information to help achieve self-efficacy, but do not communicate to target audiences that they are at-risk for childhood obesity. No statistics were presented in these PSAs to increase perceived susceptibility of target audiences. Therefore, if target audiences did not think they or their kids were at-risk for childhood obesity, then they are assumed less likely to make the requested behavior

change.

This study cannot make any generalized conclusions about the Let's Move! campaign because a content analysis was performed only on a small portion of campaign communications. A better understanding can be gained by performing a content analysis on all PSAs released for the Let's Move! campaign. Furthermore, a broader understanding of the effectiveness of campaign messages and tactics can be achieved by employing the use of different methods such as focus groups and surveys to see if the campaign influences attitude change and any further change in behavior.

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Appendix: Coding Sheet

Obesity reduction messages	Chronic disease risk reduction	Eat more fruits and veggies	Increase physical activity	Balance healthy eating with exercise	Understand what a portion is	Balance healthy eating with exercise	Limit "screen time"

Messages of awareness	Define health topic	Inform viewers what to do	Specify how to do it	Cue about when and where it should be done	Motivate further exploration of the subject

Messages of Instruction	Defines action to take (how, when where)	Clarifies the positive effects to be expected	Provide encouragement or training to enhance self efficacy	Refers back to website

Messages of Persuasion	Messenger is credible	Gives "how to" information	Demonstrates desired behavior	Gives verbal reinforcement

Content	Specific target audience (Parents or children)	PSA is applicable to real-life situation and needs	Message can be summarized in a sentence

Mechanical and stylistic factors	Use of music	Use of humor	Continuity of symbols	Theme line

Messenger	Celebrity	Ordinary Person	Minority	Cartoon Character

The Influence of Rap/Hip-Hop Music: A Mixed-Method Analysis on Audience Perceptions of Misogynistic Lyrics and the Issue of Domestic Violence

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Abstract

Using a qualitative content analysis and online survey, this research examined how college students perceive and respond to the portrayal of women when exposed to misogynistic lyrics. Based on cultivation theory, this study analyzed the lyrical content of popular rap and hip-hop songs (n=20) on Billboard's "Hot 100" chart between 2000 and 2010. Song lyrics were classified into one or more of the following coding categories: demeaning language, rape/sexual assault, sexual conquest and physical violence. Themes of power over, objectification of and violence against women were identified as prevalent throughout the content analysis sample. Survey results indicated a positive correlation between misogynous thinking and rap/hip-hop consumption.

I. Introduction

This study examined the culture of rap/hip-hop music and how misogynistic lyrical messages influenced listeners' attitudes toward intimate partner violence. Adams and Fuller (2006) define misogyny as the "hatred or disdain of women" and "an ideology that reduces women to objects for men's ownership, use, or abuse" (p. 939). Popular American hip-hop and rap artists, such as Eminem, Ludacris and Ja Rule, have increasingly depicted women as objects of violence or male domination by communicating that "submission is a desirable trait in a woman" (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008, p. 581). These songs condone male hegemony in which "men find the domination and exploitation of women and other men to be not only expected, but actually demanded" (Prushank, 2007, p. 161). Thus, these messages glorify violence against women, including rape, torture and abuse, and foster an acceptance of sexual objectification and degradation of women (Russo & Pirlott, 2006). These misogynistic themes first emerged in rap/hip-hop songs in the late 1980s and are especially apparent today with women being portrayed as sex objects and victims of sexual violence (Adams & Fuller, 2006; Russo & Pirlott, 2006).

Young adults between the ages of 16 and 30 are the most likely age group to consume rap/hip-hop music, and in turn, may become desensitized to the derogatory lyrics condoning relationship violence and sexual aggression (Smith, 2005). Specifically, the college-aged demographic has been influenced by the prevalence of sexually explicit media and the negative images of women presented in hip-hop culture, which "teach men that aggression and violence are closely linked to cultural views of masculinity" (Wood, 2012, p. 105). Furthermore, the physical abuse of women is celebrated in rap/hip-hop songs promoting "models of masculinity that sustain and encourage misogyny" (Cobb & Boettcher, 2007, p. 3026).

_____ This paper evaluated the impact of cultivation theory and whether exposure to misogynistic rap

* **Keywords:** misogyny, hip-hop culture, rap music, media effects, violent lyrics

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increases the acceptance of perpetrating violent acts against women (Johnson, Jackson, & Gatto, 1995). Also, this paper incorporated the disinhibition hypothesis in relation to how audiences become desensitized to media violence after repeated exposure (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009). Analyzing the relationship between rap/hip-hop lyrical content and song popularity showed how audiences have responded to objectifying messages through their music consumption.

II. Literature Review

Issue of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a pressing issue often deemed acceptable by the media, and thus, challenges men and women's perceptions of how they should treat their partners in their relationships. Over the past two decades, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women "reported a tremendous increase in the representation of violence against women, particularly sexual violence, in the media" (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008, p. 581). Studies suggest that increased exposure to misogynistic messages has desensitized audiences to the issue of intimate partner violence and fosters greater tolerance of male aggression (Barongan & Hall, 1996). The mass media portrays domestic violence both visually and aurally by normalizing the use of force in relationships, which correlates to the fact that "more than one in three women in the United States have been sexually coerced by a partner" (Nettleton, 2011, p. 140). Therefore, it is not surprising that "men commit at least 90% of documented acts of physical intimate partner violence in the U.S." by exerting control over women (Wood, 2012, p. 301).

The ambiguity of what constitutes sexual assault or intimate partner violence contributes to public misperception of domestic violence. The Office of Violence Against Women defines domestic violence as a "pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner" ("What Is Domestic Violence?," 2012). Physical, sexual and psychological actions or threats of abuse toward a partner are the most common forms of domestic violence ("What Is Domestic Violence?," 2012). Domestic violence includes behaviors that "intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone" ("What Is Domestic Violence?" 2012). The National Violence Against Women Survey, conducted by Tjaden and Thoennes (2000), estimates that one in five women in the United States is physically assaulted in her lifetime and one in 13 is raped by an intimate partner (Russo & Pirlott, 2006).

While women of all ages are at risk of experiencing domestic and sexual violence, those between the ages of 20-24 are most susceptible to experiencing nonfatal intimate partner violence ("Get the Facts: The Facts," 2007). According to a 2007 study by Laurel Crown and Linda Roberts, "one-half of college women in their senior year reported one or more unwanted sexual interactions during their college careers" (Wood, 2012, p. 287). The perpetration of violent behavior can be explained using the cognitive learning theory, asserting, "individuals receive messages through society and media that shape relationship ideologies" (Bretthauer, Zimmerman, & Banning, 2006, p. 30). This study specifically analyzed college students' views on the issue of domestic violence and its portrayal in popular rap/hip-hop music.

Misogyny in Rap/Hip-Hop Music

In a recent content analysis of six types of media, Pardun, L'Engle, and Brown (2005) found that music, in particular, contained substantially more sexual content than any other media outlets. Sexually explicit and derogatory lyrics are especially apparent in rap music, which has been criticized for its graphic derogatory presentation of women using lyrics that objectify, exploit or victimize them (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009; Cobb & Boettcher, 2007). Adams and Fuller (2006) assert that rap music reduces women to objects "that are only good for sex and abuse," which "perpetuate ideas, values, beliefs, and stereotypes that debase women" (p. 940). This study also noted six themes common in misogynistic rap music, and further examined three of them: derogatory statements about women in relation to sex; statements involving violent actions toward women, particularly in relation to sex; and references of women as usable and discardable beings (Adams & Fuller, 2006).

Armstrong (2001) conducted a content analysis of 490 rap songs from 1987 to 1993, in which 22%

contained lyrics featuring violence against women including assault, rape and murder. His study classified rap songs into different categories in which rappers either pride themselves on sex acts appearing to harm women, justify other acts of violence, warn women who challenge male domination that they will be assaulted, and/or seem to invite male violence against women (Armstrong, 2001). Weitzer and Kubrin (2009) conducted a follow-up study analyzing the portrayal of women in 403 rap songs through a content analysis, in which themes of derogatory naming and shaming of women; sexual objectification of women; distrust of women; legitimization of violence against women; and celebration of prostitution and pimping appeared at the greatest frequency. Sexual objectification was found to occur in 67% of the misogynistic lyrics in their songs sampled (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009). This study further examined the frequency of explicit music content found in the past decade's worth of popular rap/hip-hop music. Furthermore, stereotyped gender roles emerged from lyrics containing sexual imagery that promote the "acceptance of women as sexual objects and men as pursuers of sexual conquest," (Martino, Collins, Elliott, Strachman, Kanouse, & Berry, 2006, p. 438).

Influence on Audience Perceptions

George Gerbner focused on violent television content and how audience exposure to these violent images influences their views and conception of social reality, by cultivating a "common view of the world" (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009, pg. 165). As a result, Gerbner developed cultivation theory by examining how long-term exposure to violent media messages alters audience perceptions of violence in their everyday lives (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009). This approach can be applied to all forms of media by interpreting individuals' reactions to violent content; thus, this study will incorporate cultivation theory in an analysis of misogynistic lyrics affecting listeners' attitudes toward domestic violence (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009).

In reviewing more than five decades worth of research, Potter (1999) extended cultivation theory to determine the following effects of exposure to media violence:

Exposure to violent portrayals in the media can lead to subsequent viewer aggression through disinhibition. Long-term exposure to media violence is related to aggression in a person's life. Media violence is related to subsequent violence in society. Exposure to violence in the media can lead to desensitization. People exposed to many violent portrayals over time will come to be more accepting of violence. (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009, p. 169)

In turn, Dr. Edgar Tyson (2006) developed a 26-item instrument, the Rap Music Attitude and Perception (RAP) Scale, the "only tool available to access an individual's attitude toward and perception of rap music lyrics" (p. 212). The RAP Scale contains three constructs: empowerment, artistic aesthetics and violent misogynistic. This study incorporated the empowerment and violent misogynistic constructs to measure "violent, sexist, and misogynistic images conveyed in the lyrics" to examine college students' perceptions of the content through a survey (Gourdine & Lemmons, 2011, p. 65). Using a meta-analysis approach, Timmerman et. al (2008) found that "listening to music generates an effect on listeners consistent with the content of the music," such as when rap/hip-hop artists communicate themes condoning "power over, objectification of and violence against women" (p. 303; Bretthauer et al., 2006, p. 42). This 2008 study applied the term "priming" to determine "whether music serves as a mechanism to 'prime' someone for subsequent actions and behaviors," and in turn, react to, incorporate or reject the media content into the listener's life (Timmerman et. al., 2008, p. 307). While a correlation may exist between exposure to misogynistic music and audience attitudes regarding violent acts against women, a causal link cannot be demonstrated between listening habits and resulting misogynistic behavior (Baran & Davis, 2006, p. 331). Therefore, the consumption of misogynistic music can influence audience perceptions of misogynistic content, but does not directly lead to "subsequent aggressive actions" (Timmerman et. al., 2008, p. 307).

This study expanded upon previous research incorporating the RAP Scale, priming and cultivation theory to determine how college students' perspectives on issues of domestic violence reflect misogynistic themes emphasized in explicit rap/hip-hop music.

Research Questions

This study explored whether consuming rap/hip-hop music containing misogynistic messages affects the attitudes of audiences regarding domestic violence.

RQ. 1: How do college students perceive and respond to the portrayal of women when exposed to misogynistic lyrics?

RQ. 2: Does gender impact how college students interpret misogynistic messages found within popular rap/hip-hop songs?

III. Method

This study used cultivation theory to examine the media effects of misogynistic rap and hip-hop music on shaping audience attitudes toward intimate partner violence. By incorporating a qualitative content analysis and an online survey, this study analyzed the lyrical content of popular rap and hip-hop songs found on Billboard's "Hot 100" chart over the past decade. The sample of 20 songs was drawn from Billboard's Year-End "Hot 100" singles list, which includes the most popular music from various music genres. These were chosen due to the specific violent or objectifying terminology found within the lyrics of top-ranked rap and hip-hop songs during this study's qualitative content analysis. The Billboard "Hot 100," issued weekly by Billboard magazine, is the music industry's standard for measuring song popularity in the United States based on radio airplay, online streaming activity, physical CD sales and digital downloads ("Billboard Hot 100"). Nielsen Soundscan compiles the "Hot 100" chart rankings based on weekly audience impressions starting the first week in December each year ("Billboard Hot 100"). Year-end chart totals are calculated in the final week of November to determine the top 100 songs per year for all music genres combined ("Billboard Hot 100").

Cultivation Theory

The meanings underlying the songs' lyrical messages were analyzed through the lens of cultivation theory, which proposes "when people are exposed to media content or other socialization agents, they gradually come to cultivate or adopt beliefs about the world that coincide with the images they have been viewing or messages they have been hearing" (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994, p. 22). Cultivation theory further asserts that the more audiences are exposed to factors such as sexual aggression, submission or violence in intimate relationships, the more they accept the objectification of women over time (Gerbner, et. al, 1994). This study specifically examined gendered audiences' interpretation of misogynistic messages in popular rap/hip-hop songs to see if there were group differences in the effects of media content (Martino, et. al, 2006).

Qualitative Content Analysis

Content analysis is described as "a research technique for objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" to investigate messages and reduce them into categories (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009, pg. 42). According to Zhang & Wildemuth (2009), qualitative content analysis "pays attention to unique themes that illustrate the range of meanings of the phenomenon rather than the statistical significance of the occurrence of particular text or concepts" (p. 309). Using a qualitative content analysis guided by cultivation theory, this study examined the presence or absence of violent misogynistic lyrics found in 20 popular rap and hip-hop songs between 2000 and 2010. The song lyrics were obtained from various Internet sources (e.g., azlyrics.com) and coded line by line. Songs were classified into one or more of the following coding categories based on images and messages conveyed in lyrics: demeaning language, rape/sexual assault, sexual conquest and/or physical violence. Songs were also labeled according to their level of misogynistic content, based on the number of categories into which the lyrics were coded: high, medium or low levels of misogyny. The coding categories--derogatory naming and shaming of women; sexual objectification of women; and legitimization of violence against women--were adopted from Weitzer and Kubrin's (2009) content analysis study and incorporated into this present study.

Description of coding categories

- Songs referencing acts of physical violence toward women were coded as such if they contained words including: slap, punch, push, beat, hit, bleeding, pain, throw, pin, tie, whippings, murder, etc.
 - Songs insinuating rape or sexual assault were coded as such if they contained words/phrases including: fuck, rape, assault, cut up, bust open, etc.
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- Songs labeling women in derogatory ways were coded as such for using demeaning language containing the following words: pussy, bitch, pimp, nigga, etc.
- Songs portraying sexual conquest were coded as such if they contained phrases including: love em/leave em, feel the pain, don't have to fight back, etc.

Frequency/emphasis of misogynistic lyrics

- Songs were first coded for their misogynistic terminology and then evaluated for their amount of misogynistic content and labeled accordingly.
 - * One to two misogynistic lyrical references= low level of misogyny
 - * Three to four misogynistic lyrical references= medium level of misogyny
 - * Five or more misogynistic lyrical references= high level of misogyny

Survey

In conjunction with performing a content analysis, this study administered a survey using Survey Monkey to gauge college students' perceptions of the portrayal of intimate partner violence in the songs examined below. Surveys involve a correlational method by which researchers measure two or more variables and examine relationships between them (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009). This 12-question survey was disseminated to a convenience, nonprobability sample of 62 Elon University students, 52 women and 10 men, representing sophomores through seniors. These students were asked via email or social media to click a link to a Survey Monkey questionnaire page. The first six questions asked respondents general questions about their views on rap/hip-hop music and interpretation of musical content. This involved a series of multiple-choice questions evaluating audience listening behavior; the emphasis on lyrics versus melody in this genre; the presence of offensive or degrading lyrical content; and the perception of rap/hip-hop artists overall. The remaining questions, dealing with misogynistic themes apparent in popular rap/hip-hop songs, were prefaced with a disclaimer: for purposes of this study, lyrics are considered misogynistic if they support, glorify, justify, or normalize the objectification, exploitation, or victimization of women. This included an adapted version of the definition of misogyny, as the "promotion, glamorization, support, humorization, justification, or normalization of oppressive ideas about women" to ensure that respondents were familiar with the term (Adams & Fuller, 2006, p. 940). Respondents were presented with multiple choice and Likert scale questions examining offensiveness in misogynistic lyrics; the prevalence of misogynistic lyrics in a sample of rap/hip-hop songs; and attitudes toward the issue of domestic violence.

These questions examined specifically how the college-aged demographic was influenced by the prevalence of derogatory lyrics condoning violent sexual behavior. Students were asked to respond to a list of statements inquiring about their listening habits; opinions on rap and hip-hop songs; knowledge of domestic violence issues; exposure to misogynistic lyrics; and attitudes on sexism. Five of these categories were adapted from Tyson's 2006 RAP scale, measuring interpretations of gender using empowerment and violent misogynistic constructs.

IV. Findings

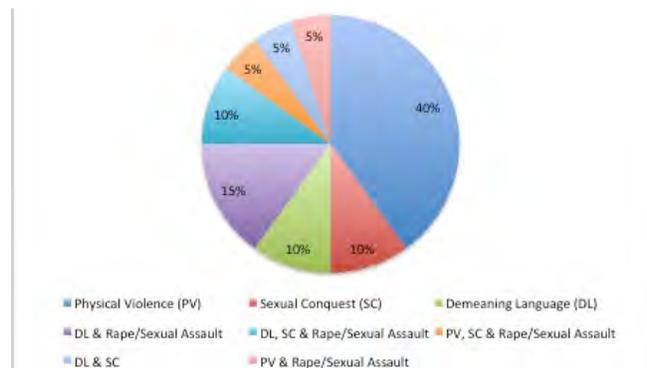
Part I: Content Analysis

Using a content analysis method, this study analyzed the lyrics of 20 rap/hip-hop songs included in Billboard's Year-End "Hot 100" singles list ranging from 2000-2010 (Refer to Table 1 on page 76). The sample set of music was selected based on the misogynistic themes appearing within the lyrics of these popular hits, all of which were labeled as explicit.

Table 1. Billboard “Hot 100” Singles Year-End (2001-2010)

Song	Artist	Genre	Year	Rank
The Real Slim Shady	Eminem	Hip hop	2000	51
Big Pimpin’	Jay-Z and UGK	East coast hip hop	2000	60
Shake Ya Ass	Mystikal	Hip hop	2000	68
The Next Episode	Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg	West coast hip hop	2000	76
Danger (Been So Long)	Mystikal and Nivea	Hip hop	2001	58
Livin’ It Up	Ja Rule and Case	Hip hop	2001/2002	79/76
Southern Hospitality	Ludacris	Southern rap	2001	77
Lights, Camera, Action	Mr. Cheeks	Hip hop	2002	49
Move Bitch	Ludacris, Mystikal and I-20	Southern hip hop	2002	55
Superman	Eminem	Alternative hip hop	2003	98
Splash Waterfalls	Ludacris	Dirty rap	2004	42
Lovers & Friends	Lil Jon, Usher & Ludacris	Dirty hip hop	2005	25
Some Cut	Trillville & Cutty	Hip hop	2005	49
Lean Wit It, Rock Wit It	Dem Franchize Boyz	Southern hip hop	2006	25
Touch It	Busta Rhymes	East Coast hip hop	2006	73
When I’m Gone	Eminem	Conscious hip hop	2006	90
Crack a Bottle	Eminem, Dr. Dre and 50 Cent	Hardcore hip hop	2009	47
Every Girl	Young Money	Hip hop/dirty rap	2009	67
Love the Way You Lie	Eminem and Rihanna	Hip hop	2010	7
Bottoms Up	Trey Songz	Hip hop/R&B	2010	52

Coding Outcome. As shown in *Figure 1*, eight of the songs (40%) sampled were coded strictly for physical violence; none of the songs were coded for strictly rape/sexual assault; two songs (10%) were coded strictly for sexual conquest; and two songs (10%) were coded strictly for demeaning language. Eight of the songs (40%) contained lyrics coded into more than one category of misogynistic content. Three songs (15%) were coded for the demeaning language and rape/sexual assault categories. Two songs (10%) were coded for the rape/sexual assault, sexual conquest and demeaning language categories. One song was coded for the physical violence, rape/sexual assault and sexual conquest categories. In addition, one song was coded for the demeaning language and sexual conquest

**Figure 1. Coding categories**

categories, along with one song coded for the rape/sexual assault and physical violence categories.

As shown in *Figure 2*, Half of the songs sampled (n=10) were coded for low levels of misogyny; eight songs (40%) for medium levels of misogyny; and two of the songs (10%) for high levels of misogyny. There were a total of 55 misogynistic references in all the individual song's misogynistic lyrical content.

Five songs by rapper Eminem were included in the coding sample, which represents one-fourth of all songs sampled. Three songs by rap/hip-hop artist Ludacris were included in the coding sample, representing 15% of all songs sampled. Rapper Mystikal was included in the sample for three of his songs, 15% of the study sampling. All of the songs by Eminem and Ludacris featured in the sample included lyrics depicting physical violence against women.

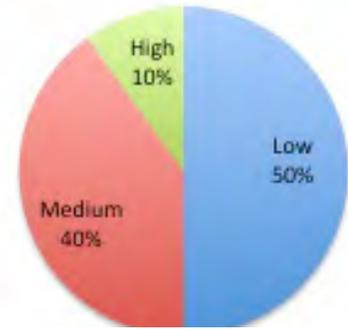


Figure 2. Levels of Misogyny

Three of the songs (15%) fell into the rap genre, with the rest classified as hip-hop music. Eminem was the only Caucasian artist featured in the song sampling, and African American artists performed the remaining 15 sampled songs (75%). Solo artists performed half (n=10) of the songs in the sample. Two (10%) of the songs sampled included a male/female artist combination, “Danger (Been So Long)” by Mystikal and Nivea and “Love the Way You Lie” by Eminem and Rihanna.

Songs containing misogynistic lyrics appeared in the sample with the greatest frequency during the first half of the decade (2000-2005). Songs featured on the Billboard “Hot 100” chart between 2000 and 2001 (n=7) contained the greatest concentration of misogynistic lyrics over a two-year period. Four out of seven songs (57.1%) during this timeframe contained two or more references to misogyny in their lyrics. Additionally, all of the songs sampled from 2006, which accounted for 15% of the total sample frame, featured lyrics suggesting physical violence against women. (For more detail, refer to Appendix 1 to view the coding sheet used in this study.)

Songs referencing acts of physical violence toward women. The artists whose songs contained lyrics strictly coded under the physical violence category included Eminem; Ludacris, Mystikal and I-20; Dem Franchize Boyz; Busta Rhymes; and Rihanna. There were 17 references to physical violence within this song sample, which are denoted with dotted lines, and the song containing the most references was Eminem and Rihanna’s “Love the Way You Lie” (n=4).

The following are lyrics from Eminem’s songs included in the sample that glorify physical violence toward women and included between one to four misogynistic references:

- “The Real Slim Shady”- *Jaws all on the floor, like Pam, like Tommy just burst in the door and started w̄hooopin̄ h̄er. āss worse then before.*
- “Superman”- *Don’t put out, I’ll put you out, won’t get out, I’ll pūsh̄ yoū out̄. There goes another lawsuit, leāve hāndp̄rint̄s̄ āll̄ ācrōss̄ yoū. Put anthrax on a tam̄pax, and slāp̄ yoū tīll̄ yoū cān’t̄ stand̄.*
- “When I’m Gone”- *What happens when you become the mājn̄ sōur̄cē of̄ h̄er̄ pāin̄? And pūt̄ hānd̄s̄ ōn̄ h̄er̄ mōthēr̄, who’s a spitting image of her. Daddy it’s me, help Mommy, her w̄rist̄s̄ ārē blēedin̄ḡ.*
- “Love the Way You Lie”- *Just gonna stand there and watch me burn, But that’s alright because I like the way it hurts, Just gonna stand there and hear me cry, You push, pull each other’s hair, scratch, claw, hīt̄. ‘em. Th̄row̄ ‘em̄ dōwn̄, pīn̄ ‘em̄. Im’a tie her to the bed and sēt̄ thīs̄ hōūsē ōn̄ fīrē.”*

The following lyrics from individual/group artists also contain one or more references in relation to men’s perpetrating violent physical acts toward women:

- Ludacris’ “Southern Hospitality”- *Lie through your teeth you could find your mouth, cold and rīp̄ out̄. yā t̄ōn̄gūē cause of what yā mouth, told.*
- Ludacris, Mystikal and I-20’s “Move Bitch”- *‘I’ma ‘bout to pūn̄ch̄ yō. .līgh̄ts̄ out̄”*
- Dem Franchize Boyz’s “Lean Wit It, Rock Wit It”- *Rock so damn hard, ū b̄rēāk̄ yōur̄ sp̄lēēn̄ wīt̄ īt̄. Perfect example watch me mākē yōur̄ fācē bēāt̄ up̄ mȳ hānd̄s̄.*
- Busta Rhyme’s “Touch It”- *I’ma hīt̄ yōū ānd̄ yōur̄ mā. and īmā hīt̄ yoū where you stand.*

Songs labeling women in derogatory ways using demeaning language. The artists whose songs

contained lyrics strictly coded under the demeaning language category were Young Money and Trey Songz. There were five total references in the songs' lyrics labeling women in derogatory ways.

- Young Money's "Every Girl" - *Open up her legs then filet mignon that **pussy**, I'm a get in and on that **pussy**, If she let me in I'm a own that **pussy**.*

- Trey Songz's "Bottoms Up"- *If a **bitch** try to get cute ima stomp her. Throw alotta money at her then yell **fuck** her.*

Songs portraying sexual conquest. The artists whose songs contained lyrics strictly coded under the sexual conquest category were Ja Rule and Case, and Ludacris. There were two total references in the songs' lyrics that represented men using women only for their sexual value.

- Ja Rule and Case's "Livin It Up"- *I got a stick, I'll ride right next to you. Do a doughnut, and cut, and I'll open it up.*

- Ludacris' "Splash Waterfalls"- *You better not of came, she want to feel the pain.*

Songs coded for two or more categories. The artists whose songs contained lyrics coded for the demeaning language and rape/sexual assault categories included Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg; Mystikal and Nivea; and Trillville & Cutty. The underlined words were coded under the rape/sexual assault categories, and bolded words were coded under the demeaning language category. There were 10 total instances of referring to women in misogynistic ways in the combined categories above, and the song containing the most references was Mystikal and Nivea's "Danger (Been So Long)" (n=5).

- Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg's "The Next Episode"- *And if yo' ass get cracked, **bitch** shut yo' trap.*

- Mystikal and Nivea's "Danger (Been So Long)"- *Leave that **pussy** smoking. If you gonna lose something. Then bend over, and bust that pussy open. The **pussy** cutter.*

- Trillville and Cutty's "Some Cut"- *Can a **nigga** get in them guts (them guts)? Cut you up like you ain't been cut (been cut). While I'm beatin and tearin down your walls (oh yeah). It's no limits to what we do, cause tonight we cutting, gut busting. I'm digging in your walls something vicious.*

The artists whose songs contained lyrics coded for the rape/sexual assault, sexual conquest and demeaning language categories were Jay-Z and UGK, and Mystikal. The underlined words were coded under the rape/sexual assault category, bolded words were coded under the demeaning language category and double underlined words were coded under the sexual conquest category. There were 13 total references for the above category, and the song containing the most references was Mystikal's "Shake Ya Ass" (n=9). This also made it the most misogynistic song overall in the entire coding scheme.

- Jay-Z and UGK's "Big Pimpin"- *You know I - thug em, **fuck** em, love em, leave em. Cause I don't fuckin need em. In the cut where I keep em til I need a nut, til I need to beat the guts.*

- Mystikal's "Shake Ya Ass"- *Pay ya fare, fix ya hair, throw that **pussy**. I got a job for you - the braided up pimp is back. Break them handcuffs, fuck you nigga move somethin. And I've been beatin that pussy up now it's smooth fuckin.*

Mr. Cheek's "Lights, Camera, Action" was coded for the demeaning language and sexual conquest categories. The bolded word was coded under the demeaning language category, and the double underlined phrase was coded under the sexual conquest category.

- Booties dancin 'round a **nigga** and I'm killin one. Killin one from the top of the stash and I'm feelin buns.

Lil Jon, Usher & Ludacris' "Lovers & Friends" was coded into the rape/sexual assault, sexual conquest and physical violence categories. The underlined words were coded under the rape/sexual assault category, double underlined phrases were coded under the sexual conquest category and the dotted-lined phrase was coded under the physical violence category.

- Be a good girl now, turn around, and get these whippings. You know you like it like that, you don't have to fight back, Here's a pillow - bite . . . that.

Eminem, Dr. Dre and 50 Cent's "Crack a Bottle" was coded into the rape/sexual assault and physical violence categories. The underlined words were coded under the rape/sexual assault category, and the dotted-lined phrase was coded under the physical violence category.

- The moment you've all been waiting for. In this corner: weighing 175 pounds, with a record of 17 rapes, 400 assaults, and 4 murders. The undisputed, most diabolical villain in the world: Slim Shady.

Part II: Survey

In order to evaluate college students' attitudes toward and perception of misogynistic rap/hip-hop music, this study conducted a non-probability survey administered via Survey Monkey. Sixty-two Elon University students, 52 women and 10 men, ranging in academic year from sophomores to seniors, responded to the 12-question survey. The survey was designed to gauge how survey respondents perceive and respond to the issue of domestic violence and whether they feel popular rap/hip-hop music has positively or negatively influenced their views. This study specifically examined gendered differences to determine the effect of misogynistic lyrical content on these audiences and their views on the portrayal of women in popular rap/hip-hop songs. The influence of factors including music genre, artist gender and artist race was considered when analyzing relationships between music consumption and gender. *(For more detail, refer to Appendix II to view the survey questions asked in this study.)*

Views on rap/hip-hop music and interpretation of musical content. Six out of ten male respondents rarely listen to rap/hip-hop music in comparison to only 25% of female respondents (n= 13). The majority of female respondents (65.4%) frequently or sometimes listen to rap/hip-hop music. Half of male respondents (n=5) pay equal amounts of attention to the instrumental aspects and lyrics/messages when listening to rap/hop-hop music, compared to 28.8% of female respondents (n=15). Over half of female respondents (n=30) listen to the instrumental aspects of rap/hip-hop music the most. Roughly 20% (n=11) of female respondents hold positive attitudes toward rap/hip-hop music, while no male respondents held similar views. Sixty percent of male respondents hold negative attitudes toward this music genre, compared to only 23.1% of female respondents (n=12) with similar views. A majority of both male and female respondents (n=58) feel rap/hip-hop music is more offensive to women than men.

When evaluating a list of terms this study identified as degrading to women, 71.2% of female respondents (n=37) considered the word "bitch" degrading compared to all the male respondents (n=10). Both male and female respondents held similar views by labeling "pussy" and the "N" word as the most degrading terms, 93.5% and 90.3% of the time respectively. Roughly 30% of respondents (n=20) considered "fuck" and "pimp" as the least degrading words out of the sample. Given a list of 16 popular rap/hip-hop artists, respondents were asked to determine which of the performers they believed perpetrated negative views about women through their songs lyrics. Nearly half of male respondents (n=4) compared with roughly 70% of female respondents (n=30) felt Snoop Dogg perpetrates negative attitudes about women in his songs. Three quarters of male respondents (n=6) indicated that Ja Rule also incorporates misogynistic views in his music compared with 21.4% of female respondents (n=9). Almost 60% of total respondents (n=37) consider 50 Cent to be the most misogynistic artist overall.

The prevalence of misogynistic themes in rap/hip-hop music. Both men and women agreed that the legitimization of violence against women is the most offensive aspect of misogynistic lyrics in rap/hip-hop songs, with over half of respondents (n=34) expressing these views. The sexual objectification of women and the derogatory naming and shaming of women were also considered offensive attributes of misogynistic lyrics. Respondents were then asked to rank the list of 20 songs analyzed in the content analysis portion of this study, based on their misogynistic lyrical content on a scale of 1 (not at all misogynistic) to 5 points (extremely misogynistic). Respondents considered "Every Girl" by Young Money the most misogynistic song, with an average of 4.36 points based on 11 total responses, followed by Ludacris' "Move Bitch," with an average ranking of four based on 34 total responses. Eminem's "When I'm Gone" was considered the least misogynistic song, with an average of 2.22 points based on 18 total responses, followed by his song "The Real Slim Shady," with an average of 2.44 points based on 34 responses. The average number of respondents to rank songs was 9.25, and the average rating for the sample was 3.21 points per song.

Respondents also ranked the degree to which they feel exposure to popular rap/hip-hop songs shape audience attitudes toward the issue of domestic violence on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (significantly). Over half of respondents (n=35) felt exposure to popular rap/hip-hop songs moderately or significantly shapes audience attitudes toward the issue of domestic violence. In addition, respondents were asked to state their level of agreement/disagreement on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) based on a list of 12 statements involving the depiction of violence toward women in rap/hip-hop music; the portrayal of hip hop culture in society; and the genre's implications on shaping attitudes toward domestic violence in the United States. Responses by men and women were fairly consistent across the board in terms of supplying comparable levels of agreement/disagreement.

The majority of respondents (n=44) agreed or strongly agreed that rap/hip-hop music encourages

disrespectful attitudes toward women, along with a majority of respondents (n=48) who agreed or strongly agreed that most rap/hip-hop music suggests women are just for male sexual satisfaction. Almost three-quarters of respondents (n=44) felt rap/hip-hop music does not provide positive messages for its listeners, while 46 respondents stated that rap/hip-hop music does not reflect the realities of intimate partner violence. Over half of respondents (n=33) felt rap/hip-hop music promotes aggressive and violent behaviors toward women, and exactly half of respondents (n=31) agreed or strongly agreed that rap/hip-hop music glorifies domestic violence. More than two-thirds of respondents (n=42) agreed or strongly agreed that explicit rap/hip-hop music is offensive, and a majority of respondents (n=45) believe that sexism in rap/hip-hop music contributes to sexist behavior. All respondents agreed that misogynistic lyrics are prevalent in rap/hip-hop music to some extent, while almost all respondents (n=59) consider domestic violence a pressing issue in the United States. Only ten respondents disagreed that rap/hip-hop artists intend to degrade women through their lyrics, while almost half of respondents (n=29) agreed or strongly agreed that college-aged women are the most susceptible to experiencing gendered violence.

Using crosstabs to analyze relationships. In order to determine subgroup differences regarding how misogynistic rap/hip-hop music affects gendered audiences, this study cross-tabbed listening habits of male and female respondents to other variables. This study interpreted survey results based on the listening habits of respondents and corresponding exposure to misogynistic lyrics in this music. Of those who frequently listen to rap/hip-hop music (n=14), no respondents claimed to have a negative attitude toward it. This contrasts to those who rarely listen to rap/hip-hop music (n=19), of which no respondents claimed to have a positive attitude toward this music. Of those who listen to rap/hip-hop music for the lyrical/message aspect of it (n=8), 37.5% of respondents believe exposure to these songs significantly shapes audiences attitudes toward the issue of domestic violence. In addition, all respondents (n=8) who listen to rap/hip-hop music for the lyrics agreed or strongly agreed that most rap/hip-hop music suggests women are just for male sexual satisfaction. The study determined the greater the frequency with which audiences listen to rap/hip-hop music, the more they feel exposure shapes audience attitudes regarding domestic violence. The final cross-tab comparing listening habits with views of misogynistic lyrics found all respondents who frequently listen to rap/hip-hop music (n=14) also agreed or strongly agreed that misogynistic lyrics are prevalent in rap/hop-hop music.

Part III: Comparing Methods

In order to evaluate consistency between the content analysis outcome and survey results, both methods were compared to determine similarities and differences between the content coding results and respondent perceptions of the study's 20-song sample. When analyzing misogynistic lyrical content, half of the songs included in both measures of analysis were considered equally misogynistic. However, there were several discrepancies between survey respondents' views and the content analysis. Survey respondents found the songs "Southern Hospitality," "Lights, Camera, Action," "Move Bitch," "Splash Waterfalls," and "Touch It" more misogynistic than the content analysis coding. In the songs coded for medium levels of misogyny, survey respondents considered "Some Cut" and "When I'm Gone" as not misogynistic, while rating "Every Girl" much more so. Survey respondents rated "Shake Ya Ass," which contained the most misogynistic references of all songs (n=9) coded in the sample, not as highly for misogynistic content. "Danger (Been So Long)" was also rated much lower by survey respondents for misogynistic levels than its high level of misogynistic content coded in the content analysis. Survey respondents labeled Eminem, Snoop Dogg, Ludacris, 50 Cent, Lil Jon and Young Money as the artists perpetrating the most misogynistic messages in their music. This corresponds with Eminem and Ludacris having the most songs included in the coding sample for misogynistic content.

V. Conclusion

Cultivation theory is supported by this paper's findings, which found continued audience exposure to misogynistic lyrics in popular rap/hip-hop music influences college students' attitudes toward the issue of domestic violence. This study's content analysis approach to examining song lyrics of the most popular rap/hip-hop songs on Billboard's "Hot 100" chart between 2000 and 2010 found messages communicating themes of power over, objectification of and violence against women to be prevalent across the sample selections (Bretthauer et al., 2006). This study's findings are comparable to Bretthauer et al.'s (2006) study, which also uses a qualitative content analysis method to examine all top 20 popular music songs from 1998 through

2003 on the Billboard “Hot 100” chart. Both studies conclude the theme appearing with the greatest frequency throughout the song samples is violence against women; this study’s survey results indicate that respondents consider the legitimization of violence against women the most offensive theme in rap/hip-hop songs.

Over half of survey respondents expressed that exposure to popular rap/hip-hop songs moderately or significantly shapes audience attitudes toward the issue of domestic violence. This supports the finding that “misogynistic music also serves as a means to desensitize individuals to sexual harassment, exploitation, abuse, and violence toward women” and “legitimizes the mistreatment and degradation of women” (Adams & Fuller, 2006, p. 953). Exposure to misogynistic messages in rap/hip-hop music has also been shown to “increase hostile and aggressive thoughts,” which may correlate to “more permanent hostility toward women” (Russo & Pirlott, 2006, p. 190). More than half of survey respondents believe rap/hip-hop music promotes aggressive and violent behaviors toward women; in addition, a majority of respondents feel this genre’s messages encourage disrespectful attitudes toward women.

Listening to misogynistic content may also attribute to listeners’ “expression of similar attitudes in their own lives, including accepting the objectification of women” (Dixon, Zhang, & Conrad, 2009, p. 348). Half of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that rap/hip-hop music glorifies domestic violence, and when these messages are conveyed to listeners, it may contribute to the “creation of a social climate in which violence is viewed as acceptable” (Adams & Fuller, 2006, p. 953). Therefore, rap/hip-hop music’s portrayal of domestic violence matters because of the significant influence its misogynistic messages have on audiences. This study found male and female college students’ listening behaviors greatly affect their perceptions of misogynistic lyrics. Survey results indicate a positive correlation between misogynistic thinking and rap/hip-hop consumption, which supports previous study findings in which “greater frequency of listening to rap music was associated with more positive attitudes toward and perceptions of rap music” (Tyson, 2006, p. 215).

Survey respondents agreed that continued audience exposure to misogynistic rap/hip-hop music might reinforce negative attitudes about women because this content is “typically gender specific in its messages” (Martino, et. al, 2006, p. 432). Cobb & Boettcher (2007) determined that males will more likely experience “priming effects of misogynistic rap because they will be less motivated than will women to thoughtfully process the content of the lyrics” (p. 2037). In turn, “because women are often the targets of misogynistic rap lyrics,” they will be more inclined to reject these demeaning messages (Cobb & Boettcher, 2007, p. 3029). More than three-fourths of survey respondents agreed that most rap/hip-hop music suggests women are just for male sexual satisfaction, and in turn, nearly all students surveyed found rap/hip-hop songs to be more offensive to women than men. However, most men who took the survey held negative views about rap/hip-hop music compared to most women holding neutral views of the genre.

Limitations

This study used a non-probability, convenience sample of Elon University students, with 62 survey respondents, and as a result, these findings cannot be generalized to the general population of 5,357 undergraduate students (“About Elon University,” 2012). Survey results would have been more accurate if every student at Elon had an equal opportunity of participating in the survey. Also, this study’s survey received more responses from women than men, which is not an accurate representation of the population. Although race was not a variable measured in this survey, it can be assumed that the majority of student respondents were Caucasian, given Elon’s demographic makeup, with non-Caucasians only constituting 14% of undergraduate students (“About Elon University,” 2012). In addition, the survey component of this study failed to consider that not all respondents were familiar with the rap/hip-hop songs and corresponding music artists they were supposed to evaluate for misogynistic primes. Therefore, some students may not have been able to offer their correct evaluation, which may skew data if respondents could not directly state they were unfamiliar with an artist or song. A final limitation of this study is that while the researcher coded the songs as objectively as possible, individuals may interpret lyrics differently.

Future Research

Future studies could determine if demographic differences, besides gender, may lead to different views on misogynistic lyrical content. Factors, such as respondent’s race, socioeconomic status and age, could alter the study’s findings. By comparing gender differences regarding attitudes and perceptions of rap/hip-hop music with ethnic differences, this would determine which variable is more strongly influenced by misogynistic messages in songs (Tyson, 2006). Previous research studies found that the “stereotyping effects

of sexually explicit lyrics in rap music might have a greater effect on White audiences,” which would create an interesting future comparison in relation to college students’ races and their views on rap/hip-hop music (Gan, Zillman, & Miltrook, 1997, p. 392). However, when individuals are exposed to media, “factors such as age, gender, race, or socioeconomic status would not matter,” according to Gerbner, because all people who consume similar amounts of misogynistic content would “share the same perceptions” (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009, pg. 166).

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Appendix I. Coding Sheet

Category Key:

Demeaning Language= DL

Rape/Sexual Assault= RSA

Sexual Conquest= SC

Physical Violence= PV

Race Key:

Caucasian= C

African American= AA

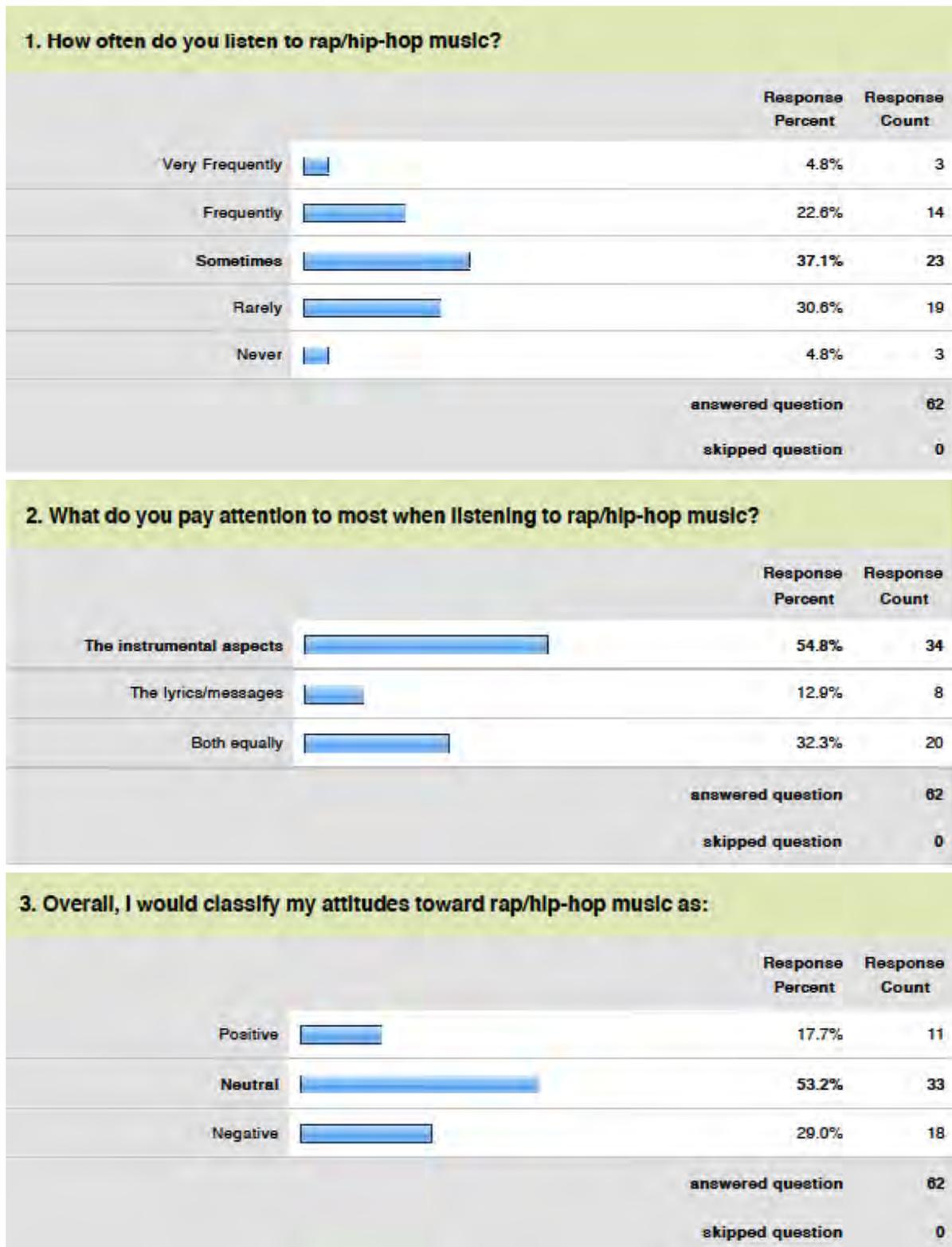
Gender Key:

M= Male

F= Female

Song	Artist	Category	Level of Misogyny	Race
The Real Slim Shady	Eminem	PV	Low	C
Big Pimpin'	Jay-Z and UGK	RSA, SC (2), DL	Medium	AA
Shake Ya Ass	Mystikal	DL (6), RSA, SC (2)	High	AA
The Next Episode	Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg	DL, RSA	Low	AA
Danger (Been so Long)	Mystikal and Nivea	DL (3), RSA (2)	High	AA
Livin' It Up	Ja Rule and Case	SC	Low	AA
Southern Hospitality	Ludacris	PV	Low	AA
Lights, Camera, Action	Mr. Cheeks	DL, SC	Low	AA
Move Bitch	Ludacris, Mystikal and I-20	PV	Low	AA
Superman	Eminem	PV (3)	Medium	C
Splash Waterfalls	Ludacris	SC	Low	AA
Lovers & Friends	Lil Jon, Usher and Ludacris	RSA, SC, PV	Medium	AA
Some Cut	Trillville & Cutty	DL, RSA (2)	Medium	AA
Lean Wit It, Rock Wit It	Dem Franchize Boyz	PV (2)	Low	AA
Touch It	Busta Rhymes	PV (2)	Low	AA
When I'm Gone	Eminem	PV (3)	Medium	C
Crack a Bottle	Eminem, Dr. Dre and 50 Cent	RSA (2), PV	Medium	C/AA
Every Girl	Young Money	DL (3)	Medium	AA
Love the Way you Lie	Eminem and Rihanna	PV (4)	Medium	C/AA
Bottoms Up	Trey Songz	DL (2)	Low	AA

Appendix II. Survey Monkey Results



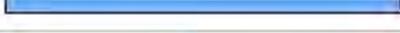
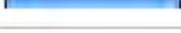
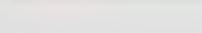
4. Do you feel that explicit rap/hip-hop songs are more offensive to women or men?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Men	0.0%	0
Women	93.5%	58
Equally offensive to both	1.6%	1
Other (please specify)	4.8%	3
answered question		62
skipped question		0

5. Which of the following words, if any, do you consider degrading? (Mark all that apply)

	Response Percent	Response Count
B*tch	75.8%	47
Pussy	93.5%	58
F*ck	32.3%	20
Pimp	32.3%	20
The "N" word	90.3%	56
None	0.0%	0
answered question		62
skipped question		0

6. Which of the following rap/hip-hop music artists, if any, do you feel perpetrate negative attitudes about women through their song lyrics? (Mark all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Eminem		64.0%	32
Mystikal		22.0%	11
Jay-Z		30.0%	15
Dr. Dre		30.0%	15
Snoop Dogg		68.0%	34
Ja Rule		30.0%	15
Ludacris		64.0%	32
50 Cent		74.0%	37
Lil Jon		64.0%	32
Young Money		64.0%	32
Trillville		18.0%	9
UGK		20.0%	10
Usher		20.0%	10
Dem Franchize Boyz		38.0%	18
Busta Rhymes		32.0%	16
Trey Songz		34.0%	17
answered question			50
skipped question			12

7. Which of the following do you find most offensive in rap/hip-hop songs containing misogynistic lyrics?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Derogatory naming and shaming of women		14.5%	9
Legitimation of violence against women		54.8%	34
Sexual objectification of women		30.6%	19
None of the above		0.0%	0
		answered question	62
		skipped question	0

8. On a scale of 1-5, please rank how misogynic you feel the following songs are if you have listened to them. If you are not familiar with a song, please leave it blank.

	1) Not at all misogynic	2)	3)	4)	5) Extremely misogynic	Rating Average	Response Count
The Real Slim Shady (Eminem)	23.5% (8)	29.4% (10)	29.4% (10)	14.7% (5)	2.9% (1)	2.44	34
Big Pimpin' (Jay-Z)	5.9% (1)	5.9% (1)	41.2% (7)	23.5% (4)	23.5% (4)	3.53	17
Shake Ya Ass (Mystikal)	3.1% (1)	6.3% (2)	15.6% (5)	43.8% (14)	31.3% (10)	3.94	32
The Next Episode (Dr. Dre)	12.5% (1)	0.0% (0)	75.0% (6)	12.5% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.88	8
Danger (Mystikal)	10.0% (1)	20.0% (2)	40.0% (4)	30.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	2.90	10
Livin' it Up (Ja Rule)	15.4% (2)	23.1% (3)	46.2% (6)	15.4% (2)	0.0% (0)	2.62	13
Southern Hospitality (Ludacris)	11.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)	3.67	9
Lights, Camera, Action (Mr. Cheeks)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	50.0% (5)	20.0% (2)	20.0% (2)	3.40	10
Move B*tch (Ludacris)	2.9% (1)	11.8% (4)	11.8% (4)	29.4% (10)	44.1% (15)	4.00	34
Superman (Eminem)	0.0% (0)	14.3% (2)	28.6% (4)	35.7% (5)	21.4% (3)	3.64	14
Splash Waterfalls (Ludacris)	0.0% (0)	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	0.0% (0)	3.11	9
Lovers & Friends (Lil Jon)	0.0% (0)	18.2% (2)	45.5% (5)	36.4% (4)	0.0% (0)	3.18	11
Some Cut (Trillville)	14.3% (1)	28.6% (2)	28.6% (2)	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)	2.86	7
Lean Wit It, Rock Wit It (Dem Franchize Boyz)	6.9% (2)	44.8% (13)	27.6% (8)	20.7% (6)	0.0% (0)	2.62	29

Touch It (Busta Rhymes)	7.7% (1)	23.1% (3)	7.7% (1)	38.5% (5)	23.1% (3)	3.46	13
When I'm Gone (Eminem)	38.9% (7)	22.2% (4)	16.7% (3)	22.2% (4)	0.0% (0)	2.22	18
Crack a Bottle (Eminem)	0.0% (0)	31.6% (6)	36.8% (7)	26.3% (5)	5.3% (1)	3.05	19
Every Girl (Young Money)	0.0% (0)	9.1% (1)	9.1% (1)	18.2% (2)	63.6% (7)	4.38	11
Love the Way You Lie (Eminem & Rihanna)	6.7% (3)	17.8% (8)	20.0% (9)	33.3% (15)	22.2% (10)	3.47	45
Bottoms Up (Trey Songz)	18.8% (8)	25.6% (11)	20.9% (9)	30.2% (13)	4.7% (2)	2.77	43
					answered question		52
					skipped question		10

9. To what degree, on a scale of 1-5, do you feel that exposure to popular rap/hip-hop songs shapes audience attitudes toward the issue of domestic violence?

	1) Not at all	2)	3)	4)	5) Significantly	Rating Average	Response Count
	1.6% (1)	9.7% (8)	32.3% (20)	43.5% (27)	12.9% (8)	3.56	62
						answered question	62
						skipped question	0

10. Please state your level of agreement/disagreement with the following:							
	1) Strongly disagree	2)	3)	4)	5) Strongly agree	Rating Average	Response Count
Rap/hip-hop music encourages disrespectful attitudes towards women.	1.6% (1)	4.8% (3)	22.6% (14)	53.2% (33)	17.7% (11)	3.81	62
Rap/hip-hop music provides positive messages for its listeners.	25.8% (16)	45.2% (28)	19.4% (12)	8.1% (5)	1.6% (1)	2.15	62
Rap/hip-hop music promotes aggressive and violent behaviors towards women.	1.6% (1)	6.5% (4)	38.7% (24)	41.9% (26)	11.3% (7)	3.55	62
Rap/hip-hop music glorifies domestic violence.	1.6% (1)	16.1% (10)	32.3% (20)	37.1% (23)	12.9% (8)	3.44	62
Explicit rap/hip-hop music is offensive.	0.0% (0)	17.7% (11)	14.5% (9)	41.9% (26)	25.8% (16)	3.76	62
Sexism in rap/hip-hop music contributes to sexist behavior.	0.0% (0)	9.7% (6)	17.7% (11)	38.7% (24)	33.9% (21)	3.97	62
Misogynistic lyrics are prevalent in rap/hip-hop music.	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	11.3% (7)	45.2% (28)	43.5% (27)	4.32	62
Rap/hip-hop artists intend to degrade women through their lyrics.	0.0% (0)	16.1% (10)	35.5% (22)	37.1% (23)	11.3% (7)	3.44	62
Domestic violence is a pressing issue in the United States.	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.8% (3)	35.5% (22)	59.7% (37)	4.55	62
Most rap/hip-hop music suggests that women are just for male sexual satisfaction.	1.6% (1)	4.8% (3)	16.1% (10)	46.8% (29)	30.6% (19)	4.00	62
Rap/hip-hop music reflects the realities of intimate partner relationships.	32.3% (20)	41.9% (26)	17.7% (11)	6.5% (4)	1.6% (1)	2.03	62
College-aged women are the most susceptible to experiencing gendered violence.	3.2% (2)	22.6% (14)	27.4% (17)	32.3% (20)	14.5% (9)	3.32	62
					answered question		62
					skipped question		0

11. What is your gender?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Male		16.1%	10
Female		83.9%	52
answered question			62
skipped question			0

12. What is your academic year?

		Response Percent	Response Count
First year		0.0%	0
Sophomore		9.7%	6
Junior		27.4%	17
Senior		62.9%	39
Fifth year		0.0%	0
answered question			62
skipped question			0

Visual Persuasion: The Media's Use of Images in Framing People Groups

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Abstract

This article compares the media's framing of five groups in response to a societal catalyst that propelled them into the public and media spotlight: Native Americans during the Indian Wars; women during the suffrage movement; African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement; Japanese Americans following the attacks on Pearl Harbor; and Muslim Americans after 9/11. A tipping point forced each group outside the "status quo," leading to pointed and biased coverage, usually in conjunction with dominant prejudices of the era, with the goal of protecting the ruling majority. While the target may have changed, the media have advanced little, during the past century, in their treatment of groups outside the traditionally understood American identity. Methodology used in this study includes analysis of print reports from multiple media outlets, including both text and visuals, to identify framing techniques, as well as study of secondary sources to provide historical context.

I. Introduction

In May 1963, the same image was featured within the pages of four national news publications, including *The New York Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Life*. The photograph, shot by Bill Hudson with the Associated Press, showed a meek and seemingly harmless African American man being held by a police officer while a dog lunged at the young man's stomach. The image came to define the heart of the Civil Rights Movement and the fight waged by African Americans in their quest for equal rights. While the target may have changed, the media's use of images, such as Hudson's, in framing the debate about current events has not altered significantly since the start of the 20th century. Specifically, the press' treatment of groups considered threats to the "status quo" has, in most cases, assumed a biased and negative tone. Some examples of mainstream press calls for less biased treatment of these groups occurred, but they were greatly outweighed. While numerous groups were targeted by both the public sphere and the press throughout the past century or more, five specific groups stand out in the similarities of their treatment: Native Americans during the American Indian Wars (1811-1923); women during the suffrage movement; African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement; Japanese Americans following the attacks on Pearl Harbor; and Muslim Americans following the 9/11 attacks. At each significant point in America's history, these groups were framed as a threat to the norm, or the traditional American identity. As a result, the press frequently used exaggerated photographs and twisted editorial cartoons to dictate how the public should view them and, in some cases, encouraged action against them. Sometimes, the group appeared innocuous and in others as threatening. But no matter which direction the media frame tilted, one commonality remained: When in the crosshairs of the media, the people

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group was not the norm and was, rather, categorized as “the other.”

II. Framing as Theory

Since the creation of the printing press and the ability to distribute news and information on a mass scale, the media have been used as a tool through which to promote not only the reports of the day, but the way the public should view them. In some cases, this comes as a result of inherent prejudices or weaknesses in the practices of the organization. In other instances, it is founded in the reliance of the press on biased sources with underlying motives. This construction of public perception, using tools such as language, style, structure, and images, is referred to as framing and can seriously influence not only the audience's understanding, but public policy as well. While the information itself may be factual, the reporting style advanced by the media can have definite effects on the reader's perception: “The effect of this framing can be far more powerful than the opinions expressed in editorial columns. Media framing affects government decision-making both directly, by supplying information to decision makers, and indirectly, through public opinion.”¹ Expert Robert Entman describes framing as “the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation.”² Essentially, according to his analysis, framing is the process of raising the salience or perceived significance of particular ideas, characteristics, or events that, most importantly, works to slant the audience toward a particular way of thinking. Various explanations have been provided as to the actual tactics used by the media to promote a particular frame – or, in other words, how the audience is led to think in this particular way. And while most stories will not contain all of these elements, they form the broadly based foundation for constructing a frame. According to research by Pan and Kosicki, there are four primary structural dimensions of news: (1) syntactic structures, or how words or phrases are placed; (2) script structures, or the perceived newsworthiness of the event; (3) thematic structures, or the use of causal statements to emphasize blame; and (4) rhetorical structures, or the stylistic choices made by journalists.³ Entman explained that the foundation of framing lies in the selection and salience emphasized by journalists: “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.”⁴ He also identified five media traits that can create a frame of reference: (1) importance judgments; (2) agency, or answer to the question (such as, who did it?); (3) identification of potential victims; (4) categorization or choice of labels; and (5) generalization to a broader context.⁵ It has been established within the study of journalism that “issues the news media set up as important will be considered to be important by the public, and media thus set the agenda for public discussion.”⁶ After defining the problems worthy of the public's attention, and spotlighting particular events or traits, the media can then promote their own spin on the story.⁷ While not always deliberate, this sense of orchestration of information and style at the hands of journalists contributes to the operations of democracy, a critical component of the media when facilitating engagement with society.⁸

Framing occurs both organically and purposefully. In some cases, it is the result of a media group's weak organizational skills that result in poor writing and editing skills – usually the organization is unaware of how their work is being affected by deadlines or enforced protocols.⁹ But, more often than not, framing is a deliberate, active process that comes as a result of the media's inherent limitations and prejudices. Perhaps

1. Matt Evans, “Framing International Conflicts: Media Coverage of Fighting in the Middle East,” *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* 6.2 (2010): 209-210.

2. Robert Entman, “Framing Bias: Media in the Distribution of Power,” *Journal of Communications* 57 (2007): 164.

3. Gerald Kosicki and Zhongdang Pan, “Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse,” *Political Communication* 10 (1993): 55-75.

4. Robert Entman, “Framing: Towards Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm,” *Journal of Communication* 43.4 (1991): 52.

5. *Ibid*, 52.

6. Lesley Cowling, “The Media and the Production of the Public Debate,” *Social Dynamics* 36.1 (2010): 78.

7. Entman, “Framing Bias: Media in the Distribution of Power,” 164.

8. Cowling, “The Media and the Production of the Public Debate,” 83.

9. *Ibid*, 79.

one of the most powerful of these confines is the tendency of the press to be biased toward the status quo: “[objectivity in journalism] is inherently conservative to the extent that it encourages reporters to rely on...the ‘managers of the status quo’ – the prominent and the elite.”¹⁰ Often, elite, white, males serve as the key sources for quotes, insight, analysis, and basic information, meaning the media often serve as the conduits for the promotion of a certain perspective to an audience.¹¹ Beyond the elite, the press is often tied as well with the state, relying on information provided by the government to construct their stories. But, as much as journalists are influenced by their sources, the target audience also drives their content. Most news organizations seek audiences that are affluent, those being most preferred by advertisers, on which media outlets rely heavily.¹² As a result of this pandering to the well-off, educated, and urban, certain classes are inherently ignored: “The majority – the poor and disadvantaged – have little or no access to the mode of engaged citizenship such media can offer.”¹³

Framing has been criticized by some as a convenient tool in the pocket of a biased media system and praised by others as a means of quickly and easily explaining a dense or expansive topic. Yet a conundrum still remains: “for a rationally debating public to come into being, a high degree of orchestration is needed. However, with orchestration comes control – control over the dynamics of debate, over the issues and voices, and over who gets to be a part of a public and who is excluded.”¹⁴ Ideally, frames are intended to be prescribed to certain topics as a means through which to give meaning and an organizing idea or story line to an event being covered by a journalist. But it is when these tendencies are coupled with a tense sociopolitical climate that the dangers of framing become most apparent. Frequently, frames reflect shared cultural narratives and social themes to which journalists are acutely sensitive: “In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotypes for us by our culture.”¹⁵ Often, this equates to the marginalization of sociocultural, religious, and other groups considered outside the norm through “misinformation, racist ridicule, and overall unfair coverage.”¹⁶ And, in many cases, the press simply reflects the prevailing public sentiment of the time: “[Established] general circulation newspapers have tended to go along with efforts to suppress deviations from the prevailing political and social orthodoxies of their time and place, rather than support the right to dissent.”¹⁷

III. Existing Literature

While the use of media framing has been prevalent for centuries, it was only more recently that the tactics employed by journalists have come under the close scrutiny of researchers. Around the turn of the 20th century, fear of the effect of media messages on attitudes first began to grow as strategic propaganda dominated the experiences of much of the developed world during World War I. Studies of framing progressed through different stages during subsequent years. From the 1930s to the 1960s, much emphasis was placed on the idea of personal preference and the fact that the media simply reinforced existing ideas, followed by a brief period of focus on the cognitive effects of the media. The most current understanding is that of the idea of “social constructivism” by which the “mass media actively set the frames of reference that readers or

10. Theodore Glasser, “Objectivity Precludes Responsibility,” *The Quill* (1984). Cited by Scott London in “How the Media Frames Political Issues,” 1993, <http://bit.ly/ScottLondon>. Accessed Nov. 17, 2012.

11. Rosalee Clawson, Thomas Nelson, and Zoe Oxley. “Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and its Effect on Tolerance,” *American Political Science Review* 91.3 (1997): 568.

12. Cowling, “The Media and the Production of the Public Debate,” 83.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

15. Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1922): 81. Cited by Juan Gonzalez and Joseph Torres, *News for All the People: The Epic Story of Race and the American Media* (London: Verso, 2011): 3.

16. Frankie Hutton and Barbara Straus Reed, eds., *Outsiders in 19th-Century Press History: Multicultural Perspectives* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1995), 1.

17. John Lofton, *The Press as Guardian of the First Amendment* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1980), 279.

viewers use to interpret and discuss public events.”¹⁸ Works including *Mightier than the Sword: How the News Media Have Shaped American History* by George Streitmatter and *News for All the People: The Epic Story of Race and the American Media* by Juan Gonzalez and Joseph Torres have examined the intersection between framing and the public's perception. However, this study is unique in that it draws comparisons between five groups of a people in a way that has never previously been done, concluding that the press has historically set its crosshairs on a group of people and attempted to portray them as “the other” when they posed a threat. The study draws primarily upon print visuals (both in newspapers and as stand alone images, such as propaganda) from each time period, while also incorporating written text to support and bolster the argument made by the images.

IV. Native Americans

From the arrival of the Europeans on the shores of the continent, Native Americans had always been considered inferior, heathen beings that must either oblige with civilization or face certain destruction. Early news reports in the 18th century set the standard for visualizing Native Americans. Indians were often referred to as “the Skulking Indian Enemy” in colonial newspapers. “Good” Indians were referred to as “Christianized Indians.” Both, however, were generally considered the other. Indians who signed alliances with the British colonies were tolerated until no longer needed to help protect white colonists from the French, the Spanish, and from Great Britain during the Revolution.¹⁹ After serving their purpose, they were expendable, as Massachusetts Governor William Shirley explained to Indians in Massachusetts after they had successfully helped Americans repulse the French in 1760. Their land was now to belong to the whites of the colony: “Tell your people I am come to build a fort at Penobscot and will make the land English—I am able to do it—and I will do it.”²⁰



Figure 1, “American Progress,” John Gast, 1872. This early visual representation of Manifest Destiny idealistically shows the Native Americans fleeing their land upon the advance of the White Man, acting under the authority of higher power. In reality, the Indians would not vacate their territory without a fight.

When Native Americans became a threat to Manifest Destiny in the 19th century, the press actively stepped up its coverage of Native Americans, and truly painted Indians as “the other.” With the necessity of removing Natives through forced relocation and the reservation system came the necessity of justifying the treatment, and preserving the status quo, through the power of the press. As a result, the late 19th and early 20th century press went about constructing an identity for the native, an often-contradictory persona that painted the Indian as dually savage, yet romantic, virtuous yet doomed and was based entirely off the standards of the press and its readers, not that of the Native. According to John Coward, “news about Indians was created, organized, and received in ways that supported Euro-American ideas and challenged or ignored native ones,” thereby degrading and marginalizing the Native.²¹

The press representation of the Indian has been described as a “double-minded” scenario, wherein

18. Dietram Scheufele. “Framing as a Theory of Media Effects,” *Journal of Communication* (2009): 105.

19. David A. Copeland, *Colonial American Newspapers: Character and Content* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 46-66.

20. *Boston Evening-Post*, May 12, 1760, quoted in David A. Copeland, *Debating the Issues in Colonial Newspapers* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2000), 56.

21. John Coward, *The Newspaper Indian* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 10.

they were either “sensitive, proud, peaceful children of the forest or they were sneaky and cruel barbarians, a race of naturally violent and warlike people.” But no matter which identity was employed by the press, both served the distinct purpose of constructing a national identity that excluded the Native: “Both identities were oversimplified stereotypes and both conceived of Indians as markedly different from Euro-Americans.”²² Imagery of Native Americans, by the end of the 19th century, typically fell into one of two categories: (1) the violent, inhumane beast that must be subdued at all costs; (2) the Noble Savage who, while representing the origins of America, could never entirely assimilate. In both cases, the press advanced the notion that the Indian race was doomed for extinction.

The image of the Native American as savage was the most prevalent among visuals, and generally reflected similar descriptions presented through the written word: “...when Indians refused to be quaint, White culture’s imagery condemns them. In the nineteenth century, those who resisted domination were painted as bloodthirsty savages....”²³ Newspaper reports were quick to point out the atrocities committed by Native Americans, even if these actions came in response to violent actions carried out by white warriors invading Indian territory. Figure 2, “The Right Way to Dispose of Sitting Bull and His Braves,” was published in response to the death of George Custer, which incited a wave of racial hatred toward the Natives. (Ironically, Sitting Bull eventually died not at the hands of a white man, but by a stray bullet shot in a firefight by one of his Indian peers.) In this drawing, Sitting Bull is



Figure 2, “The Proper Way to Dispose of Sitting Bull and His Braves,” *New York Graphic*, Aug. 15, 1876.



Figure 3, “After Mother Country’s Scalp,” Thomas Nast, *Harper’s Weekly*, July 17, 1886.

depicted as a half-human beast responsible for the death of a white man, lying trampled under his feet. His white adversary is victorious against him, as to be expected by a public hungry for the destruction of the Native American way of life. Natives were portrayed as violent, cruel, contemptuous toward authority, and inhumane in a process Coward calls “making the evil Indian.” During wartime particularly, the cultural identity of the native society was of no concern or importance in written and visual reports. References and images of scalping, cannibalism, and torture were prevalent and all served to create the image of a bloodthirsty, warmongering Indians that must be subdued, such as this one, from a March 1837 report in the *New Orleans Picayune*: “When once an Indian is aroused to revenge and war, his spirit will never be subdued. They cannot – must not be trusted.”²⁴ Writers did not mince words and resorted to the ugliest of name calling in their descriptions of the Native American: “The Indian in romance may be a noble savage, but in fact, I mean in the bloody reality of the days I am going to tell you of, [the Indian] was vermin, ruthless, cunning, brutal vermin, and no good till he was dead – and precious little good then.”²⁵ Figure 3, published by *Harper’s Weekly* in 1886, visually depicts the “ruthless, cunning, brutal” creature described above. In this image, a band of enraged, savage-looking Indians remove the scalp from a woman intended to visually represent the “mother country,” or the rapidly expanding United States. As the artist knew, the general public would be enraged to think

that the Native, considered barbarians when compared to advanced European society, would dare to threaten the future of the nation.

22. *Ibid*, 7.

23. S. Elizabeth Bird, ed. *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998), 4.

24. *Picayune* (New Orleans), March 24, 1837, 2. Cited by John Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*.

25. “Old Man Porter’s Revenge,” *Fort Worth Gazette*, July 7, 1895, 13.

Native Americans were also visually portrayed as the Noble Savage, representing the unity of civility and savagery, humanity and beastliness. This characterization served a dual purpose for the American public. Some believed the savage could be redeemed and fully embrace his noble side through European practices and culture and denying himself of all semblances to his former culture. Others were reminded of the natural, authentic qualities of American life inherent in the perceived nobility of the Indian, while also easily measuring



Figure 4, "The Indian Child," *Harper's Young People*, November 4, 1884.

their own civilization against his savagery. The term can be traced back to that of the "eloquent savage," which was portrayed by traders, travelers, missionaries, and others who interacted with Natives early on. Similar to the contrasting terms of the phrase "noble savage," there was a contrast in these travelers' experiences among the Native country of the New World: "They alternated between admiration for the ease and simplicity of life which they envisioned every Indian enjoying and fear that they might very soon meet some tragic end."²⁶ The romanticized, noble Indian portrayed in print and visuals was archetypal representations of a type of Indian, not a real individual from an actual tribe. In 1834, a weekly Tennessee paper published a factually inaccurate story about an Indian woman mourning the loss of her husband and child: "The father of Life and Light has taken from me the apple of my eye, and the core of my heart, and hid him in these two graves, I will moisten the one with my tears, and the other with the milk of my breast, till I meet them in that country where the sun never sets."²⁷ As were many similar accounts about Indian life, "the story reinforces the vanishing Indian idea by portraying native life as marked by tragedy and by suggesting that Indian happiness comes only when their lives have ended...."²⁸ The use of children in Noble Savage imagery was common, and they were often tied to both the freedom of nature and the inevitable doom

of the people. In a November 1884 edition of *Harper's Young People*, the image of an Indian child in Figure 4 was accompanied by a poem by M. E. Sangster, titled "The Indian Child," which concludes "Better things one day shall be / For thy dusky race and thee, / Indian child, so sad and grave, / Boastful, ignorant, and brave."²⁹ Other images showed the dual nature of the Noble Savage by presenting the Indian with representations of both. Figure 5, from a 1905 edition of *Washington Times*, includes a Native American dressed in European clothes and using an advanced weapon, yet still clinging to his savage side, indicated by the headdress. A few years prior, the same newspaper ran a story that relied on the model of the Noble Savage to describe the Indian, rather than his actual name or individual personality: "A notable gathering of private and public citizens had assembled to shake the red hand of the noble savage and hear the grunt and chuckle of blazing warriors, who had lifted the scalps of many white settlers and left their lonely cabins in ashes."³⁰ In both the written and visual representations from the *Times*, the Indian is painted in terms of the identity given him by the press and public. Once the Indian was effectively conquered by the mid-20th century, the savage part of his nature was essentially stripped and, instead, his characterization fully became that of the noble representation of days gone by and the foundations of America: "Noble Indians were presented as members

of children in Noble Savage imagery was common, and they were often tied to both the freedom of nature and the inevitable doom



Figure 5, *Washington Times*, Sept. 30, 1905, page 1.

26. Edna Sorber, "The Noble Eloquent Savage," *Ethnohistory* 19:3 (1972), 227.

27. *Western Weekly Review* (Franklin, Tennessee), June 20, 1834, 1. Cited by John Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*.

28. Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, 49.

29. M. E. Sangster, *Harper's Young People* 6:202 (New York: Harper & Brothers, November 4, 1884), 2.

30. John Joyce, "Personal Collections of Walt Whitman," *The Washington Times*, Oct. 5, 1902, 10.

of a dying race and as holders of long-dead traditions that were no longer a threat to white people, their ambitions, or their values.”³¹

Both the savage and noble depictions of the Indian resulted in their distinction as “the other,” which effectively reinforced the idea that the Indian was the enemy of America and the direction in which the nation was heading. Many whites believed their eradication was simply the natural order of things, ordained by God, and an unavoidable conclusion. In some cases, whites took pity on what they considered to be the dying breed and allowed natives to celebrate their culture before it was entirely eradicated. In the fall of 1898, an Indian Congress was held in Omaha with more than 500 participants from 35 different tribes. But even then the American press could not stay away from poking fun at the event. *The Conservative* in Nebraska described the Congress as a “spectacle,” while also acknowledging the disservice being done to the Indians: “Is history ever likely to be written from the Indians’ standpoint?”³²



Figure 6, “Yellow Shirt.” Taken by Frank Rinehart at the 1898 Indian Congress in Omaha.

V. Women

The women’s suffrage movement in the United States was defined by females questioning the traditional roles imposed on their lives and seeking expanding rights. This led dominant males in society to feel their power threatened and attempt to reassert control and authority over the opposite sex. The core of the anti-suffragists’ philosophy was that the nature of women, as ordained by God, was inconsistent with participation at the polls.³³ The specific focus on the limitations of women, including their excitable temperaments, was often hard to counter: “This emphasis on intangible qualities worked well in the [anti-suffragist’s] struggle to maintain the status quo. Suffragists knew they could not challenge these undefined perceptions of women, and, therefore, were limited in the possible direct attacks on the anti-suffragists’ logic.”³⁴ By the time the suffrage movement was launched in the late 19th century and reached its peak in the early 20th, the role of the press within society, and its key players, had been well-established: “The Fourth Estate was a body overwhelmingly peopled by – and largely committed to serving – men.”³⁵ The men were threatened by the thought that women could potentially arise from their positions as a lower class of society and take hold of the power base traditionally held by the male half of the population. Thus, the media reflected this fear – the major male players in American media of the time either entirely ignored the Women’s Rights Movement, or when they did cover it, used methods of mockery and disdain.³⁶ Images of women fell into two categories: (1) cartoons of women emphasizing their weaker nature, lack of intelligence, or potential problems caused by granting them the right to vote; and (2) anti-suffrage propaganda used to portray women as “the other” and destroyers of the family.

It is almost a century since women first gained the right to vote and society has yet to crumble into complete disarray. Yet, when women’s suffrage was first demanded at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 in New York, that’s exactly what men feared. In order to stir up opposition to the women’s right to enter the polling booth, the media became a key tool in suppressing women’s voices. Females were described as weak, unintelligent, inferior, silly and giving them the right to cast a vote called a sin against God.³⁷ And while the words published against the movement would have been enough to dampen their shouts, newspaper images and cartoons also served as a means of limiting the cause. In August 1912, the *New York Tribune* ran a story

31. John Bloom, “‘There is Madness in the Air:’ The 1926 Haskell Homecoming and Popular Representations of Sports in Federal Indian Boarding Schools,” in *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*, ed. S. Elizabeth Bird (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998), 104.

32. “The Indians at Omaha,” *The Conservative*, Aug. 18, 1898, 4.

33. Carolyn Summers Vaca, *A Reform Against Nature: Woman Suffrage and the Rethinking of American Citizenship, 1840-1920* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2004), 81.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Rodger Streitmatter, *Mightier than the Sword: How the News Media have Shaped American History* (Philadelphia: Westview Press, 2008), 37.

36. Streitmatter, *Mightier than the Sword*, 37.

37. *Ibid.*, 48.



Figure 7, *New York Tribune*, Aug. 18, 1812, page 3.

about a rally for women's suffrage at Hyde Park. The headline read "War Cry of the Militant Suffrages Enticed Kate Carew to Hyde Park," accompanied by a photo of a matronly woman wagging her finger while clearly admonishing someone (Figure 7). The headline and the photo both portray the females as demanding, almost violent (as expressed by the use of the word "militant"). The image, in particular, is reminiscent of a mother scolding her young son. What grown man wants to be scolded



Figure 8, "The New Navy, about 1900 A.D.," *Life*, April 16, 1896.

by a woman who could potentially erode some of his power? While the *Tribune* was not as direct in discrediting the rally, perhaps because the reporter was surprisingly a female, other papers were quick to deride such gatherings of women. An 1852 meeting in Syracuse was called a "Tomfoolery Convention" and described as a "mass of corruption, heresies, ridiculous nonsense, and reeking vulgarities which these bad women have vomited forth."³⁸ Magazines were the most common source of images challenging the women's rights movement, with *Life* magazine particularly known for line drawings that placed women in unflattering light. One such image showed a female minister behind a pulpit in an abandoned church, while another depicted women "smoking, drinking alcohol, and cavorting in a modern-day club for women."³⁹ In Figure 8, we see the worst fears of men being realized, as women take over control of the Navy, completely stripping men of their power. Similar to the written abuse often hurled against them, the physical appearances of the women in the photo are exaggerated and uncomplimentary.



Figure 9, "Suffragette Vote-Getting." Published in "The Male Madonna and the Feminine Uncle Sam," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91:4 (2005): 368.

Propaganda images were often distributed among anti-suffragists in an attempt to belittle women and the impact they would have as voters. Most notable was the 1909 campaign by the Dunston-Weiler Lithograph Company of New York, which published a set of 12 full-color cartoon postcards "lampooning, satirizing, and

opposing woman suffrage...."⁴⁰ The postcards portray the dangers of women voting, including men being forced to stay home and care for children, women fraudulently paying for votes, and a wife who loves her vote more than her husband. These images were particularly significant due to the popularity of postcards during the era – they were often circulated more widely than magazines and were not dependent on literacy, thereby reaching far beyond the scope of normal print media: "Postcards were ubiquitous, cheap, easily accessible, and clearly participated in the suffrage controversy in a way that developed and extended the argument beyond what can be found in the verbal



Figure 10, "Election Day." Published in "The Male Madonna and the Feminine Uncle Sam," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91:4 (2005): 370.

38. *Syracuse Star*, 1852. Cited by Rodger Streitmatter, *Mightier than the Sword*.

39. Streitmatter, *Mightier than the Sword*, 53-54.

40. Catherine Palczewski, "The Male Madonna and the Feminine Uncle Sam: Visual Argument, Icons, and Ideographs in 1909 Anti-Woman Suffrage Postcards," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91:4 (2005): 366.

arguments contained in broadsides and print media.”⁴¹ In this way, anti-suffragists could easily and quickly relay their message and effectively frighten the ruling class of men about how women would surely erode their power if given the vote. However, in many ways, these postcards simply echoed the words of opponents printed in the preceding decades, who also emphasized the wife’s need to tend to the home. In March 1870, the *New York Times* wrote that “the number of woman...who can keep house without feeling what are called its ‘cares’ overwhelming is alarmingly small.”⁴²

VI. Japanese Americans

On February 19, 1942, a little more than two months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 into law that called for the internment of an estimated 120,000 American-born Japanese citizens.⁴³ The Japanese Americans were rounded up and placed in shelters in some of the most inhospitable regions of the country, all in the name of protecting the country from more attacks by the Japanese. The immediate reaction within the pages of the press was swift, both

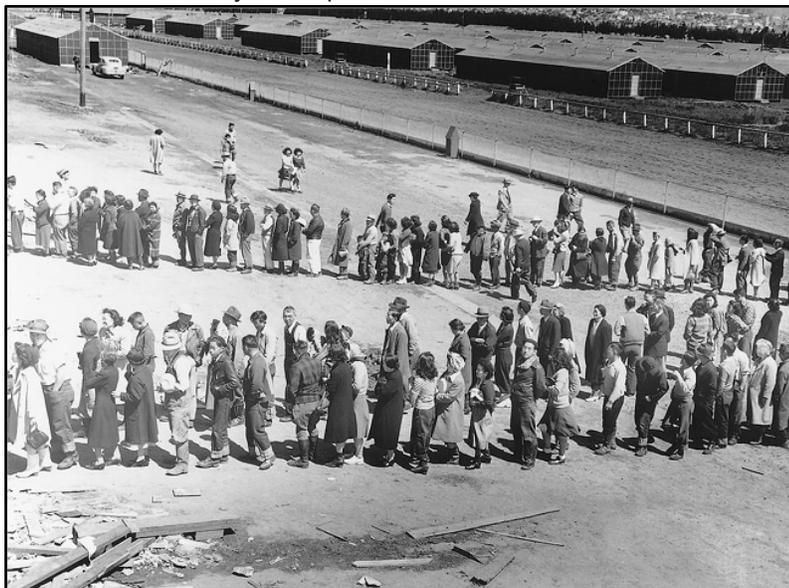


Figure 11, Dorothea Lange for the United States War Relocation Authority.

in the form of editorials and letters to the editor, the majority of which voiced support for the incarceration of innocent citizens.⁴⁴ A common thread ran among all coverage: Japanese Americans were, in fact, not a part of the American identity, which banded together in the wake of the devastation of the Pearl Harbor attacks. In one letter to the editor, George Martin expressed a racism that was prevalent through much of the coverage, that tied Japanese Americans to the pilots who bombed Pearl Harbor, and not the nation they had called home all their lives: “The way I look at it, the average tame American Jap is hard to tell from a wild Jap. The Japs in Tokyo, no doubt, intended to use the Japs already here as a screen to filter into our midst, then stab us in the back.”⁴⁵ And while letters against internment were published, not a single of seven major

newspapers on the West Coast, nor the *New York Times*, questioned the military’s claim that the Japanese Americans were a threat.⁴⁶ Keenly aware of how visual representations of the internment would be perceived, the government closely controlled the images that were published of the round-up and internment campus. Images of Japanese Americans generally fell into two categories: (a) photographs of the internment that served to demonize the Japanese American, without highlighting their maltreatment in the internment campus; and (b) propaganda images portraying all Japanese as a threatening savage and an enemy that must be stopped.

Photographer Dorothea Lange, well known for her images of the Great Depression, was called upon by the War Relocation Authority to take photos of the internment in 1942. The Authority provided her with strict restrictions that included no images of barbed wire, watchtowers, armed soldiers, or Japanese resis-

41. Ibid, 384.

42. “Will Women go Crazy in Politics?” *The New York Times*, March 9, 1870.

43. Brian Thornton, “Historic Editors in Short Supply,” *Newspaper Research Journal* 23:2 (2002), 100.

44. Ibid 104.

45. George Martin, “Japanese Problem,” *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, June 9, 1942, 4. Cited by Thornton, “Historic Editors in Short Supply.”

46. Thornton, “Heroic Editors in Short Supply,” 109.



Figure 12, U.S. propaganda campaign.

tance: “They wanted the roundup and sequestering of Japanese Americans documented – but not too well.”⁴⁷ Lange was entirely restricted from talking to detainees and almost lost her job when one of her images showed up in an anti-internment pamphlet published by the Quakers.⁴⁸ The images Lange produced were, in fact, so damning of the federal government and failed to demonize the Japanese American that the War Relocation Authority censored the vast majority, leaving 97 percent of Lange’s work unpublished. The images that did make their way to the pages of publications were those that showed the process of internment, but not the negative, brutal side of it. Japanese American families standing in line before entering their new home were common, as were images of daily life in the camp. Those images that tied Japanese Americans to the national American identity were quietly impounded, lest the public forget that the Japanese – all of them – were the enemy.

The most important visual tool used to frame the Japanese Americans during the World War II internment was propaganda which, again, relegated all Japanese, even those born on American soil, to the position of enemy and threat within the larger American community. This served a dual purpose, both of uniting the United States against a common enemy and justifying the government’s use

of internment camps to prevent any further attacks from happening. Images such as the Tokio Kid (Figure 12) were frightening and played up to racial stereotypes about the physical appearance and culture of Japanese. In many cases, the propaganda was used to warn the public about Japanese Americans helping their peers, echoed in the pages of newspapers that incorrectly claimed local Japanese were helping their homeland government prepare another attack on the West Coast.⁴⁹ The propaganda posters only served to add fuel to a fire that had been blazing since December 7, 1941, as evidenced by a story published by the *Los Angeles Times* the day after the attack: “A viper is nonetheless a viper wherever the egg is hatched – so a Japanese American, born of Japanese parents, grows up to be a Japanese, not an American.”⁵⁰

VII. African Americans

Similar to the Suffrage Movement, the Civil Rights Movement posed a serious threat to the status quo and the ability of the white male to hold onto his traditional base of power within society. With the rise in popularity and availability of television, TV news reports brought the violence of the movement into the living rooms of the American people. But while video cameras showed the reality of the fight for equality, printed publications still very much relied on biased word choice, emphasis on the negative, and sensational images to subjugate African Americans to the position of “other” within society. While detailed in their coverage of all race-related issues, most newspapers fell short in one important area: “[they] showed their propensity to cover the hot and simple story, not the complex one; they were drawn to the raging fire, not to the slow burn, so the successful boycott on the Negro side of the racial line went on for weeks with little notice.”⁵¹ The general public was not so much drawn in by the stories of success, but more so by the tales of conflict, a force that is, in many ways, the heart of news coverage. In the years since the conclusion of the Civil Rights Campaigns, some newspapers have issued public apologies for what they believe to be weaknesses in their coverage, including the *Kentucky Herald-Leader* and *Birmingham News*, with reporters and editors admit-

47. “Impounded: Dorothea Lange and the Censored Images of Japanese American internment,” Review, *Publisher’s Weekly* 253: 28 (2006): 144.

48. Dintia Smith, “Photographs of an Episode That Lives in Infamy,” *The New York Times*, November 6, 2006.

49. Gonzalez and Torres, *News for All the People*, 274.

50. *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 8, 1941. Cited by Gonzalez and Torres, *News for All the People*, 275.

51. Hank Klibanoff and Gene Roberts, *The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 110.



Figure 13, Bill Hudson/Associated Press

different meanings in different publications, largely dependent upon the text within the accompanying story. While some, such as *The New York Times* strove to remain neutral by not placing blame on either involved party, others were more direct in their pointed language, such as *Newsweek*. In a May 1963 edition, the popular news magazine wrote about “angry mobs of Negroes” within a story titled “Look at them Run,” a reference to a statement made by Connor. Printed in its entirety within the story, the magazine was derogatory toward the participants: “‘Look at those niggers run,’ he beamed as five dogs bounded out of police cars and set the crowd backpedaling. Some of the negroes darted up close, woofing back at the dogs. One stripped off his red shirt and waved it like a matador’s cape.”⁵⁴ The imagery here is striking, as the reporter suggests that the African American participants were attempting to rile the dogs and provoke them to attack. In coverage of the same image, *Time* was quick to draw a distinction between good and evil, right and wrong when describing the scene of the event, emphasizing the fact that there was a clear distinction between the two races, while also describing the scene in mildly racist terms: blacks in Birmingham were a “docile lot,” while Martin Luther King, Jr. was “inspirational but inept.”⁵⁵ Unlike previous images that clearly rallied for or against a particular group, the images of the Civil Rights Movement were, at times, left up to interpretation, as “journalists, politicians, local Southern authorities, and civil rights activists vied for the power to construct meaning for the nation.”⁵⁶

Though not as often, African Americans were also represented by drawings and cartoons that often reflected those characteristics differentiating them from the rest of society, particularly their skin color. Unlike previous coverage of racial groups, this was more a reflection of deeply rooted cultural beliefs, and less about the press promoting a particular way of viewing African Americans. In many ways, the press was simply acknowledging the existing divides, based on color, which existed at the time. In a 1963 editorial, *The New*

ting their stories were influenced by internal forces of the organization and, externally, political leaders of the era.⁵² The images that were published during the Civil Rights Movement draw much of their meaning from the accompanying text, which provides important context that explains the media’s coverage: “[It] told modern myths of heroes and villains, good and bad, that defined the photographs’ meaning for us.”⁵³ Images of African Americans generally fell into two categories: (1) photographs of African Americans engaged in Civil Rights Activities, while usually being opposed by white authority; and (2) political cartoons highlighting the differences of African Americans, as mirrored by society.

The iconic image of anti-Black, anti-Communist Bull Connor, holding a German shepherd as it lunged toward a defenseless black man (Figure 13) took on



Figure 14, *The Washington Post*, 1963.

52. Barbara Friedman and John Richardson, “‘A National Disgrace:’ Newspaper Coverage of the 1963 Birmingham Campaign in the South and Beyond,” *Journalism History* 33:4 (2008): 225.

53. Meg Spratt, “When Police Dogs Attacked: Iconic News Photographs and Construction of History, Mythology, and Political Discourse,” *American Journalism* 25:2 (2008): 86.

54. “Birmingham, U.S.A.: ‘Look at Them Run,’” *Newsweek*, May 13, 1963, 27-29. Cited by Spratt, “When Police Dogs Attacked.”

55. Spratt, “When Police Dogs Attacked,” 95.

56. *Ibid.*, 94.

York Times suggests that the staff of the paper viewed racism as an entrenched problem that could not easily be addressed: "We do not expect that there will be overnight rejection of all the policies that caused so much distress to the Negro community. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders of the drive to break down racial barriers ought not to expect it either."⁵⁷ Figure 14 shows a cartoon from a 1963 edition of the *Washington Post*, which highlights the ingrained beliefs about color as the determining factor in limiting the rights of African Americans in society. In many ways, the images that characterized African Americans in the press served to portray them as the "other" while, in some cases, also showing the audience the brutality of how they were being treated by the white establishment, such as Figure 13. In most cases, the accompanying text was particularly important in attaching meaning and context to an image, which could be taken a number of different ways, based on how the publication chose to write about the visual and the event it represents. While still pointed, the treatment of African Americans through visual was not as blatant as the treatment of the people groups that came before them.

VIII. Muslim Americans



Figure 15, "Muslim Rage," *Newsweek*, Sept. 24, 2012.

The tipping point that propelled Muslim Americans into the media spotlight was, of course, 9/11. This major catastrophic event served as the catalyst that moved Muslim Americans from the periphery and into the forefront of the United States' mindset and necessitated extensive coverage by the press: "Whether traveling, driving, working, walking through a neighborhood, or sitting in their homes, Arabs in America – citizens and non-citizens – are now subject to special scrutiny in American society. The violence, discrimination, defamation, and intolerance now faced by Arabs in American society has reached a level unparalleled in their more than 100-year history in the US."⁵⁸ When the terrorist attacks occurred that September morning, the public, with little prior knowledge of Muslim Americans, looked first to the media when attempting to make sense of the situation and the people. When the media portrayed correctly the attackers as Muslim, a connection was

made between the followers of the religion and the act of terrorism and direct violent actions followed at the hands of the American public. The frame of Muslim Americans at the hands of the media was created on September 11, 2001, and the public subsequently responded. Images of Muslims Americans generally fall into two categories: (1) photographs of Muslim anger and violence against the west, that tied all Muslims to this fury; and (2) images from within local stories immediately sensationalized and played up by the national media. As was the case with African Americans, the context and text with which the image is accompanied is particularly important.

In the wake of 9/11, Muslim Americans were particularly tied to their countries of origin, such that their American side was de-emphasized and they were portrayed as not part of the larger national community, effectively portraying them as "the other" and to be feared. The public reaction against Muslim Americans was swift and covered extensively by the media and little to no distinction was given to the differentiation between Muslim Americans and the terrorists who carried out the attack. In the immediate wake of 9/11, The New York Times ran a story containing quotes from Phil Beckwith, who was filled with violent fury against all followers of Islam: "I know just what to do with these Arab people,' ... 'We have to find them, kill them, wrap them in a

57. "Racial Peace in Birmingham," *New York Times*, May 7, 1963. Cited by Friedman and Richardson, "A National Disgrace."

58. Louise Cainkar, "No Longer Invisible: Arab and Muslim Exclusion After September 11," *Middle East Research and Information Project* 224 (Fall 2002): 22-29.



Figure 16, *The Atlantic*, Sept. 12, 2012.

go without serious consequence. For example, an innocent Muslim American was shot 35 times at point blank range by Mark Anthony Stroman, who went on a post-9/11 killing rampage. On Long Island, a 75-year-old man tried to run over a Pakistani woman at a shopping mall, threatening to kill her for “destroying my country.” The examples go on and on, and researchers and Muslim Americans alike contend the media have played a direct role in the largely negative treatment toward the group. In a research study conducted with anonymous Muslim Americans in the wake of 9/11, one woman was clear in her blame: “I blame the media for the ignorance of the people, because they sit there and they make Muslims seem as if they are bad people and that they are terrorists. They’re aggressive . . . they don’t think. . . . You know, they have no morals, no values. And, like, the media plays a big role in [this] . . . they always show that we are negative.”⁶²

Another framing technique used by the media in the case of Muslim Americans was the sensationalization of local stories, which were picked up by the national media and overplayed. In many cases, these revolved around discrimination against Muslims and were accompanied by inflammatory images. Normally, such stories would not reach the national level but, because of the inferior status of Muslim Americans within society, they became more prevalent. Just a few examples include the Dove World Outreach Center, pictured in Figure 17, which has been outspoken in its criticism of the religion. The image of the “Islam is of the Devil” sign placed in front of their building was widely circulated among publications. Just a few years ago, the media were overtaken with reports about the “ground zero mosque,” in reality, an Islamic community center in lower Manhattan. The coverage was met with outrage and protests across the country, even though the impact would only be felt in the local New York community. The vast majority of stories about Muslim Americans involve stereotyping, mistreatment, or anger toward Islam and never portray the positive side of the religion, such as its cultural practices, good works in the community, etc. Similarly, images often highlight either the reactions against Muslims or, as numerous researchers have



Figure 17, *The Gainesville Sun*, July 8, 2009.

pigskin and bury them. That way they will never get to heaven.”⁵⁹ Figure 15 was featured on the front page of *Newsweek* in September 2012 alongside the headline “Muslim Rage.” While the image itself is not one of Muslim Americans, the accompanying, controversial story ties all followers of Islam to such violence: “In the age of globalization and mass immigration, such intolerance has crossed borders and become the defining characteristic of Islam.”⁶⁰ Islam and Muslims are tied to key, inflammatory words, including “eruption,” “indignation,” and “violent”—and that’s only within the first paragraph of the story.⁶¹ While voices and perspectives of Muslim Americans did exist, unlike the coverage given to Native Americans, they were often drowned out by the negative and often violent cries against them. And the written word did not

59. Blaine Harden, “For Many, Sorrow Turns to Anger and Talk of Violence,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 14, 2001.

60. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, “Muslim Rage and The Last Gasp of Islamic Hate,” *Newsweek*, September 17, 2012.

61. *Ibid.*

62. Brigitte Nacos and Oscar Torres-Reyna, *Fueling our Fears: Stereotyping, Media Coverage, and Public Opinion of Muslim Americans* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 106-107.

pointed out, the differences that mark the religion.⁶³ While reporters were certainly not as blatant in name calling, as they were with the Natives, the types of stories reported and the speed with which they spread across the nation were as just as negative toward the group.

IX. Conclusion

Throughout American history, the media have repeatedly been used to frame the understanding of groups of people outside of the traditionally understood boundaries of “white America” and outline the context and dictate the conversation surrounding them, thereby creating a new identity for them: “In no place on earth has the daily production of news formed such an integral part of people’s images of themselves – of a national narrative – as in the United States.”⁶⁴

While the exact media tactics used against each group differed slightly, the press was successfully able to frame each in response to a catalyst that made each a threat, thereby protecting the status quo of white male America. By emphasizing cultural differences, downplaying any ties to American identity, and, in some cases, resorting to blatant name calling, the groups were framed as “the other.” Many of these images have endured as representations of the struggles faced by groups on the march to equality, standing as reminders of former, misguided fears. It goes without saying that the press did improve in the more than 100 years between the Indian Wars and 9/11; however, weaknesses still exist, and framing is a major problem that must be addressed by the American media system in order to mitigate the negative effects felt by groups of people being covered by the press. As evidenced repeatedly throughout history, and specifically in these five cases, framing tactics are often employed by the media in targeted attacks designed to shape the public’s understanding of an event or group of people considered outside of the status quo. While the common understanding of what this “norm” entails has changed over the course of many years, there will always be a group “outsiders” who find themselves under the scrutiny of the press.

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63. Nacos and Torres-Reyna, *Fueling our Fears: Stereotyping, Media Coverage, and Public Opinion of Muslim Americans*.

64. Gonzalez and Torres, *News for All the People*, 1.

The Portrayal of the American Legal System in Prime Time Television Crime Dramas

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Abstract

This is a case study looking at how the legal system is portrayed on prime time network television crime dramas in respect to suspect treatment, the case building process and trial length. Through content analysis, it compared the exaggerations presented in those dramas to real-life accuracies. The Good Wife, Law & Order: SVU, Fairly Legal and Major Crimes were selected to study, and the fourth and seventh episodes of each television program's season broadcast within a one-year period were watched. It was found that though suspect treatment is portrayed fairly accurately in prime time network television crime dramas, tendencies of exaggeration and inaccuracy exist through the case building process and trial length. These inaccuracies and exaggerations lead viewers to misinterpret the processes of the United States legal system.

I. Introduction

In 2010, the Federal Bureau Investigation (FBI) reported an estimated 1.2 million violent crimes occurred nationwide in the United States.¹ To relay stories concerning these instances of murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault to the public, television stations dedicate approximately 20 percent of news coverage to crime reporting.² Through expansive crime coverage, television stations have attracted large, loyal audiences. In July 2011, 5.2 million people tuned into network HLN to watch the Casey Anthony verdict.³

It is evident Americans have become infatuated with suspects, criminals and the legal process. Major television networks have recognized this interest and have developed crime scene drama programs that are supposedly modeled after real-world legal cases.

Today, the CBS television network broadcasts drama *The Good Wife* during prime time hours on Sun-

* **Keywords:** Primetime television crime dramas, United States legal system, suspect treatment, the case building process, trial length

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1 "Violent Crime," *Federal Bureau Investigation*, n.d., <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2010/crime-in-the-u.s.-2010/violent-crime/violent-crime> (September 17, 2012).

2 "Crime Most Common Story on Local Television News," *Kaiser Family Foundation*, March 12, 1998, <http://www.kff.org/mediapartnerships/1374-crime.cfm> (September 17, 2012).

3 Brian Stelter, "Casey Anthony Verdict Brings HLN Record Ratings," *New York Times*, July 6, 2011, <http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/07/06/casey-anthony-verdict-brings-hln-record-ratings/> (September 17, 2012).

day.⁴ NBC airs *Law & Order: SVU* during Wednesday prime time.⁵ USA broadcasts *Fairly Legal* on Fridays during prime time,⁶ and TNT airs *Major Crimes* during prime time hours on Monday.⁷ In order to keep large audiences watching, these crime scene dramas have exaggerated aspects of the legal process, droning out legal jargon to spice up the courtroom's atmosphere. Through embellished, false presentations, crime dramas have painted inadequate pictures of the legal system for American viewers.

So, with millions tuning in weekly, how debilitating are crime dramas to the integrity of the legal system in terms of suspect treatment, the case building process and trial length? This research examined how the legal system is portrayed on prime time network television crime dramas, and it compared the exaggerations presented in those dramas to real-life accuracies.

II. Literature Review

There has been little scholarly study done on the accuracy of how the legal system is portrayed on prime time network crime dramas in terms of suspect treatment, the case building process and trial length. Substantial research pertaining to the *CSI Effect* exists though. This phrase is used to define the impact crime dramas, such as *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, have on jurors' decision-making processes.⁸

Defining Crime and the Legal System

Though the definition of crime is subjective and evolving, for the purposes of this research, crime is defined as "an act committed or omitted, in violation of a public law, either forbidding or commanding it."⁹

The legal system, in this context, refers to secular rather than religious law. Secular law is created by human beings and refers to external actions performed by individuals that affect other individuals.¹⁰

The CSI Effect

*"This is the unpleasant reality of real crimes, the plot is unscripted, and no professional actors deliver the scenes."*¹¹

As crime dramas such as *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* and *Law and Order* have grown in popularity, media have speculated millions of viewers have developed unrealistic expectations for the processes of evidence collection and presentation.

Each week, *CSI* draws in audiences averaging more than 10 million viewers.¹² In a typical episode, audiences see forensic technicians using advanced technological equipment to complete DNA and gunshot residue tests. Simultaneously, viewers watch as crime scene investigators work to put together the clues to solve the case in 45 minutes or less.¹³

Supposedly, because the forensic techniques and evidence illustrated on *CSI* are more reminiscent of science fiction than true practice, real-world jurors have developed "reasonable doubts" about defendants'

4 "CBS Primetime TV Schedule," CBS, n.d., <http://www.cbs.com/schedule/> (September 17, 2012).

5 "Schedule," NBC, n.d., <http://www.nbc.com/schedule/> (September 17, 2012).

6 "Schedule," USA, n.d., http://www.usanetwork.com/series/fairlylegal/theshow/episodeguide/episodes/s2_rippleofhope/index.html (September 30, 2012).

7 "Schedule," TNT, n.d., <http://www.tntdrama.com/schedule/?startDate=10/1/2012&timeZone=> (September 30, 2012).

8 Tamara F. Lawson, "Before the Verdict and Beyond the Verdict: The *CSI* Infection Within Modern Criminal Jury Trials," *Loyola University Chicago Law Journal* 41 (2009): 121.

9 *Black's Law Dictionary, 2nd ed.*, s.v. "Crime."

10 *Legal Information Institute*, s.v. "Legal Systems."

11 Tamara F. Lawson, "Before the Verdict and Beyond the Verdict," 128-129.

12 "Top 20 Network Primetime Series: Oct. 8-14, 2012," *Nielsen Television (TV) Ratings for Network Primetime Series*, n.d., <http://www.zap2it.com/tv/ratings/zap-weekly-ratings,0,7508066.htmlstory> (October 23, 2012).

13 Kit R. Roane, "The *CSI* Effect," *U.S. News & World Report*, April 17, 2005, Tech section, 1-2.

guilt during trials.¹⁴ Reasonable doubt is defined as “doubt based on reason, a doubt for which [one] can give a reason.”¹⁵ After watching *CSI* episodes, jurors expect to see dynamic, “smoking-gun” evidence in real-world courtrooms; they are less willing to accept basic criminal trial evidence, and they grow disappointed when they are not involved in *CSI*-style investigations.¹⁶ According to Tamara Lawson:

These shows fail to present the reality of criminal investigations, such as crime lab backlogs and resource limitations, which real criminal investigators and litigators must surmount. A potential juror’s exposure to this distorted version of the prosecutorial process prior to jury service shapes his or her understanding and expectations.¹⁷

The *CSI* Effect has resulted in increased juror expectation levels,¹⁸ as jurors assume attorneys will prepare cases supported by advanced forensic evidence unreasonably quickly. In summary, “Jurors schooled in crime investigations through watching TV dramas expect prosecutors to show them sophisticated forensic evidence ... making it tough for the government to prove cases.”¹⁹

Only about 10 percent of all criminal cases go to trial and are decided by juries,²⁰ so those cases that do go to trial often carry the highest dangers and most severe punishments.²¹ For this reason, the consequences of the *CSI* Effect are serious, as false acquittals or wrongful convictions can majorly jeopardize the safety of communities as guilty individuals are released back into society and innocent people are erroneously put behind bars. For example, if jurors were biased in their considerations of evidence, a criminal defendant’s right to a fair trial would be jeopardized, and he or she might be found guilty of a crime he or she did not commit. As Lawson observed:

When factually innocent individuals are convicted due to the same type of juror confusion, a more severe injury to society occurs. Both mistakes jeopardize the legitimacy of the criminal justice system. However, wrongful convictions are inherently more repugnant to justice.²²

In the literature on the subject of inaccurate portrayals of the legal system on network television crime dramas, there are holes where suspect treatment, the case building process and trial length are concerned. This research looked to fill those gaps to see whether exaggerations and inaccuracies accompany the portrayal of these three themes. This research also sought to determine if previous conclusions concerning the inaccurate portrayal of forensics on network television crime dramas are valid in these areas.

One research question for this study is how debilitating are crime dramas to the integrity of the legal system in terms of suspect treatment, the case building process and trial length?

One hypothesis from this question is that tendencies of exaggeration and inaccuracy in prime time network television crime dramas exist through the portrayal of suspect treatment, the case building process and trial length. These inaccuracies and exaggerations lead viewers to misinterpret the processes of the United States legal system.

III. Methodology

To begin with, the television programs *The Good Wife*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *Fairly Legal* and *Major*

14 Tom R. Tyler, “Viewing *CSI* and the Threshold of Guilt: Managing Truth and Justice in Reality and Fiction,” *The Yale Law Journal* 115 (2006): 1052.

15 Young Lawyer’s Section, *Bar Association of the District of Columbia*, 4th ed., s.v. “Criminal Jury Instructions for the District of Columbia.”

16 Kit R. Roane, “The *CSI* Effect,” 1-2.

17 Tamara F. Lawson, “Before the Verdict and Beyond the Verdict,” 132.

18 Richard Willing, “‘*CSI* effect’ has juries wanting more evidence,” *USA Today*, August 5, 2004, News section, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2004-08-05-csi-effect_x.htm (October 23, 2012).

19 Martha Graybow, “Prosecutors See ‘*CSI* Effect’ in White-Collar Cases,” *Reuters*, September 24, 2005, http://www.redorbit.com/news/general/250029/prosecutors_see_csi_effect_in_whitecollar_cases/ (October 23, 2012).

20 Nancy Jean King, “The American Criminal Jury,” *LAW & CONTEMP. PROBS* 62 (1999): 41, 59.

21 Tamara F. Lawson, “Before the Verdict and Beyond the Verdict,” 127.

22 Tamara F. Lawson, “Before the Verdict and Beyond the Verdict,” 124-125.

Crimes were selected to study. They were chosen because of their consistently large audiences and high ratings.²³ The fourth and seventh episodes of each television program's season broadcast within a one-year period were watched. Often times, the premier and finale episodes of a television program are more sensationalized or dramatic, so by selecting the fourth and seventh episodes within a program's season, this research avoided those extremes. The one-year period spanned from September 2011 to September 2012.

Through content analysis, each episode was analyzed and coded through its presentation of three themes: suspects' treatment, the case building process and trial length.

In terms of suspects' treatment, episodes were watched to determine whether the characters representing police officers, detectives or interviewers referred to the pre-trial interactions with suspects as interviews or interrogations. Historically, interviews produce voluntary statements while interrogations coerce confessions.²⁴ Further, it was noted whether or not police officers, detectives or interviewers physically harassed suspects while questioning them. Physical harassment can include such things as performing "threatening or intimidating actions, blocking a person's path with intent to intimidate or threaten, pushing, shoving or purposely bumping into a person and performing unwelcome touching, caressing or fondling."²⁵ Finally, it was noted whether or not police officers, detectives or interviewers presumed innocent suspects were guilty. According to Saul M. Kassin et al.:

That interrogation is by definition a guilt-presumptive process, a theory-driven social interaction led by an authority figure who already believes that he or she is interrogating the perpetrator and for whom a just outcome is measured by confession. In the case of innocent suspects, one would hope that investigators would periodically reevaluate their beliefs. Over the years, however, a good deal of research has shown that once people form an impression, they unwittingly seek, interpret and create behavioural data that verify it. This last phenomenon – often referred to as the behavioral conformation bias – has been observed not only in the laboratory but in classrooms, the military, the workplace and other settings.²⁶

In terms of the case building process, each episode was watched to determine what type of attorney was building the case. Additionally, each episode was watched to determine how long it took an attorney to build his or her case. For a frame of reference, Casey Anthony's attorney, Jose Boaz, spent approximately three years preparing his defense case for Anthony's murder trial.²⁷

When considering the portrayal of trial length, it was noted whether or not the preliminary hearing, the arraignment, the discovery and motion practices, the plea bargain, the entry of plea and the trial were mentioned in the episodes. If a trial did occur, the episode was watched to determine how long the trial lasted, if a jury was present and if the defendant's sentencing was addressed. Though a particular trial may be longer or shorter than the average, a criminal trial typically lasts between five and ten days.²⁸

Episodes could be classified in one of two categories:

- Accurate: The episode portrayed the treatment of suspects, the case building process and trial length accurately based on real-world legal facts.
- Inaccurate: The episode exaggerated or inaccurately portrayed the treatment of suspects, the case building process and trial length in comparison to real-world legal facts.

Framing themes in the episodes will be noted. If accurate portrayals of suspects' treatment, the case building process and trial length are illustrated, the episode falls under a normal framing context. If any inaccuracies or exaggerations are presented, that frame is recorded.

23 "Top Tens & Trends of Television," *Nielsen*, August 20, 2012, <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/top10s/television.html> (September 30, 2012).

24 Saul M. Kassin et al., "Interviewing suspects: Practice, science, and future directions," *Legal and Criminology Psychology* 15 (2010): 39.

25 "Physical Harassment," *SC Budget and Control Board*, n.d., <http://ohrweb.ohr.state.sc.us/OHR/antiharassment/Page15.htm> (November 17, 2012).

26 Saul M. Kassin et al., "Interviewing suspects," *Legal and Criminology Psychology* 15 (2010): 41.

27 "Casey Anthony Trial: Timeline of Key Events in the Murder Trial of the Florida Mother," *ABC News*, July 6, 2012, <http://abcnews.go.com/US/casey-anthony-trial-timeline-key-events/story?id=13990853&page=3#UKhS94VrZr0> (November 17, 2012).

28 "Trial Juror's Handbook," *New York State Unified Court System*, n.d., www.nyjuror.gov (October 23, 2010).

IV. Findings

Eight episodes were coded in this study. Each episode aired during a one-year period spanning from September 2011 to September 2012. The episodes studied include *The Good Wife*'s "Feeding the Rat" and "Executive Order 13224," *Law & Order: SVU*'s "Double Strands" and "Russian Brides," *Fairly Legal*'s "Bo Me Once" and "Coming Home" and *Major Crimes*' "The Ecstasy and the Agony" and "The Shame Game."

In terms of suspects' treatment, only one episode, "The Shame Game," referred to pre-trial interactions with suspects as interviews. All others did not reference the interaction as an interview or an interrogation. "The Shame Game" was also the only episode to show police detectives physically harassing a suspect in the questioning room. However, six of the eight episodes showed instances where innocent suspects were presumed guilty. For example, in the *Law and Order: SVU* episode "Double Strands," suspect Gabriel Thomas is wrongly accused of being a serial rapist, and because of this false accusation, he attempts to commit suicide while awaiting his trial in prison. However, his identical twin, Brian Smith, is found to be the actual serial rapist at the end of the episode.

In terms of the case building process, two episodes assigned district attorneys to build the legal cases, while two had mediators, one a prosecutor and one a pro bono lawyer. The remaining two episodes did not specify what types of lawyers were building the cases.

Five of the eight episodes specified how long it took the attorney to build his or her case. In two episodes, the attorneys built their cases in one day. In one episode, a lawyer built her case in four days. It took an attorney three days to build her case in one episode, and in another, it took her months.

When considering the portrayal of trial length, only three of the eight episodes mentioned the preliminary hearing. One mentioned arraignment, one mentioned the discovery and motion practices, and five mentioned the plea bargain. Only one episode, "Coming Home," included a trial, but the trial only lasted one day, and there was no jury present in the courtroom. Three episodes mentioned the convicted criminals' sentencing, though two of those three did not show a trial or its preliminary processes. (For a full reference of the coding, see Appendix.)

V. Discussion and Conclusion

Through this study, it can be concluded prime time television crime dramas portray suspects' treatment fairly accurately, as the majority of the studied episodes showed police officers, detectives or interviewers professionally interviewing suspects. Additionally, the overwhelming majority of interviewers did not physically harass suspects in the questioning room. However, because many of the episodes included instances where innocent suspects were presumed guilty, there seems to be a disconnect between the fair treatment of suspects and the guilty statuses police officers, detectives or interviewers assign to them. This contradiction relates back to the literature, which states, "In the case of innocent suspects, one would hope that investigators would periodically reevaluate their beliefs. Over the years, however, a good deal of research has shown that once people form an impression, they unwittingly seek, interpret and create behavioural data that verify it."²⁹ It seems that although police officers, detectives and interviewers in television programs ask questions politely, they rarely reevaluate their initial impressions of suspects, which in turn results in several wrongful detentions.

Within this study, it can also be concluded prime time television crime dramas do not accurately portray the case building process. Because the majority of the episodes showed attorneys building their cases within five days, it seems crime dramas inaccurately depict the amount of time it takes attorneys to collect and review evidence, meet and interview their clients, research background information and select witnesses.

Finally, it can be concluded that prime time television crime dramas do not accurately portray trial length. Before a defendant reaches trial, he or she must attend a preliminary hearing, which requires the prosecutor and defense attorney to present evidence, challenge whether or not there is enough information to suspect a crime has been committed and argue whether the defendant committed the crime. If charges are brought forward, a defendant must then attend the arraignment where he or she is formally informed of

29 Saul M. Kassin et al., "Interviewing suspects," *Legal and Criminology Psychology* 15 (2010): 41.

the charges he or she is facing. Further, the defendant is given the opportunity to enter a plea. Then, the prosecutor and defense attorney must complete the discovery and motion processes, which require they both exchange information about the case. Finally, a defendant can submit a plea bargain, which means he or she agrees to plead guilty to the said charges in order to avoid trial. If and when a defendant does reach trial, a jury must be present unless the defendant has waived his or her right to a trial by jury or unless the case addresses a certain misdemeanor where a bench trial is more appropriate.³⁰ Because many crime dramas fail to mention or show any of these processes, it is clear they do not accurately present the length of a trial.

In essence, it can be concluded from this study that tendencies of exaggeration and inaccuracy in prime time network television crime dramas exist through the portrayal of suspects' treatment, the case building process and trial length. These inaccuracies and exaggerations lead viewers to misinterpret the processes of the United States legal system.

This study cannot make any generalized conclusions though. It only included episodes from four different crime drama television programs, so it cannot be applied to all crime drama television programs. Only two episodes per program were selected, so the results could have been different if other episodes within the same seasons had been selected. Further, this study cannot be used to describe *The Good Wife*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *Fairly Legal* or *Major Crimes* in respect to their accurateness as a whole—it can only be used to describe these television programs to a certain point within a specific time period. Because of these things, this study should serve as a pilot for a more extensive study concerning these issues.

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30 "What are some common steps of a criminal investigation and prosecution?" *National Crime Victim Law Institute*, 2012, http://law.lclark.edu/live/news/5498-what-are-some-common-steps-of-a-criminal/law/centers/national_crime_victim_law_institute/for_victims/answers/ (October 23, 2012).

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Young Lawyer's Section, *Bar Association of the District of Columbia*, 4th ed., s.v. "Criminal Jury Instructions for the District of Columbia."

Appendix: Coding sheets

Television Programs	Season	Title	Date	Question: Interview or inter
The Good Wife Episode 4	3	"Feeding the Rat"	16-Oct-11	Neither
The Good Wife Episode 7	3	"Executive Order 13224"	6-Nov-11	Neither
Law & Order: SVU Episode 4	13	"Double Strands"	12-Oct-11	Neither
Law & Order: SVU Episode 7	13	"Russian Brides"	9-Nov-11	Neither
Fairly Legal Episode 4	1	"Bo Me Once"	2/10/11	Neither
Fairly Legal Episode 7	1	"Coming Home"	3-Mar-11	Neither
Major Crimes 4	1	"The Ecstasy And The Agony"	3-Sep-12	Neither
Major Crimes 7	1	"The Shame Game"	24-Sep-12	Interview

Television Programs2	Suspect physically harassed	Innocent person presumed guilty	Type of at
The Good Wife Episode 4	No	Yes	Pro Bono, Leg
The Good Wife Episode 7	No	No	Prosecutor
Law & Order: SVU Episode 4	No	Yes	DA
Law & Order: SVU Episode 7	No	Guilty presumed innocent	N/A
Fairly Legal Episode 4	No	Yes	Mediator
Fairly Legal Episode 7	No	Yes	Defense, Med
Major Crimes 4	No	Yes	N/A
Major Crimes 7	Yes	Yes	DA

The Good Wife Episode 4	Three days	Yes	No	Yes
The Good Wife Episode 7	N/A	Yes	No	No
Law & Order: SVU Episode 4	N/A	No	Yes	No
Law & Order: SVU Episode 7	N/A	No	No	No
Fairly Legal Episode 4	Months	No	No	No
Fairly Legal Episode 7	Four days	Yes	No	No
Major Crimes 4	One day	No	No	No
Major Crimes 7	One day	No	No	No

Television Programs4	Plea bargain	Trial	Jury	Length of trial	Sentencing add
The Good Wife Episode 4	Yes	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
The Good Wife Episode 7	No	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Law & Order: SVU Episode 4	Yes	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Law & Order: SVU Episode 7	No	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Fairly Legal Episode 4	Yes	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Fairly Legal Episode 7	No	Yes	No	One day	Yes
Major Crimes 4	Yes	No	N/A	N/A	Yes
Major Crimes 7	Yes	No	N/A	N/A	No