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The Emergence of Newsworthiness:

Inclusion, Exclusion and Inequality in Political News and Online Media.

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of

Philosophy in Sociology

by

Noah Daniel Grand

2015

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Emergence of Newsworthiness:

Inclusion, Exclusion and Inequality in Political News and Online Media.

by

Noah Daniel Grand

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Steven E. Clayman, Chair

For over a generation, social scientists have tried to categorize the relationship between journalists and politicians. Which side holds power and influence over the other? Some scholars propose "active" theories: journalists have preferences and the power to impose them on anyone seeking media attention. Other scholars argue journalists are essentially "reactive," dutifully writing down what politicians say with little ability to add alternate perspectives. In this dissertation, I propose both camps are extremes based on a fundamental misunderstanding of how journalists can apply their preferences on news content. Politicians and other sources provide information to reporters, bloggers and other new media writers. Each writer then chooses how to respond to this information. Journalistic power – whether we are discussing traditional media outlets or newer partisan media organizations – is best understood as a set of if : then propositions.

The empirical sections of the dissertation consist of three separate studies, each of which focuses on one set of inputs and the output from a particular set of news organizations. The first study focuses on how presidents schedule press conferences at particular times and places. I find scheduling influences how much attention journalists give a conference, which in turn influences the balance of opinion found in stories. The second study shows how journalists resist but may ultimately give in to evasive responses, by examining quotations on a statement-by-statement basis. The third study examines some of the most popular phrases from the 2008 election, comparing how a wide range of media organizations responded to the same set of political and non-political ideas. Put together, these studies offer a common theoretical framework for comparing traditional and new media organizations, allowing for commonalities as well as differences.

The dissertation of Noah Daniel Grand is approved.

Tim Joseph Groeling

Gabriel Rossman

Steven E. Clayman, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

To Saul and Roslyn, who always supported my education

Table of Contents:

List of Figures and Tables

Acknowledgements

It's probably not a surprise that one day I would be finish up my dissertation. Back when I was taking calculus in 8th grade, everyone expected me to go on and be a math professor. One fateful day when I had no more math classes to take, I got a letter from the campus mail: someone had recommended me to sign up for the school newspaper the next year. Andy Sorensen – my high school journalism teacher – changed my life. He got me more interested in working with people instead of equations. Mr. Sorensen always pushed me to pursue the best story, even if it exposed the school board wasting millions of dollars. (Like any good journalist, he probably wishes my lede was shorter.)

I chose UCLA as an undergrad in large part because of its outstanding newspaper, the Daily Bruin. Balancing classes with a nearly full time job as a reporter was always a challenge. By the end of my third year, I wasn't sure if I wanted to stick with news. My job relied on others being incompetent so I would have something to write about. I think J.P. Hoornstra was the first to see me as a potential teacher: "I can see you being one of those profs where when students look up and see they got Professor Grand they first say oh no, but it turns out he's actually a really cool prof." I'd never actually thought of myself as a teacher before, but the idea grew on me over the summer.

When I started graduate school at UCLA, I wasn't really committed to being a sociologist of news. The reason I chose sociology instead of political science was because I didn't fully know what I wanted to study. It was only after talking with some of the people in my first year cohort – Shawn Halbert, Iddo Tavory, Erika Lamoureaux,, Kate Choi, Esther Friedman, Marisa Pineau and Rocio Rosales – that I realized I could make a major contribution by building on my experience as a journalist. Everyone wants to know why news organizations cover certain stories

and not others, why they include certain ideas and not others. But most academic theories were so far removed from the actual decision-making processes I was familiar with as a journalist.

I felt like I had a ton of great ideas. I think every academic feels this way. But all of our "great ideas" are worthless without people who can help us make sure the rest of the world has a clue what we are talking about. Throughout my time at UCLA, my adviser Steven Clayman has played that critical role in my life. Steve understood a generation of largely qualitative research and knew how quantifying some of the patterns that others described could be a major accomplishment. He always pushed me to keep things simpler, like a good editor should. At the same time, Steve gave me as much space as I needed to develop as an independent scholar – a luxury not all graduate students receive.

I actually applied to PhD programs as an ethnographer – having only taken one course in math or statistics since 9th grade. I decided to put off taking statistics my first year to focus on more substantive coursework. When I got the idea for a quantitative master's thesis, I knew I would need a second committee member who could help me build an efficient path to learn stats from scratch, like the Romans built their highways. Gabriel Rossman was a perfect fit, knowing the most efficient ways to study cultural industries. Gabriel pushed me to think about how news organizations may be like other organizations competing in an uncertain marketplace – a definite advantage for me as I tried to study some of the changes in political media content.

Studying media and news is a very small niche in sociology. The American Sociological Association has a section for Animals and Society, but not Media and Society. To survive as a "media sociologist" requires the sage wisdom of a veteran scholar who is interested in the media but does not study it. William Roy played that critical outsider role on my committee. Bill's

emphasis on starting with the big picture and then thinking about which details would help fill that picture became the cornerstone of my teaching philosophy.

Every dissertation committee requires an "outside" member from a different department. I don't think either of us knew what we were getting in to when I first asked Tim Groeling to be on my dissertation committee. "Outside" members are often a formality, but calling Tim an "outside" member feels like a misnomer. I would not have been able to afford staying at UCLA without Tim's banana stand. I think we bonded as much over quoting TV comedies as quoting research articles. We may have weirded out a few of our honors students when we went back and forth with Simpsons quotes for the first ten minutes of a meeting, but it was worth it. RAing for you became an excellent class in how to manage people.

Other sociologists may look at the background of my committee as the first line of a joke: "A conversation analyst, a quant and a comparative-historical researcher walk in to a bar…" My dissertation would not have been possible without four professors who were willing to set aside some of the core divisions among social scientists and work together on my dissertation committee. I chose UCLA over other top sociology departments because I thought UCLA would give me the best chance to work with a wide range of faculty who would give me a chance to try and develop my own line of research. I have always felt grateful for the opportunity. Other people at UCLA probably recognize what a rare opportunity I have – and I'm not sure I can fully put it in to words for any readers who are not academics.

Graduate school puts many students in an odd position. We are evaluated (and eventually hired) primarily on our ability as researchers. It was Isaac Speer who first got me to think about teaching as something I could enjoy, and not just something I had to do in order to pay the bills. Our first teaching assignment together was one of the more stressful, but over the years we

bonded through our common desire to see students get the most out of our classes. Later on, I bonded with Corey O'Malley and Pat Reilly through our discussions of teaching. It is so rare to have conversations about how to be an effective teacher and compare different styles. I'm sure our students have benefitted from our friendship.

One of the great pleasures of my graduate school career was the opportunity to exchange ideas with a groups of friends who I met through sociology. I remember David Cort saying he stuck around campus even as he was writing his dissertation, because he wanted to leave the department a better place. By sharing a department with people like Anthony Alvarez, Anthony Ocampo, Jooyoung Lee, Wes Hiers, Dwight Davis, Yana Kucheva, Kjerstin Gruys, Tara McKay, Anup Sheth, Isaac Speer, Corey O'Malley, John O'Brien, Gustav Brown and Marie Berry, I think we carried that legacy forward for the next generation. I also want to commend our graduate counselor, Wendy Fujinami, whose tireless work holds the department together a bit like Teemu Selanne held the Anaheim Ducks together.

As a huge sports fan, I always like trying to use sports metaphors as a way to explain difficult concepts. My students enjoy me talking about my horrific free throw shooting to explain small sample sizes. But few concepts are as difficult to explain as peer review. Every scholar has a horror story about an unsympathetic "Reviewer #2" (unless they get a wise and dedicated editor like Tim Dowd.). Maybe the best way to explain it is like calling balls and strikes: every academic sees the strike zone differently. It is easy for young scholars to get mixed up. We can forget that there is another strike zone, based on what kind of relevance our research has for people outside of academia. Thankfully, I've got a great friend outside of academia, Gilbert Quinonez, who can help me locate a strike zone based on common sense. A brilliant and pragmatic editor, Gil is always there to give me perspective when some obnoxious reviewer is

throwing an eephus and claiming it's a fastball. As dedicated fans of the less popular team in our city, Gil and I are united in our continual hope to root for the underdog, despite our rational side telling us that we're crazy. After all, UCLA baseball won it all in 2013 after being declared the worst team to make the College World Series.

Last and most importantly, I want to thank my parents and grandparents for all of their support during the trials and tribulations of graduate school. Sometimes the support was financial. A dirty secret of PhD programs is most people finish with tens of thousands of dollars of debt, or they get family support that is never acknowledged. I know how fortunate I was to get support from my family. Of course, the love and emotional support was even more important. For most of the time I was in graduate school, my mom was too, getting her PhD in English. We understood how important it was to support each other. Academics are socialized to see the glass as half empty, even if it is 90 percent full. My family told me the glass is 90 percent full – even in the times when it wasn't.

As I was finishing up my dissertation, I read a column somewhere on the Internet where the author tried to justify why people were doing something stupid by arguing "this isn't about wisdom, it's about disrespect." The author's argument was very popular. As I read that quote over and over again on social media, I have never been more thankful to be raised in a family that always sought out wisdom and encouraged me to do the same. Whether that wisdom comes from academia or religion, English literature or computer programming, it doesn't matter. The pursuit of wisdom and the continual self-improvement that comes with it were the most important lessons I brought in to my graduate career, and I have my parents to thank.

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Chapter 1: Patterns in Political Media as Emergent Phenomena

Few if any scholars would argue that news coverage is a perfect, compete and unbiased record of what was happening at a particular place and time. One problem is that the "most important" news stories of the day are often debatable. Even in the simpler era of the 1970s, reporters struggled to define newsworthiness beyond "you know it when you see it" (Fishman 1980; Gans 1979; Tuchman 1973). Today's reporters, pundits and bloggers are all bombarded with demands from a wide range of potential news sources. Veteran campaigns may send hundreds of emails in a day. Choosing stories is difficult because news organizations have multiple goals: filling their quota for news and attracting an audience. It is difficult to know on a day-to-day basis which news stories will be the best at attracting an audience, since the news is predicated on a series of new and often unexpected events. Organizational theories like Meyer and Rowan (1977) described the need to fulfill goals with no clear standard of excellence or path to success as high goal ambiguity. As they would predict, journalists have turned to various rituals to choose news stories, largely based on the logistics of news production.

Organizational theories have grown more common in the sociology of entertainment culture, but they are less common in studies of news and political culture. Goal ambiguity and related concepts about organizational behavior such as organizational fields are commonly used to explain music (Anand and Peterson 2000; Peterson and Berger 1975) and television (cf Bielby and Bielby 1994). Outside of the 1970s wave of newsroom ethnographies, scholars have typically treated news differently than other cultural production because of the important role an independent news media could play in a well functioning democracy. News coverage is one of the main ways for people to learn about the public actions of the state. News is also one of the main ways that people learn about social problems (Downs 1972; Gans 2003; Hunt 1999). A

large volume of media coverage could help define behavior as a social problem (Adut 2008; Saguy and Almeling 2008). It is possible to combine an interest in the implications of news content with the production of culture school, but it is often harder than it appears to be.

Peterson and many of his colleagues in the production school argue in favor of treating culture "as a widget." They treat records and movies like other mass industrial products instead of interpreting their meaning. It is hard to imagine studying news content without considering things like the balance of opinion in a news story or valence or framing. News content has an impact on our society largely because it can carry these meanings to the audience. If journalists emphasize or *over*emphasize certain ideas, they may define social problems (Benson and Saguy 2005; Downs 1972; Entman 1993, 2004; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Hunt 1999). Omission from the news helps us to understand how and why certain points of view are marginalized in public debates (Bennett 1990; Benson 2009; Croteau and Hoynes 1994; Gitlin 1980; Hallin 1986). We know journalists have a wide range of normative, aesthetic and professional preferences about what is ideal for news content. We also know journalists' decisions are heavily constrained by organizational needs, limited cognition and technology. Can these two competing perspectives be placed in a common theoretical framework? What kinds of options do journalists have, and how do they tend to use their discretion?

A good metaphor is a card game. Card players may have preferred strategies when they sit down to play. Then they get dealt their cards. Some players will continue their original strategy, even if the cards are not in their favor. However, most players will adjust their strategies to account for the hand they got dealt. They will also study the dealer, to try and understand which cards are likely to show up in the future. Journalists are a bit like card players. They may have agendas, but they cannot turn these agendas in to news stories without

collaboration with some source. Most theories of journalistic inclusion and exclusion focus on this step of the production process. The card playing metaphor is helpful because it also describes the next step in the process of journalistic discretion. News sources are like dealers – they provide journalists with their hand. Journalists can only play the cards they get dealt, but they may have wide latitude in how they play these cards. Some journalists may have a strong preference for the "gaffe" card instead of the "policy" card, but they can only write about a gaffe if a source makes a mistake. My dissertation will focus primarily on this last step of the production process: journalists and new media writers have already been "dealt" a certain range of stories, quotes and meanings, but which will they choose to write about?

In an era with more and more media organizations, some may have wildly different strategies for playing the same "hand." I argue one of the main things that unifies traditional and new media organizations is the need to create some kind of organizational routines and cognitive schemas to handle working in highly ambiguous situations. As media diversifies, there are more benefits to studying journalistic preferences as a series of if : then statements. We would expect a group of related media producers to share cognitive frameworks for making sense of the information around them and deriving meaning (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). In particular, media producers need a way to interpret and react to the behavior of sources, who are often self serving. In this dissertation, I will argue that many patterns in the news are emergent phenomena (Schelling 1978), based on the dynamic chaos of finding news. These patterns are real. They can have important consequences for the audience's understanding of current events. But they are often the unintended consequence of how individual newsmakers seek media attention and how journalists interpret these actions.

2. Explaining Patterns in News Content

While older theories of journalism examined "press-state relations" by debating whether or not journalists had *any* independent influence on the news, I will argue for a middle ground. Everyone who studies journalism acknowledges there are more potential stories and potential perspectives to include in each story than space and time to write everything. Some theories argue journalists play a critical role in resolving these ambiguities, based on a wide range of normative and professional preferences. Other theories argue journalists are largely beholden to the elites who act as news sources, funneling them information. I will argue the back-and-forth "who is in control?" debate is an oversimplification that obscures how people can use their discretion when writing about politics. Journalists and partisan bloggers are constrained, because they rely on others to provide information. However, there is always a surplus of information, which gives writers the opportunity to make choices and impose various preferences. Journalists often derive meaning from *how politicians deliver information and create the range of options for journalists to choose from*, not just the "substance" of what politicians say. These preferences – which often operate at the organizational or micro levels – have wide-ranging unintended consequences for the macro patterns of news content.

2.1: Active, Reactive and Situational Theories of Journalistic Influence

To understand the novelty and complexity of what I propose, it is important to start by reviewing other theories that portray journalists as essentially "active" or essentially "reactive." At the extreme end, some scholars portray journalistic norms as universal and always active. For example, journalists may be more interpretive and less willing to quote a source at length, regardless of what that source said. Patterson (1994) argues increased journalistic power is a concern, because journalists are "interfering" with the relationship between politicians and

4

voters. Aggression or distrust of certain sources may also follow this always-active pattern, because they argue journalists have some core set of professional values they apply in every situation. For other scholars, the main thing we should be concerned about is a *lack* of independent, aggressive reporting in cases like the Vietnam War (Entman 1989) and the Abu Ghraib prisoner scandal (Bennett, Lawrence and Livingston 2006). In older theories of "press-state relations," we would classify these positions as all the way on the "reactive" end: journalists "index" to the range of opinions held by elites (Bennett 1990, see also Hallin 1986) instead of exerting independent power.

Before moving on, it is important to note that labeling journalists as "reactive" has a very specific meaning in this academic debate about political journalism. Drawing from theories like Hallin's "three zones," labeling journalists as reactive is largely synonymous with labeling them as passive or impotent. It means deference to political elites. In everyday life, reaction is not synonymous with passivity, impotence or deference. Judo is a martial art based on reacting to an opponent's movements and using their motion against them. Schelling argues people reacting to the world immediately around them can create large-scale patterns of housing segregation. The everyday definition of being reactive is somewhere in between the extremes presented in prior theories of "press-state relations." One of the main challenges for some readers will be to set aside the specific definition of journalistic reactivity found in the indexing literature. To help distinguish, I will refer to the more everyday concept of responding to others' activities as a "situational" kind of journalistic power.

The metaphor of journalists as watchdogs is instructive here, because a good watchdog does not bark 24 hours a day to assert itself. Well-trained watchdogs bark when there is an intruder. They react to their surroundings. Micro studies of journalistic behavior – both

ethnographies (cf Fishman 1980; Klinenberg 2005) and conversation analysis (cf Clayman and Heritage 2002a) – show that journalists consistently have to adjust to the behavior of sources. On an organizational level, we know that a lot of what journalists do is respond to the uncertain flow of events, deciding some occurrences, people and ideas are worth publishing while others are not. Journalists cannot fill pages or broadcasts by themselves. They need collaboration with sources seeking media attention. We know that using power on a micro level, like holding politicians "accountable" for their responses, is largely a response to the politician's behavior during the interaction (Clayman 1990, 2002; Clayman and Heritage 2002b).

Choosing from a constrained range of options is a very different image of journalistic power than most theories of how journalists assert themselves. However, it is important to remember that the ability to choose how to respond is still a way of exerting influence. Think about the relationship between reporters and sources. Without sources, reporters would have nothing to report. Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein did not "discover" the Watergate scandal on their own; they found sources who told them about Watergate (Epstein 1975). Some scholars may end here, saying sources have the upper hand because reporters lack unilateral power. I argue Woodward, Bernstein and any other reporter still have a form of gatekeeping power based on whether they pursue sources' claims and ultimately put them in news stories. Will someone alleging a massive cover up be believed? Will elected officials? Will sources providing less controversial information be deemed interesting enough for publication?

Journalists face these kinds of ambiguous situations every day, because there are more potential things to write about and perspectives to include than will fit in the newshole. Every potential story and each perspective on that story presents a unique set of attributes that makes them more or less worthy of inclusion. No writer for a large media organization has the time to

sort through all the possibilities and make the optimal decision. They have deadlines. Writers learn various rituals for how to process the flood of information in order to satisfy their bosses (Epstein 1973; Fishman 1980; Klinenberg 2005; Tuchman 1973) and the audience (Tuchman 1972). Thinking about journalists' decisions as rituals and sensemaking schemas helps to distinguish situational theories from always-active theories of journalistic norms. Hallin and Patterson exemplify the active approach with their argument that journalists break up quotes to add their own interpretations because journalists have grown less trusting of politicians since Watergate. Tuchman exemplifies the situational approach, showing that journalists read through interview notes and then place the most controversial opinions in quotation marks as a say to distance themselves from potential criticism.

Situational theories acknowledge an important limit on a media organization's ability to set the agenda: it is very hard to create an agenda from thin air. Media organizations can create polls and pursue investigations, but these are both expensive and time-consuming. Reporters can certainly receive a politician's agenda and then challenge it. They can ignore events completely, give a "reasonable" amount of coverage, or give an "unreasonable" amount. All of these decisions are reactions to someone else's proposed agenda. Even when a live news interview begins with an accountability question, the interviewer is basing the question on an agenda the interviewee proposed during a prior public event. Consider the alternative – an interviewer with a strong agenda might try to impose the same agenda and questions on every interviewee, regardless of the context.

I argue the situational approach has considerable value in an era of new media, because every writer is faced with a similar flood of potential things to write about. If we think of active journalistic norms, many new media organizations appear completely different. How well can we

compare the aggressiveness of a modern journalist at a legacy media organization to a host on Fox News or a blogger on the *Daily Kos*? Partisan media appears to be on a completely different continuum, prompting some scholars to write entire books just to describe the genre's norms (Berry and Sobieraj 2013). Situational approaches have an advantage, because they look at writer's decision-making as a set of if : then statements. There is an input and output logic. We can think of various events in the world, speakers seeking media attention, and different viewpoints as inputs. We can gather a common set of inputs. Then we can see how partisan websites and other new media companies react to these inputs, and whether they respond differently than their legacy media counterparts. Normative approaches may treat partisan media as something completely different. Situational approaches see every kind of media organization as trying to solve the basic question – how can we pick and choose the best stories from an overwhelming range of options – even if some media organizations have different goals and target a different segment of the audience.

2.2: Illustrating Active, Reactive and Situational Approaches With a Simple Pattern

When Ronald Reagan held a press conference, ABC's *World News Tonight* dedicated an average of 542 words of coverage, out of approximately 6500 words in the hour-long broadcast. By George W. Bush's first term, the average shrunk to 266 words. This is as simple as a media comparison can make: one legacy media organization, Republican presidents, and only focused on the volume of coverage. It is still deceptively difficult to explain *why* this pattern exists just by comparing media content and interpreting the differences, the most common method for people describing "active" changes in journalistic norms. ABC's declining coverage could reflect broader changes in the journalistic field (Benson 2006), such as an economic incentive for features and soft news (Hamilton 2004). ABC may have partisan biases (cf Groeling 2008;

8

Groseclose and Milyo 2005) or have changed their news gathering routines while incorporating

new technology (Epstein 1973; Gans 1979). Reactive theories would emphasize journalistic

deference to political power (Bennett, Lawrence and Livingston 2006), particularly when

presidents deploy culturally resonant "frames" of discourse (Entman 2004), but the argument is

otherwise very similar to the active theories of journalists imposing norms. Some of these

theories may be more plausible than others, but it is hard to build an argument from such a

superficial comparison.

One of the best ways to parse competing explanations for media content would be to

gather some data outside of the content, such as an independent set of news events that

journalists have to choose from. Political scientists have increasingly used exogenous data points

to study partisan bias. For example, Groeling (2008) used regular public opinion polls to test

whether television networks were more likely to report on rising or falling opinion or whether

they were biased towards a particular party. Sociologists have used this method occasionally to

study media content (Oliver and Maney 2000; Saguy and Almeling 2008). Using the logic of

before and after to infer some causal theory is much more common with regression models than

content analysis, which tend to rely on descriptive statistics and simple comparisons like t-tests.

The Millian logic of similarity and difference, which is the foundation of many comparative-

historical methods to sociology, is rarely seen in media sociology.

Adding the underlying source material does more than help to adjudicate alternative

theoretical explanations; it fundamentally changes the theory of how journalistic preferences

could affect media content from active or reactive to a more situational and contingent theory.

Instead of assuming media organizations can impose any normative preferences they want, I

argue writers are usually forced to choose from a limited range of options. External reference

points let us know what political writers have to choose from. In the example of Reagan and Bush press conferences, we can look at the type of press conference. Reagan held solo press conferences in the White House, often in prime time. Bush held a number of joint press conferences outside the White House in his first term. As I explain in more detail in my first empirical chapter, news coverage is different because presidents produced different news events. ABC's volume of news coverage only dropped by 0.4 words per year, after controlling for other variables. One reason that journalists are changing their behavior is because sources are using more sophisticated strategies. In this case, journalists' responses to the changing behavior of presidents over time were a better explanation than journalistic norms that are "always active." However, more complex patterns in news content could be derived from both active and reactive decision-making, so it would be helpful to build a theoretical framework of situational decision-making that can incorporate both.

2.3: Creating a Situational Framework to More Complex Patterns in News

Comparing the volume of news coverage that two presidents receive is, of course, a very simple pattern. In most cases, we want to know about more complex patterns in media content. Receiving news coverage does not necessarily mean someone will receive *good* news coverage. How well do different studies focusing on more complex meanings and representations in media content map on to an active and reactive typology of describing journalistic influence? Theories explicitly mentioning bias or fitting in to the political communication literature tend to fit clearly. Hallin and Patterson's theory of increased aggression is an active theory, as is Groseclose and Milyo's (2005) study of partisan bias and Niven's (2001) study arguing journalists care more about negativity than partisanship with regards to news about the economy. Other approaches provide groundwork for a situational approach, explicitly comparing how different journalists

10

react to a common set of events. For example, Groeling (2008) compares different television networks and when they decided to broadcast a story about a change in presidential approval ratings. Groeling's work suggests a situational approach can be used to examine basic issues of presentation bias (positive and negative representations), but is better geared towards selection bias (see also Groeling 2010, 2013).

Framing and other theories based on cultural resonance are much harder to map on to my active and reactive typology, because cultural resonance could work both ways. In *Frame Analysis*, Goffman (1974) described frames as a classification schema for interpreting the world around us. Reporters could apply this classification schema at any point in the production process. Entman's "cascading activation" model (2004) implies these schemas are always on, because people are attuned to culturally resonant messages. Many sociologists make similar arguments. Because reporters are part of a society with particular norms and cultural practices, they will apply their culture to the news (Benson 2006; Benson and Saguy 2005; Lamont and Thevenot 2000). On the other hand, issues of culture and inequality may be most salient at particular points of ambiguity in the news production process. Hunt (1999) argues that in the OJ Simpson case, reporters resolved the ambiguity of how to portray Simpson by drawing on established scripts of race and criminality in America.

Hunt's study is a potential exemplar for future studies in this area, because he shows how sources played a major role in creating the racialized frames that mainstream reporters put in their news stories. Reporters may have started out more sympathetic to sources critical of OJ Simpson than who criticized the way the Los Angeles Police Department treated non-white suspects. However, they also reacted more positively to the official police sources. This is why the if : then situational approach I described is so compelling. If we know sources produced a

racial injustice frame and reporters neglected to use it, we can specify how the selectivity of media organizations affects the portrayal of a social problem. If we see that reporters always pounce on a frame when it is available – such as any violence or property damage at a protest (Oliver and Maney 2000) – that's another sign of how reporters' preferences work. If reporters only pay attention to a perspective once it gains mainstream support – as Hallin (1986) found with Vietnam War protesters – we again get a more specific account of journalistic decision-making through their reactions. My if : then approach is better geared towards situations where there is a middle ground or subtle effect, because it is more amenable to probabilistic statements.

2.4: Inside the Newsroom

Scholars who have observed the process of producing news at any level, from comparative ethnographies (Epstein 1973; Gans 1979) to conversation analysis of daily "budget" meetings to choose stories (Clayman and Reisner 1998), have found that reporters' preferences differ from the audience. For example, both Epstein (1973) and Tuchman (1973) argued that reporters begin sorting through potential stories by thinking about how difficult it would be to complete that story before deadline. Reporters prefer official sources as a cognitive heuristic, because they have no way of independently knowing which sources are credible (Fishman 1980). Instead of seeing journalists as ideological, the 1970s newsroom ethnographies described journalists like other workers operating in highly complex and ambiguous fields (cf DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Meyer and Rowan 1977). The audience probably doesn't care which stories are easier or harder for journalists to produce. Audiences just want some combination of information and entertainment. Readers define "newsworthiness" based on appealing headlines and lede paragraphs. However, news organizations define "newsworthiness" based on a

combination of the events in the world and the logistical difficulty of producing a news story regarding an event by a specific deadline.

Because news routine theories were based on the limited technology of the 1970s, their insights may be somewhat overlooked today. The sociologists who studied news in the 1970s paralleled Peterson's emerging production of culture school, focusing on the social processes of news production. Studies emphasizing rituals – like Tuchman's seminal work on objectivity (1972) – echo early theories of institutionalism within organizational theory. Unfortunately, the newsroom ethnography wave ended before production of culture and institutionalism were well-established traditions. Since the theoretical contribution of news routines was ahead of its time, authors often grounded their specific empirical findings in the limited technology of the 1970s. As technology improved, it was easy to dismiss the news routines literature as dated. It is easy to think about how reporters could now publish news at 2 AM if they wanted to, so news routines and their technological limitations should no longer apply. However, a news routines scholar would remind us that journalists and sources would probably prefer to avoid the disruption of 2 AM news, even if it is technically feasible.

Even as technology improves, subsequent newsroom ethnographies have still found a production process defined by managing the ambiguities and uncertainties of news. Digital technology solved some problems of quickly producing stories from remote locations, but created new problems of constantly monitoring competing media organizations to copy their stories (Boczkowski 2010). Increased emphasis on profitability and conglomeration under one corporate umbrella changes how news organizations allocate resources. They dedicate more attention to affluent parts of the city, focusing on stories that appeal to the audiences most sought by advertisers (Kaniss 1991). Crime and the courts receive disproportionate coverage because

they require little labor (Klinenberg 2005). All of these strategies fall under the news routines rubric: news organizations develop some way to quickly make sense of the mass of stories in the world, so they can efficiently allocate reporters. Tuchman and Fishman's emphasis on sensemaking, ambiguity and ritual should still apply. They should even apply to new media organizations. Every media organization needs some way of finding information. They need some criteria for deciding which sources of information are the most credible when they cannot independently verify information. We'd just expect new media organizations to provide different answers to these questions – particularly if they are explicitly partisan.

Along with studying the newsroom itself, there has been a move towards studying the way that journalists interact with sources. Journalists and sources need to collaborate to produce news, but the terms of collaboration are always subject to negotiation through interaction. Journalists and sources frequently contest the news agenda (McCombs and Shaw 1972), but the balance of power approaches inspired by McCombs and Shaw often overlook the fact that news is based on interviews. Interviewing helps reporters find information and meet restrictive deadlines, because it is more time efficient than direct observation (Epstein 1973; Fishman 1980; Gans 1979; Klinenberg 2005). However, reporters often rely on interviews even when they could give their own first person accounts (Livingston and Bennett 2003).

During interviews, both the interviewer and interviewee have a wide variety of tools to influence the interaction (Clayman and Heritage 2002a). Interviews are a form of professional talk, where interviewers are supposed to ask questions and interviewees answer them. People may not think about these norms as long as they are followed. However, any deviation from the norm is "inferentially rich" – it is a notable deviation (Heritage 1984). Such deviations often need to be explained. Reporters often follow up on these questions, as part of a broader move to

try and hold politicians accountable for their actions (Clayman 1990, 2002). Subsequent studies have examined how social structure can influence journalists' questions (Clayman et al 2007) or interviews with non-officials (Montgomery 1999, 2007).

Computer-mediated interaction plays an increasingly important role in political communication, but face-to-face interaction and news interviews are often an important foundation for what happens online. Consider this case from the 2008 general election. A week after Sarah Palin received widespread attention during the Republican National Convention for her brand as a maverick reformer, Obama said Palin's branding is like "putting lipstick on a pig." The phrase became one of the most commonly used phrases online during the 2008 election cycle (Leskovec, Backstrom and Kleinberg 2009). Pundits, bloggers and traditional election reporters all debated whether Obama made a mistake and whether he was being sexist. The debates were computer-mediated interactions, but the foundation was a face-to-face interaction at a campaign rally. As social media makes it easier for people to share video, the specific micro behaviors in news interviews may actually play a *larger* role in political communication.

3: Media Patterns as Emergent Phenomena

Similar to theorists like Bennett, Entman and Benson, I argue it is important to study patterns in media content as a large-scale social system. Unlike these macro theories, I argue that the large-scale system of journalism is best understood through examining its component parts. We know that American journalists see potential news stories differently, because they have to produce news on a regular basis. Professional norms may explain certain aesthetic preferences like an enthusiasm for "gotcha" questions (Patterson 1994). On the other hand, many of the reactions that media producers have come from the ambiguities of needing to produce a certain volume of news every day, with no clear standard about which sources are credible and which

15

stories are the most important for publication. Every potential story could be a unique snowflake, but this quickly gets overwhelming. Large-scale producers of news and political commentary need more systematic ways to organize new information to resolve ambiguities, similar to other large-scale producers of cultural content (Anand and Peterson 2000; Bielby and Bielby 1994).

Drawing from Schelling's Nobel Prize winning theory (1978), I propose that many patterns in political media content emerge from the largely uncoordinated actions of individual journalists and new media writers. His theory helps us to explain how the even the improvisational nature of conducting interviews and writing stories could result in stable patterns of media content. Schelling describes many examples of emergent systems, but one of the most intuitive examples is a traffic pattern. When we get in our cars, there are various rules that we follow. Some rules, such as following stop signs, are encoded into law. We would expect to see more cars stopped in front of a stop sign than halfway in between stop signs. People prefer to drive on roads, even in situations where we could drive off the road without hitting anything. Therefore, we would expect to see traffic patterns mirroring street layouts. A theory of traffic based solely on street layouts helps us to explain certain aspects of urban congestion, but let's think about highways. American interstates do not have stop signs, and they have multiple lanes to reduce congestion, yet we will still see significant congestion after an accident. We see traffic getting blocked even if there is no debris, and the accident is on the other side of the freeway!

We can get a better understanding of traffic congestion if we think a bit about how drivers decide how fast to drive. Drivers pay attention to legal prohibitions like stop signs, streetlights and speed limits (to a varying extent). However, drivers also pay attention to other drivers. Regardless of the posted legal speed limit, drivers will look for cues from other drivers around and calibrate their velocity accordingly. If everyone in front of us slows down, we don't

want to get in an accident, so we will slow down as well. Once we slow down, the people behind us slow down as well, potentially creating a chain reaction. "Rubbernecking" is based on this type of unintended chain reaction. One driver sees something in the road and slows down. Other drivers see the first decelerating driver and slow down as well. Individual drivers making decisions based on the actions of other drivers cause the traffic jam. Traffic jams are more common on surface streets as drivers have a wider range of objects to react to (intersections, stores and other destinations, pedestrians).

Traditional journalists are a bit different than the drivers in Schelling's example. There is a certain degree to which reporters copy each other (Boczkowski 2010), particularly in campaign coverage (Crouse 1973). However, journalists mainly respond to the actions of sources. Schelling argued social systems can emerge based on the "*system of interaction* between individuals and their environment" (1978: 14). Sources who regularly provide news, from campaigns that send hundreds of e-mails per day to police departments, are another part of the system. Reporters may have simple decision rules, like drivers, about which sources to prioritize. National level forces probably shape these rules, but they are also based on organizational requirements and micro level behaviors where a source establishes their credibility or calls it in to question via non-responsiveness (Clayman 1990). Journalism is a field where professional rules are easily shared, encouraging mentorship and on-the-job training. We would expect to see common frameworks for processing information spread through the field (cf DiMaggio and Powell 1983). These would lead to common patterns being repeated in news content, even without formal coordination.

One implication of emergence that is critical for understanding traditional media organizations is that any consistent behavior to fulfill organizational needs will lead to patterns in

news content. These patterns may be intentional, but they are often unintentional. For example, officials have major advantages getting their perspectives in the news. Some of this is because they are assumed to have privileged access to information, but some of this is because they have a large enough staff to make sure someone can answer the phone. Social movements may be at a disadvantage because they are seen as less legitimate (Croteau and Hoynes 1994; Gitlin 1980; Hallin 1984; Hunt 1999). However, movement organizations may also be at a disadvantage if they do not designate someone to speak for the movement and respond to media inquiries. Gitlin found this was a major problem with Students for a Democratic Society, and it appears to have hurt Occupy Wall Street as well. Reporters are used to speaking with individuals who are delegated with the power to speak for their office or organization. Organizations that do not have this structure will probably struggle to get media attention, regardless of the organization's other goals or values.

Emergence is probably strongest as a theory of media decision-making when thinking about issues like echo chambers. Partisan media organizations often take stances in relationship to mainstream media organizations and each other, along with reacting to sources. Partisan media organizations may want to point out how competitors operating in a different part of the political spectrum are biased. This is much easier when there is a specific action to point to as an example. Even when media organizations have a strong agenda, it may be easier to apply that agenda by reacting to the behavior of others in the system than creating stuff from thin air. Let's say Fox News wants to criticize Obama. It is easier to criticize him for something he did than to make up a hypothetical about what Obama might do. Of course, a media organization with a really strong agenda may look to impose it no matter what the others do. Fox News may seek out Obama statements as a way to transition to an established critique. The *Daily Kos* may seek out

Republicans' statements as a way to bash Republicans and promote their vision of social justice via critical outrage. In both cases, it is easier to develop an agenda by writing about the actions of others in the system than writing about stasis. Outrage is one of the main things that attracts audiences to partisan media (Berry and Sobieraj 2013).

4: Advantages of Emergence & Treating Media Producers' Power as Situational

The main advantage of applying a theory of emergence is it helps us to think about media content as the final step of a long and complex production process, while still being sensitive to earlier steps in the process. For scholars familiar with sociology's production of culture school, this will sound quite familiar. When someone is writing a story, they are responding to the world around them, interpreting various influences to derive meaning. Some of these influences are based on writers being a part of a specific society with a specific stratification structure. Other influences come from being part of an organization with a specific set of resources and goals. Writers also have to pay attention to the moment-by-moment behavior of others, to try and determine their veracity. My framework allows scholars to incorporate multiple levels of analysis in one study, as independent variables. It provides a way to explain how patterns in the news are unintended consequences, instead of reifying normative differences. In an era where the definition of "media organization" is broadening, my approach has a considerable advantage because it can put different types of media organizations in to a common if : then framework, based on how different media organizations respond to the same stimulus.

Macro-micro links are often easier to discuss in theory (cf Coleman 1986) than to put in to practice. Most studies of media content eschew the micro level entirely. This is particularly common in sociology today, as cultural sociologists rely on Bourdieusian field theory instead of an organizational approach. Clayman et al (2007, 2010) have made a great advance, showing

19

how macro changes in the economy and journalistic norms lead to changes in the questions they ask. At the same time, conversation analysis points to meaning construction that only occurs at the micro level, as interviewers try to hold politicians "accountable" for poor answers (Clayman and Heritage 2002a). Maybe there are other ways that journalists construct meaning as a response to politicians' actions. Sources' behavior at the micro (and organizational) levels could have an independent influence on journalists' decisions, including the final stories that journalists write. Most content analyses in sociology omit the actions of sources as an independent influence, possibly because they lack conceptual tools to put macro inequality and specific uses of power in to one coherent theory.[1] My dissertation can help provide these tools.

As I explained in an earlier section of this chapter, studies of media content based on if : then statements have major methodological advantages in explaining why a particular media organization exhibits a particular pattern in their content. Theorizing media organizations' power as an if : then proposition has considerable advantages in an age of new media, because we can find cases where a wide range of traditional and new media organizations are faced with the same "if" proposition. After a debate or major speech, every media organization from the *New York Times* to *Buzzfeed*, the large conservative blog Townhall.com to my tiny blog all have the same inputs. This makes it make easier to compare different outputs of news content. Analyses based on an if : then comparison can handle a wider range of independent variables instead of one or two *a priori* axes of comparison. Scholars could treat the *New York Times* content as one set of outcome variables, *Buzzfeed* content as another set, and so on, running the same regression model for each outcome. My novel approach to studying media content would allow sociologists to see if multiple types of media organizations share similar responses, such as paying greater

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[1] This problem appears to be heavily concentrated in cultural sociology, as opposed to political communication. Because political communication scholars have a long history of examining the balance of power between the state and the press, studies are more sensitive to the actions of political elites even if they do not explicitly focus on press-

attention to everything Barack Obama said during the 2008 election, or if only certain kinds of media organizations paid disproportionate attention to Obama.

5: Empirical Studies of the Dissertation

The bulk of this dissertation is three separate article-length studies, all based on the theoretical principles described in this introduction. Each study builds upon the advantages of thinking about journalistic power as a response to the uncertainties of producing news on a daily basis. Instead of assuming journalists impose a certain set of norms in every situation, or that they are powerless to respond to political elites, I assume journalists will be particularly sensitive to the contexts in which they receive new information. Even when confronted with limited options, reporters and bloggers will apply a set of if : then decision-making frameworks to separate the things they want to write about from the rest of the pack. Instead of thinking about political journalism as a balance of power with a winner and a loser, I will try to show empirically how each action by sources has a corresponding reaction. The final news content we read is a product of both the sources' decisions and how journalists respond to these decisions. To borrow from a fundamental principle of social network theory (cf Wasserman and Faust 1999), political media content is better understood as a byproduct of the relationship between sources and writers, instead of being treated as an attribute of a media organization.

The first two studies deal with mainstream media coverage of press conferences, while the third chapter compares the role of traditional and new media organizations in the spread of phrases across the blogosphere. I focus on presidential news, but in the concluding chapter I will outline implications of my findings for other potential sources seeking media attention.

5.1: Riding Journalistic Coattails

The second chapter of my dissertation examines the relationship between the organization of news events, journalists' determinations of newsworthiness, and a newsmaker's ability to dominate the opinions found in that coverage. Journalists have changed over time, but sources have as well. In particular, American presidents have grown far more sophisticated in their communications' strategies (Farnsworth 2009; Kernell 1986). If news coverage of the president changes, how much will journalists be responding to the specific actions of presidents instead of other normative change over time? I propose that deviation from the day-to-day routines of presenting information to journalists will be interpreted as signals of newsworthiness, independent of the actual things a newsmaker says. Additionally, I propose that when journalists receive a large amount of news from one source, they pay more attention to concerns over objectivity. Therefore, one source creating a large amount of news may create additional opportunities for other sources, as an unintentional consequence of journalists' adapting to the unfolding the news production process. These mechanisms show how the day-to-day organizational process of producing news can lead to broader patterns in the content of news stories, even if journalists' ability to find information is not constrained by technological limitations.

I use data from presidential press conferences and their subsequent coverage to test these hypotheses. Press conferences may be artificial news events (Boorstin 1971), but they allow us to best examine the effects of newsmakers' decisions about when and how to interact with reporters. Presidents can plan when to hold conferences and who gets to ask questions, but answers are improvised in a way that speeches are not. The emphasis on scheduling press conferences as a part of presidential communication strategy starts with Reagan (Kernell 1986),

so I examine press conferences from 1981-2009. I obtained transcripts of press conferences from archives maintained by the University of Michigan, Library of Congress, and presidential websites. Subsequent news coverage in the *New York Times* and ABC's *World News Tonight* were obtained through Lexis-Nexis. Using both print and television helps us identify robust patterns of behavior that are not idiosyncratic to one news format. The *New York Times* is used for print coverage because it has been a leader in national news coverage throughout the period of the study. ABC is the only network with intact records in Lexis-Nexis. Articles were obtained by searching the next newspaper or broadcast, using the president's last name and either "press conference" or "news conference" in the body of the article. These search criteria are best suited to finding all coverage originating from the *event*, while filtering out stories on similar issues originating from separate events.[2]

The first measure I use for change in news coverage is the number of words in *all* stories regarding the press conference. Sociologists typically treat news coverage as a dichotomous state (McCarthy, McPhail and Smith 1996; Oliver and Maney 2000). Because most presidential events receive coverage, a continuous variable is preferable. To measure whether a president's actions can give more opportunities to get in the news, we need to construct a measure of how much the president's opinions are featured in the news, relative to other sources. I operationalize this concept through measuring the proportion of the words of presidential quotes over the total number of quoted words attributed to sources. Journalists' statements and document names were excluded. Independent variables included aspects of press conference scheduling that presidents can change, such as whether to hold the conference in the White House, along with macro-level controls such partisanship and approval ratings.

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[2] Theoretically, some newsholes are opened by ongoing issues (Downs 1972) that precede and exist largely independently of presidential action. The search criteria used here allow us to distinguish between these two often overlapping newsholes and focus on the effects of newsmakers' activity.

5.2: To Quote or Not to Quote

Chapter 3 of the dissertation examines how the micro-interactional dynamics of news interviews could be a potential source of power and influence over news content. Political theorists have proposed that placing topics on the agenda for public debate – or keeping topics out of the agenda – is a form of power in and of itself (Lukes 1974). Political operatives talk about "controlling the message" as a primary goal. A month after the 2008 election, Obama campaign communications director Anita Dunn said "we would force the coverage to our campaign events, to the things the campaign did and we would not talk about anything else" (Jamieson 2009: 141). Staying on message is a dramatic departure from the norms of everyday conversation, where "answers" should correspond to questions (Clayman 2002a; Schegloff and Sacks 1973). I propose that controlling for the topics and substantive actions of political speech, such as explaining a policy or criticizing a political opponent, statements are disproportionately less likely to be quoted in the news when they violate this basic norm of social interaction.

Similar to chapter 2, I use presidential press conferences as a data set for this study. News interviews are notoriously difficult to study directly. Transcripts rarely exist. The presence of a researcher as a participant observer could alter the character of the interview. Press conferences are a rare case where the text of questions and answers are available verbatim. I selected four major solo press conferences in the White House, fitting a 2x2 table with president (Clinton or George W. Bush) and whether or not questions were relatively focused on a specific topic (national health care for Clinton, interrogation of prisoners for Bush).[3] Coding each statement, I developed a database of 1,743 statements. This database is large enough that it allows me to

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[3] While these topics are not the same, both press conferences were held after the president's policy was criticized by members of his own party, giving the conferences a similar tone.

compare meanings created through micro-interactional behavior versus substantive actions like criticizing political opponents via a common method.

While Chapter 2 used one newspaper and one television network, in this chapter I create an index for quotation in four newspapers: the New York Times, Washington Post, LA Times and USA Today. News coverage was obtained by searching the next day's newspaper for the president's name and "press conference" or "news conference" in either Lexis-Nexis or ProQuest, depending on the publisher. All four newspapers used similar criteria for quote selection, so the index adds robustness.[4] Television was excluded because clean sound bites are critical for the medium (see separate work by the author), while print reporters often "clean up" the unattractive parts of speech before putting it in the newspaper.

5.3: Blogging Through an Election

In 2008, some conservative pundits argued the media was "in the tank" for Obama, but it is unlikely that traditional journalists would add explicit pro-Obama slant to their coverage. One possibility is that the differences were mainly issues of selection bias. Mainstream media organizations might have been more likely to emphasize Obama's statements, or been more likely to repeat the same topics as leading liberal blogs. Leading conservative blogs may have been much more of an "echo chamber." I offer a novel way to test this folk wisdom based on an adaptation of the Memetracker database of 20,000 news organizations and nearly one million blogs. To begin with, I recoded the 1,000 largest "phrase clusters" of the Memetracker database by hand, separating out a wide range of ambiguities that machine learning continues to struggle with. I also coded what topic each phrase dealt with, such as the economy or race. I also coded who the initial speaker was, if there was a clear initial speaker. My new sample of 2,814 phrases

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[4] An index of newspapers would not add robustness in chapter 2, because the size of each paper's newshole is a confounding variable with coverage volume.

used from August 2008 through January 2009 gives a common database to compare selection biases across different types of media organizations.

The majority of my phrases were titles of cultural works (like pop songs) or common English language idioms. Most phrases could not be attributed to a specific politician. The breadth of my dataset allows me to ask novel questions about the relative salience of politics, as compared to other issues. Non-political phrases provide a valuable baseline. One possibility is that during an election, elite media organizations will care more about every political topic than every non-political topic. Smaller bloggers may care more about other topics. Prior studies of news content often start by selecting stories on a particular topic, to manage data collection and human coding. Because I am drawing from the Memetracker dataset, I have 1.27 million webpages.

Along with a descriptive analysis of various patterns, I use a novel way of comparing large traditional news organizations, leading partisan blogs and smaller media organizations via a series of negative binomial regression models. Each model uses the same dataset and independent variables, treating how frequently a particular group of media organizations repeated a particular phrase as the outcome variable. In practical terms, this means I constructed a set of "if Obama is the speaker, then we give this much attention" rules for each group of websites. These decision-making rules can be directly compared, either my comparing a group of websites' interest in Obama as compared to McCain or by comparing television networks' interest in Obama to large conservative blogs' interest in Obama. The wide range of comparisons should help to explain the structure of large partisan websites, in comparison to traditional media elites.

5.4: Conclusion

In Chapter 5, I try to outline some of the implications of my dissertation for future sociological studies of media content. Some of the implications are methodological, largely echoing what I have described in this introductory chapter. In an age of social media, people are quick to react to everything they see. Since most social media users have not studies how news gets produced, it is critical for those of us who study news to take the production process seriously. Fortunately, advances in data collection make it easier than ever before to gather a wide range of media content and compare how a wide range of journalists and new media writers behave in a wide range of situations. Better data will make it easier to tell how writers play a role in the social construction of problems and how much they respond to others' attempts to portray some aspect of social life as problematic. As I explain in Chapter 4, the range of "political writers" has broadened greatly. However, many people who publish blogs avoided politics. In the conclusion, I theorize how this avoidance may continue, and what effects it could have for public participation in the democratic process.

Chapter 2: Riding Journalistic Coattails:
How Presidents Create Newsmaking Opportunities for Political Opponents

1: Introduction

Sociological theories of access to American news often argue that newsmakers are largely atomized social actors competing with each other for scarce media attention. In this zero-sum game, journalists favor "mainstream" of political opinion while excluding outsiders (Bennett 1990; Entman and Rojecki 1993; Gitlin 1980; Hallin 1986). More recent studies find that social movement organizations can influence journalists' daily coverage decisions (McCarthy, McPhail and Smith 1996; Oliver and Maney 2000; Oliver and Myers 1999), suggesting other newsmakers could have power over journalists as well. Recent work has highlighted the wide range of viewpoints potentially found in news stories (Benson 2009; Ferree et al 2002; Gans 2003), but this research agenda has not been integrated with older studies of journalistic news routines. The limits on news coverage imply that the actions of one newsmaker would influence other newsmakers' access. However, because prior theory tends to treat each newsmaker seeking coverage as an atomized actor, we have a poor understanding of how newsmakers are interconnected and affect each other's ability to get into the news.

Examining the interconnection of actors is rare among sociologists who study news, but it is a common approach in the neo-institutionalist branch of organization theory. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that organizational fields are maintained through common identification of key actors and shared ways of understanding their environment. American political news has similar organizational characteristics, such as a hierarchy of sources led by Presidents of the United States being the most newsworthy and informal standards of what constitutes the "major" news of the day (Baum 2003; Groeling 2010; Hamilton 2004; Kernell 1986; Maltese 1992). In

other organizational fields of cultural production, the fame of actors and directors can "spill over," helping lesser known actors obtain Academy Award nominations (Rossman, Esparza and Bonacich 2010). An organizational approach, focused on field cognition and spillovers, gives us a new theoretical approach to examine the opinions found in news coverage. Could the specific actions of a powerful newsmaker actually help other sources gain news coverage for themselves as well?

If a powerful newsmaker could affect others' newsworthiness, we could gain new insight in a long-standing debate over how journalists selectively present information (Benson 2009; Gitlin 1980; Hallin 1986; Tuchman 1972). Scholars offer numerous explanations for news content, agreeing that inherent qualities of "newsworthiness" are insufficient explanations. The restrictive deadlines of news production (Epstein 1973; Fishman 1980; Gans 1979; Klinenberg 2005; Tuchman 1973) and meanings that journalists attach to news events based on their size and physical activity (McCarthy, McPhail and Smith 1996; Molotch and Lester 1975; Oliver and Maney 2000) have been used to explain why some events receive coverage while others do not. Scholars examining the balance of opinion found in news stories point to the balance of political power (Bennett 1990; Entman 2004; Gitlin 1980; Hallin 1986) or political economy and national culture (Altschull 1984; Benson 2006, 2009; Benson and Saguy 2005). Current studies suggest an unlikely paradox: organizational behavior and individual agency explain whether an event gets covered as news, but no one has examined whether they affect the concentration of opinion in those news stories. I propose the concentration of opinion in any political news story is largely an organizational phenomenon: powerful sources seeking major media attention will create what I call "journalistic coattails" – organizational incentives for journalists to seek out additional opinions in their stories.

To better understand how the actions of newsmakers could affect how their events are covered, I propose using press conferences as a data set. Conferences are created by newsmakers and may not be tied to more concrete political action (cf Boorstin 1971), making them a useful case for understanding how the creation and design of news events affects how those events are covered. Created news events – which increasingly dominate political news (Farnsworth 2009; Kernell 1986) – could create opportunities for other sources to get into the news because of journalists' norms of objectivity (Tuchman 1972) or a preference for conflict (Groeling 2010). Press conferences are methodologically useful, compared to other news events, because their scheduling has changed but the ritual character of presidents publicly responding to aggressive questions has endured (Clayman and Heritage 2002b; Clayman et al 2007; French 1982), enabling longitudinal comparisons.

Using data from the coverage of 105 presidential press conferences from 1981-2009, I will show that the way presidents design their events influences both journalists' decisions and the ability of other sources to get into the news. I find that presidents can create contexts that lead their press conferences to receive more or less news coverage in both the *New York Times* and ABC's *World News Tonight*. These event contexts affect other political actors as well. By creating a major news event, a president also creates more opportunities for others seeking news coverage. Once journalists determine an event is newsworthy, norms of objectivity and conflict are triggered. Journalists seek out more comments from other sources and dilute the president's dominant position. I attempt to use the case of presidential press conferences to argue that a group's ability to garner media attention is tied to the actions of others in the political news field, instead of being a purely dyadic relationship between a journalist and a source.

2: Day-to-Day Influence over Coverage?

To connect different theoretical questions that sociologists ask regarding news coverage, I will use both coverage volume and the president's monopoly over subsequent quotation as outcome measures. Most newsmakers struggle to get coverage, so coverage is often quantified as a yes or no question (McCarthy, McPhail and Smith 1996; Oliver and Maney 2000; Oliver and Myers 1999). By this logic, presidents would not be interesting, because even minor presidential events get coverage. However, the volume of coverage varies considerably from one presidential event to another (Farnsworth 2009; Kernell 1986), and is meaningful when treated as a continuous variable. To measure the degree to which other sources get into stories on presidential events and disrupt his monopoly over journalists' attention, I measure the proportion of presidential quotes to quotes from all sources in subsequent news coverage of a press conference. This proportion functions like a scale that tilts in favor of the president or other sources, and will be explained in more detail below.

2.1: Creating newsworthiness through event context

Newsroom ethnographies help us to understand how sources could affect the news production process, based on the context they create for specific events. Gans (1979) argued that potential stories are evaluated on the basis of "accessibility" and "suitability." Particularly in Gans' day, reporters were bound by organizational logistics, which made many events inaccessible for coverage (Epstein 1973; Fishman 1980; Gans 1979; Tuchman 1973). New technology has made it easier for journalists to cover events from remote locations (Livingston and Bennett 2003). However, news organizations may still prefer to cover events with cheap and simple logistics (Klinenberg 2005). By creating events that fall within journalists' preferred daily newsgathering routines, sources could increase the amount of coverage they receive.

Logistical considerations leave journalists with a large pool of potential stories, so they use additional meaning-based criteria to make decisions about which stories are "suitable" for coverage. By designing a different event context, presidents can convey a different set of meanings and influence journalists *before* they speak. In his memoir, Sam Donaldson describes Reagan's stagecraft in a trip to Korea, "enabling Reagan to look into North Korea with the cameras catching him just right. This scene made Reagan look strong and tough" and was featured in the nightly news (1987:124). Academic research has shown a different form of direct presidential influence over journalists' actions: joint press conferences held with another foreign leader cause more deferential questions (Banning and Billingsley 2007).

Most studies of presidential communication point to an indirect form of influence over journalists based on signaling and shared understanding of journalists' professional standards for determining newsworthiness. Presidents can signal a major event by scheduling it in Americans' primary TV watching time (8-11 PM) and directly addressing a national audience (Farnsworth 2009; Kernell 1986), drawing on a basic journalistic premise that events involving more people should get more coverage. Conversely, leaving Washington or holding a joint conference could suggest a narrower intended audience and diminish coverage.[5] Journalists prefer covering rare and novel events (Baum and Groeling 2010; Epstein 1973; Fishman 1980; Gans 1979; Klinenberg 2005). Press conferences are the only institutionalized setting where the president is publicly asked to respond to potentially hostile questions (Clayman and Heritage 2002b; Clayman et al 2007; French 1982), so conference rarity could influence coverage volume regardless of what gets said during the conference.

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[5] Kernell found that foreign travel often generates more news coverage, but this coverage often focuses on ceremony and strategy and not necessarily specific events like a press conference.

Hypothesis 1: When presidents create larger press conferences (by making them rare events or holding them in prime time), they will receive an increase in the total volume of subsequent news coverage. When presidents create lesser events (by increasing their frequency, leaving Washington or holding a joint press conference), they will receive less news coverage. Note that while presidents create the conditions that may affect the volume of coverage, they do not necessarily intend to influence coverage.

2.2: A Bull's Eye? Direct opportunities for other sources

Political news is an organizational field centered on a highly ambiguous concept of newsworthiness. Journalists need some working definition of newsworthiness before they can choose which stories to cover, but often struggle to define what makes an event "newsworthy" (Epstein 1973; Fishman 1980). Newsmakers also need a definition of newsworthiness to attract journalists' attention (Maltese 1992). When organizational fields are defined by this type of uncertainty, actors need to agree on a common set of information to coordinate their activities (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Cultural industries often face similar ambiguities, so they rely on field orienting information regimes (Anand and Peterson 2000) to coordinate their activities. The music industry uses SoundScan to count all music sales, while television executives and advertisers both agree to use Nielsen's ratings for counting TV viewership.

I propose that elite newsmakers establish their own kind of field orienting information regimes by creating logistical contexts for their news events, potentially affecting the actions of other sources. The logistical context of a president's event conveys fine-grained information about the likely newsworthiness of an event, based on the setting and direct audience, before the event occurs (Farnsworth 2009; Kernell 1986; Maltese 1992). Press conferences are usually scheduled days in advance, and reporters will often label a conference as "hasty" if arranged

within 24 hours. Presidential signals of impending newsworthy activities could reach other sources as well, leading them to prepare responses. Criticizing the president is a way for political actors to increase their exposure, particularly if those actors are from the president's party (Baum and Groeling 2010; Groeling 2010). By signaling a newsworthy event in advance, presidents could essentially create a bull's-eye on their backs and attract additional criticism, but this has yet to be systematically examined.

Hypothesis 2: When presidents create larger press conferences, they will receive a lower proportion of the total quoted words from sources in subsequent news coverage, relative to other events. When presidents create lesser events, they will receive a higher proportion of quotes.[6]

2.3: Journalistic Coattails? Indirect opportunities for other sources

Even if elites do not directly attract critics when holding major news events, they may indirectly give other sources greater access to the press. American journalists have strong normative preferences for connecting one newsmaker to another, whether they are ritually displaying an "objective" balance of opinion (Tuchman 1972) or emphasizing conflict as a way to gain attention (Baum and Groeling 2010; Epstein 1973; Gans 1979; Patterson 1993). Prior studies pose each journalistic norm as a broad historical trend based in American political culture. If journalists' norms of quotation are a way to manage the various suppliers of opinion while maintaining their legitimacy, the actions of one newsmaker could indirectly affect another, similar to an industrial production market (White 1981). Because presidents create a wide range of news events with varying qualities (Farnsworth 2009; Kernell 1986), the equilibrium of news sources could change on a daily basis. As Sigal (1973) argued, no one person makes the news on their own.

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[6] This seems unlikely with joint press conferences, but it is possible that the joint press conference signals a minor news event, causing journalists to care less about non-presidential quotes.

Journalists' determinations of newsworthiness are the most likely trigger for a change in how they do objectivity and write conflict narratives. Drawing from White's emphasis on change in production quality and the importance of prestige in cultural spillovers from Rossman, Esparza and Bonacich (2010), I argue news "spillovers" are more likely when a president is deemed to be highly newsworthy. Journalists' rituals of objectivity and preference for conflict are sensitive to the "quality" of a news event, expressed through an allocation of the newshole. Reporters may decide how much coverage to allocate to a presidential event, *and then* they decide how much of their stories should be allocated to other points of view (see Figure 2.1). When allocating large sections of the newshole, journalists will incorporate additional, less prestigious sources to stories, allowing them to construct a conflict narrative and deflect potential criticism by demonstrating objectivity. Conversely, journalists would include fewer secondary sources and may abandon this portion of their objectivity rituals completely when allocating small portions of the newshole. The range of secondary sources is constrained by logistics (Epstein 1973; Fishman 1980) and journalists' conceptions of who belongs in the field (Benson 2009).

Hypothesis 3: As journalists allocate more news coverage to a presidential press conference (measured in words), the proportion of presidential quotes to total quotes will decrease, meaning other sources have an easier time getting into the news.

Figure 2.1: Hypothesized Relationships Between Key Variables in Study
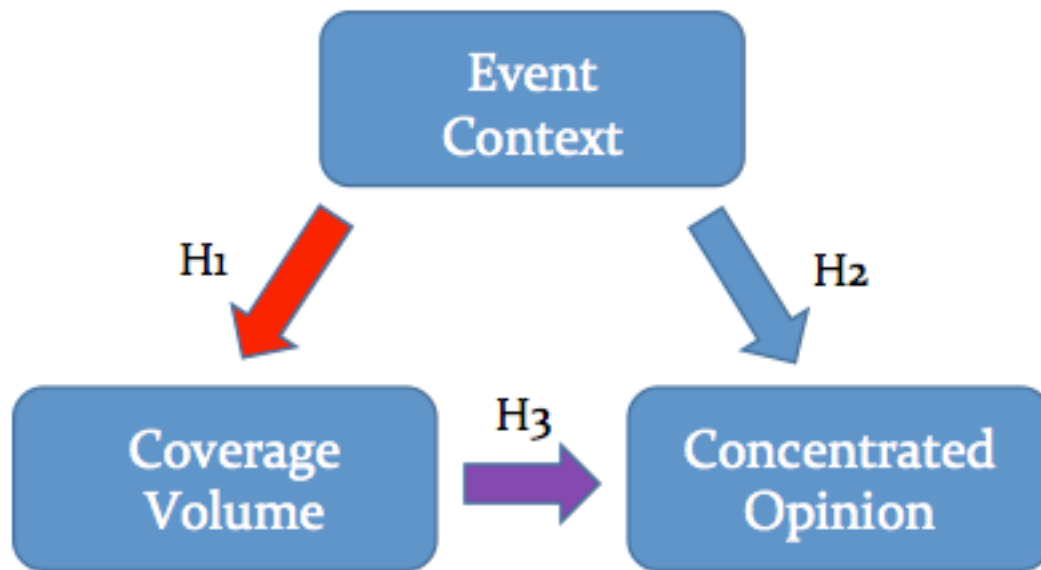
3: Data and Methods

3.1: The Empirical Case of Presidential Press Conferences

As many sociologists have noted, the amount of news coverage a potential newsmaker receives is influenced by their social position (Croteau and Hoynes 1994; Gitlin 1980; Oliver and Maney 2000). Combining these findings with the concept of spillovers in other cultural arenas (Rossman, Esparza and Bonacich 2010), I propose that an elite newsmaker can create additional opportunities for actors with less standing. Within American journalism, Presidents of the United States stand at the top of the newsworthiness hierarchy (Groeling 2010; Kernell 1986; Maltese 1992). Because of their standing, presidents can usually exercise considerable control over when and how they will be featured in the news and avoid the back-and-forth interaction with journalists that is the basis for most news stories (Farnsworth 2009; Epstein 1973; Kernell 1986). Press conferences are a rare case where presidents answer journalists' questions, drawing them closer to non-presidential events while maintaining their status as an elite-created event.

Planned news events like press conferences may seem artificial to critics like Boorstin (1971), but they increasingly define the field of political news. A month after the 2008 election, Obama campaign communications director Anita Dunn said "we would force the coverage to our campaign events, to the things the campaign did and we would not talk about anything else" (Jamieson 2009: 141). Reporters ultimately accepted the campaign's restrictions because they lacked alternatives. Press conferences are semi-controlled events, in that presidents can control the scheduling but need to improvise most of what they say. Sam Donaldson, notorious for his aggressive questioning, acknowledged presidents would prefer controlled events: "[Improvised] gaffes are not important, perhaps. Let's face it; every one of us does the same thing on occasion. But a president's staff is never satisfied to have the president's image projected in any way short of perfection" (Donaldson 1987: 118). Because conferences can unfold in unpredictable ways, any relationship between scheduling and news coverage is likely to be due to logistics and scheduling, not the lengthy speechwriting that precedes major speeches.

The emphasis on scheduling press conferences as a part of presidential communication strategy starts with Reagan (Kernell 1986). He upped the stakes in 1982 by moving to 8 PM to speak directly with voters instead of relying on news coverage, something prior administrations only did sparingly. Even Sam Donaldson lauded Reagan's ability to connect with the public during most of these interrogations. Years of successfully going public came to a screeching halt after Reagan struggled to explain covert U.S. arms sales to Iran in a widely viewed conference. Since Reagan, there has been significant variation in the logistical context of press conferences (Farnsworth 2009). George H. W. Bush took over half of his conferences outside Washington D.C., speaking to local or foreign audiences and only speaking indirectly to the national audience. Clinton began inviting foreign heads of state for joint press conferences, which largely

focused on foreign policy topics relevant to both leaders instead of domestic politics. Both of these scheduling innovations have been used frequently by subsequent presidents. Since Reagan took office, press conferences have been held in a wide variety of logistical contexts, providing the variation necessary for study.

3.2: Data Sources

To test my hypotheses, I utilize data from presidential press conferences and subsequent news coverage in the *New York Times* and ABC's *World News Tonight*. Due to delays in updating archives, several sources were necessary to compile a database of press conferences. For Reagan through Clinton, conferences are selected from the "Public Papers of the Presidents," an archive of all of a president's public statements maintained by the University of Michigan. This archive has proven reliable for prior research (Clayman et al 2006, 2007), which required more detail about the substance of press conferences than the current study. Press conferences for George W. Bush's first term were gathered through a similar archive maintained by the Library of Congress. Text of press conferences for his second term and Barack Obama's administration were obtained through their respective administration websites, because other archives were not up to date at the time of data collection.

For this study, I randomly sampled one press conference per quarter from January 1981 through June 2009.[7] While going back further in time could help us assess other broad changes in journalism, these earlier conferences lack variation in the independent variables. Starting in 1981 allows all news coverage can be taken from Lexis-Nexis. Random selection of one press conference per quarter leads to over-sampling, where a conference is more likely to be included in the sample if the president held fewer press conferences in that quarter. I do not weight the

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[7] Out of 114 quarters, there was no presidential press conference in nine. Five were the quarter of a presidential election. Reagan, who rarely held conferences, had three other quarters without a press conference. Bush did not hold one in the third quarter of 2005. No conference was chosen for these quarters.

results to control for this sampling bias, because the rarity of conferences is of substantive and theoretical interest as an independent variable.

Subsequent news coverage in the *New York Times* and ABC's *World News Tonight* were obtained through Lexis-Nexis. Using both print and television helps us identify robust patterns of behavior that are not idiosyncratic to one news organization. The *New York Times* is used for print coverage because it has been a leader in national news coverage throughout the period of the study. The research questions focus specifically on the White House Press Corps. The *Times* has regularly been used in the past by sociologists as a print leader in national news coverage (cf Benson and Saguy 2005; Myers and Caniglia 2004). *Times* articles were obtained by searching on the day following the press conference, using the president's last name and either "press conference" or "news conference" in the body of the article. These search criteria are best suited to finding all coverage originating from the *event*, while filtering out stories on similar issues originating from separate events.[8] Using only one newspaper may introduce a regional bias for local stories (Molotch and Lester 1975) or a bias based on the *Times'* large newshole. However, aggregating newspapers in a scale of "average print coverage" will not increase N and could inadvertently incorporate a wider range of other differences between newspapers (Benson 2009; Myers and Caniglia 2004).

ABC was used for network news coverage because it is the only network with transcripts in Lexis-Nexis for the entire period of study. Because television news stories may show viewers that the president is at a press conference without explicitly saying so in the story, I searched television archives under the president's last name as the only keyword and then manually checked presidential sound bites with the official transcripts to see if they came from the press

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[8] Theoretically, some newsholes are opened by ongoing issues (Downs 1972) that precede and exist largely independently of presidential action. The search criteria used here allow us to distinguish between these two often overlapping newsholes and focus on the effects of newsmakers' activity.

conference.[9] Stories were included if they explicitly mentioned the press conference or used a

sound bite that was made at the conference. Between its smaller newshole, emphasis on visuals

(Gans 1979; Klinenberg 2005) and short sound bites (Hallin 1992) we would expect differences

between print and TV. In this study, the goal is to find common behavior across two mainstream

news organizations, which could be expanded upon in future studies that incorporate a larger

number of news organizations.

3.3: Outcome Variables

The first measure I use for change in news coverage is the number of words in *all* stories

regarding the press conference. Sociologists typically treat news coverage as a dichotomous state

(McCarthy, McPhail and Smith 1996; Oliver and Maney 2000; Oliver and Myers 1999). Because

most presidential events receive coverage, a continuous variable is preferable. Press conferences

are often covered through multiple stories, but word counts allow a more precise measure than

stories for both print and TV. Presidential statements are occasionally included in a story on a

separate issue. For example, a story on the 1994 assassination of Luis Donaldo Coloiso – the

favorite in Mexico's upcoming presidential election – included a short statement from Clinton's

press conference (DePalma 1994). Because the presidential statement is a minor insertion in

these stories, only sentences describing the conference, the president's statements, other

statements that occur during the conference (i.e. a journalist's question), and all sentences

describing other sources' reactions to the president were included in the word count. Other

sentences were omitted. In most cases, the entire article was included.

To measure whether a president's actions can give more opportunities to get in the news,

we need to construct a measure of how much the president's opinions are featured in the news,

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[9] A random audit of *Times* coverage of 15 conferences using this method found a total of 55 stories. 50 of the 55 stories were found in my search criteria. Omissions were minor stories placed in the interior of the news section. This suggests my search method for the *Times* leads to a slight undercount of coverage volume.

relative to other sources. Prior scholars have constructed many measures to compare differential

treatment and diversity in news coverage (Bennett 1990; Benson 2009; Croteau and Hoynes

1994; Hallin 1986), but examining the opportunities for non-presidential sources as a group

requires a concentration measure. I operationalize this concept through measuring the proportion

of the words of presidential quotes over the total number of quoted words attributed to sources.

Journalists' statements and document names were excluded. All other material in quotation

marks was included in the count (22.73 percent of words in the *Times*, 22.86 percent of words in

ABC). Because different sources may be spread across multiple stories of varying lengths,

quoted words are totaled across all stories for the day before constructing the proportion. For

example, if the *Times* prints three stories the day after a conference, I add the quoted words

across the three stories before dividing.

The proportion of quotes is best conceptualized as a scale, with quoted words from the

president on one side and quoted words from other sources on the other side. A high proportion

means the scale tips towards the president, with a value of 1 indicating a presidential monopoly

on subsequent quotes. A proportion of 0.5 indicates a mathematical balance between presidential

quotes and other sources, although it does not mean equal prominence. Lower proportions mean

other sources get a higher volume of quotes than the president. On average, over 70 percent of

quoted words in this data set come from the president, for each news organization. Because we

are interested in the relative concentration of quotes, it is important to compare presidential

quotes to those from all other sources, not just the opposition party. [10] Monopolizing coverage

could end up hurting a president who makes embarrassing statements. Even in this case, the

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[10] The proportion of quotes is ideal for a study with a wide range of news events, because it has a similar
interpretation for any story. Framing (cf Benson and Saguy 2005; Entman 2004 for recent exemplars) is well suited
for comparison across a small number of substantive topics but not as an abstract, large-N measure of who gets into
the news across a wide range of substantive areas.

proportion of quotes would remain a valid measure of a president's ability to dominate coverage of his events, relative to other sources trying to use presidential events to get exposure for themselves and journalists' actions to add sources.

3.4: Independent Variables

I use four variables to operationalize different ways that presidents can affect subsequent news coverage through scheduling. To account for the frequency of press conferences, I construct a variable for the number of press conferences a president has held in the three months prior to the selected press conference (labeled *# of Prior Conf.* in the tables). This is chosen instead of the number of days since the last press conference, because prior literature on news routines (Fishman 1980; Gans 1979) suggests that journalists are influenced by regular contact with sources over a long period of time. To operationalize *evening press conferences* as larger events, I code for whether or not a press conference begins after 5 PM, giving more of a direct audience (Kernell 1986). Two ways of making a conference a lesser event are coded as separate dichotomous variables: holding the conference outside Washington D.C. (*Leave WH Conf.*) and holding a *joint press conference* with a foreign head of state. While the prestige of presidential travel and foreign heads of state can vary widely, I propose that any deviation from the solo White House conference would alter the questions asked and thus dampen the significance of a press conference (Banning and Billingsley 2007).

It is unrealistic to assume that the news coverage of events would be explained solely by the event contexts that political actors can control directly, so additional control variables are necessary. The most important of these is the *year of the press conference*. Prior historical studies of journalism described changes in news coverage (Hallin 1992; Patterson 1993), journalistic behavior (Clayman et al 2007) or presidents' attempts at managing journalists

(Farnsworth 2009; Maltese 1992). In this study, the year of the conference serves as the best available proxy for a wide range of changes in journalistic norms and the economic environment of newsrooms, all of which could have an independent effect on coverage. For ease of interpretation, the first year of the study (1981) is re-coded as 1, 1982 as 2, and so on.

To control for attention cycles in news coverage (Downs 1972), I use two separate variables. I operationalize attention cycles surrounding the president and his administration by counting the number of front page *New York Times* stories featuring the president in the two weeks prior to the conference (*# of Prior Stories*). The president's name and "president" or "administration" were used as search terms in Lexis-Nexis. Items only referring to another story on an inside page were omitted. To measure attention cycles surrounding issues, I coded the topic of each question in a press conference to find the most common topic, then constructed a variable "*question focus #*" to measure what percentage of questions were on that topic (1-100). The measure is intended to capture conferences where journalists ask largely overlapping questions, so issues are narrowly defined. For example, the resignation of a CIA director is treated as separate from food aid to the Soviet Union.

Because of the wide range of issues over 29 years of American politics, any proxy for attention cycles will be limited. To control for differences in conferences focusing more on foreign policy (Clayman et al 2007), I code for whether the issue most frequently asked about concerns foreign policy (*Question Focus: FP*) and whether a president's opening statement praises or criticizes a foreign actor (*Open: Foreign Pol.*). More detailed issue coding is problematic, given that conferences involve multiple issues, and beyond the scope of this study. Additionally, evasive responses often lead to journalists asking follow up questions (Clayman

and Heritage 2002a, 2002b), so question focus captures both journalists' attention on an issue and the president's willingness to answer those questions.

Six additional variables are used as controls. Whether or not the president is a *Democrat* is included to control for potential partisan bias (Groseclose and Milyo 2005). Since all but two of the Democrat conferences were held by Bill Clinton, any "partisan" effect may simply be a Clinton effect instead. Divided government is a proxy for potential elite opposition to a president (Bennett 1990). It is coded 0, 1 or 2 houses of Congress controlled by the opposition party (*Divided: Opp Houses*), and is treated as a categorical variable with unified government as the omitted category. Presidential election campaigns may be covered differently than other events (Patterson 1993). Campaigns are coded for whether the president is a candidate for *re-election* in the next 12 months, the president is not participating in the election (*Lame Duck*), with no upcoming election as the omitted category. To control for a potential honeymoon effect (Grossman and Kumar 1979), I code for whether a press conference is held within the *first year* of an administration.[11] Presidential *approval ratings* are controlled for using the most recently completed Gallup Poll. Finally, percent change in real dollars GDP over the past quarter (*GDP Growth*) is used to control for fluctuation in the state of the national economy.[12]

Table 2.1: Summary Statistics for All Independent and Dependent Variables

Independent Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
# of Prior Conf. (last 3 mo.)	4.23	3.95	0	18
Evening Conf.	29.52[A]		0	1
Leave WH Conf.	29.52		0	1
Joint Conf.	33.33		0	1

[11] Alternate specifications of the first 6 months or 9 months were tested, as well as testing for the first year of each term. These alternatives did not significantly improve the fit of the model.
[12] Unemployment may have an even stronger connection with journalistic aggressiveness (Clayman et al 2007). However, it is highly correlated with time for the period of study, so it cannot be used here.

Year of Conf (start @ 1980)	14.97	8.14	1	29
Open – Foreign Policy	47.62		0	1
Democrat	31.43		0	1
Divided Gov't				
Fully Unified	24.76		0	1
1 Opposing House	26.67		0	1
2 Opposing Houses	48.57		0	1
Elections:				
No election	72.38		0	1
Re-election	16.19		0	1
Lame duck	11.43		0	1
First Year	16.19		0	1
Approval Rating	53.75	11.83	28	89
GDP Growth (quarterly)	0.69	0.70	-1.64	2.26
# of Prior Stories	15.73	5.94	7	33
Question Focus: #	40.54	18.97	12	100
Question Focus: FP	27.62		0	1
Outcome Variables - NYT				
Words of Coverage	1964	1268	0	4756
Number of Stories	3.308	2.005	0	8
Proportion of Pres. Quotes	0.757[A]	0.209	0	1
Have any quotes?	95.23		0	1
# of Non-Pres. Sources	4.049	3.560	0	18
Outcome Variables - ABC				
Words of Coverage	409.1	399.0	0	1672
Number of Stories	1.257	1.074	0	4
Proportion of Pres. Quotes	0.695	0.313	0	1
Have any quotes?	64.76		0	1
# of Non-Pres. Sources	1.558	1.888	0	8

A: For dichotomous variables, the "mean" reported is the percent of conferences where the condition applies. While the proportion of presidential quotes ranges from 0 to 1 as well, it is a continuous variable and not a dichotomous variable.

3.5: Estimation

I perform different sets of regression models for each outcome variable. ABC did not

cover 27 press conferences in this data set. For standard OLS regression, these missing

conferences would be highly problematic, because they are unlikely to be missing at random.

Assuming that the variables that cause ABC to assign less coverage also cause them to ignore a

conference entirely, a Tobit model can be used. To estimate coverage volume, I use a Tobit

model with lower level censoring at zero words of coverage. Coefficients from a Tobit model

can be used to analyze both the expected volume of coverage and the chance of censoring (a

press conference receiving no subsequent news coverage). For consistency, Tobit models are

also used for the volume of *New York Times* coverage, even though only three conferences went

uncovered. Standard OLS regression is used for the proportion of presidential quotes. In theory,

the outcomes of interest could share unobserved heterogeneity with the president's other press

conferences. However, there are a number of problems in using either fixed effects or random

effects models.[13] To adjust for potential heteroskedasticity in the results, Huber-White standard

errors are used in all the OLS models.

4: Results

4.1: Coverage Volume

Table 2.2: Tobit Regression Models for Volume of News Coverage of Presidential Press
Conferences for the *New York Times* ABC's *World News Tonight*. N=105, with 3 censored obs.
for NYT and 27 for ABC. (Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses).

	NYT 1	NYT 2	ABC 1	ABC 2
Year of Conf.	-50.33**	-34.30*	-2.985	2.131
	(17.36)	(15.78)	(6.946)	(7.049)
Open: Foreign Pol.	-298.2	-31.71	-407.2***	-264.0*
	(255.3)	(221.6)	(105.6)	(101.5)
Democrat	-181.0	-123.9	-332.4**	-273.7*
	(264.0)	(238.5)	(111.2)	(110.1)
Divided: 1 Opp. House	201.2	-323.7	-287.6[+]	-441.8**
	(409.0)	(340.2)	(165.3)	(155.2)
Divided: 2 Opp. Houses	-389.1	-326.8	-120.5	-117.2
	(325.5)	(274.6)	(132.9)	(127.2)
Re-election	-466.6	-11.97	-45.74	114.1
	(321.7)	(267.2)	(133.7)	(124.1)

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[13] Fixed effects models can only include variables that have variance within a presidency, so variables like partisan
affiliation cannot be included.

Lame Duck	351.9	-61.95	-57.87	-152.7
	(399.3)	(335.9)	(162.9)	(151.4)
First Year	-560.3$^+$	-308.9	80.51	175.6
	(334.6)	(282.8)	(134.5)	(126.8)
Approval Rating	-2.857	14.61$^+$	-3.489	1.155
	(10.28)	(8.707)	(4.214)	(3.989)
GDP Growth	-40.97	-36.42	-14.70	1.379
	(172.7)	(139.2)	(69.81)	(62.43)
# of Prior Stories	19.66	34.80$^+$	12.75	19.41*
	(22.13)	(19.47)	(8.985)	(8.739)
Question Focus: #	-5.316	-3.189	3.362	4.255$^+$
	(6.031)	(4.842)	(2.488)	(2.210)
Question Focus: FP	-635.2*	-403.3$^+$	23.56	92.63
	(282.7)	(234.1)	(113.1)	(104.0)
# of Prior Conf.		-79.69**		-19.34
		(29.17)		(13.50)
Evening Conf.		157.5		34.77
		(252.4)		(117.1)
Leave WH Conf.		-692.3**		-147.9
		(252.3)		(115.1)
Joint Conf.		-941.8***		-410.7**
		(271.3)		(129.0)
Constant	3712***	2715***	651.2$^+$	296.1
	(798.6)	(753.6)	(329.1)	(340.6)
Log Likelihood	-862.9***	-839.2***	-605.7**	-593.1***
LR test on added terms (4 df)		47.43***		25.28***
Censored obs	3	3	27	27
Sigma	1099	875.4	431.3	379.1
	(77.60)	(61.69)	(36.30)	(31.58)

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < 0.001$, $^+ p < 0.1$; two-tailed tests.

The first pair of models (labeled NYT 1 and ABC 1) predict coverage volume without accounting for the context a president creates for his press conference. The second pair of models (NYT 2 and ABC 2) incorporates the variables of theoretical interest. When looking at the models, it is important to bear in mind that the low sample size requires stronger effects to achieve statistical significance at the .05 level. Interpreting any variable's effect on coverage volume is done the same way as standard OLS. For example, when press conferences are held

outside of Washington (*Leave WH* in the table), they receive an average 753 fewer words of *Times* coverage, net of other variables.

The formula for predicting whether a conference will be ignored is non-linear: the effect of one variable is dependent upon the values of other variables.[14] Taking the coefficients from Table 2.2 and setting each variable to its median (or mode for dichotomous variables), a Republican's solo conference had a 2.21 percent chance of being ignored by ABC.[15] Negative regression coefficients indicate a greater chance of lower level censoring (no coverage) along with less coverage when there is a story. If a Republican held a joint press conference, the predicted probability of having zero coverage would increase to 17.67 percent. When Clinton held joint press conferences, we would predict a 41.84 percent chance they get ignored, as the two negative regression coefficients from the Tobit model amplify each other's effects.

These regression models show that the logistical contexts of a news event can signal more or less meaningful news events, but it is more difficult to signal a highly newsworthy event. The second pair of models show that leaving the White House, holding a joint press conference, or holding a large number of conferences over the prior three months are all considered signals of reduced newsworthiness, as these conferences receive less coverage in the *Times*. When George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair publicly disagreed about whether to seek another United Nations Security Council resolution six weeks before the invasion of Iraq, this conference only received 1,738 words of coverage in the *Times* – less coverage than the average conference.

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[14] Technically, this is predicting the likelihood of lower level censoring at zero words of coverage. See Long and Freese 2006.
[15] This could reflect ABC not assigning a reporter before the conference starts or a decision reached after the conference ends.

Presidents' scheduling has less influence over the volume of ABC coverage, which is affected by joint conferences but not other event contexts. It is unclear if the differences between the *Times* and ABC reflect the logistical differences between using one correspondent vs. many or normative differences regarding the treatment of presidents. Because the *Times* has a particularly large newshole, even for newspapers, their decisions about allocating space for coverage may be more nuanced and responsive to presidential signaling than other news organizations, where coverage is more of a yes or no question. Perhaps surprisingly, evening conferences do not receive significantly more coverage, even though speaking directly to the American people is one of the main ways a president defines a news event as important (Kernell 1986). As a result, Hypothesis 1 is largely but not completely supported: event scheduling is more likely to dampen coverage volume than enhance it.

While we cannot directly ascertain whether presidents intend to influence their newsworthiness by leaving the White House or appearing with another foreign leader, there are many clues that suggest intent. The retrospective accounts of both reporters (Donaldson 1987) and White House staffers (Jameison 2009) suggest any public questioning of a president or candidate is carefully planned, with an eye towards subsequent coverage. Political scientists have described a continuous increase in the scope of presidential communication planning (Farnsworth 2009; Kernell 1986; Maltese 1992). Joint conferences provoke less aggressive questions (Banning and Billingsley 2007). Additionally, between two leaders giving opening statements and potentially answering each question, joint conferences average only 9.46 questions in this sample, as opposed to an average of 25.79 questions per solo conference. A t-test finds t = 11.32 (p < 0.001), suggesting that presidents give reporters fewer chances to ask questions during a joint conference. These clues do not necessarily prove that presidents

schedule press conferences intending to influence coverage, but they suggest intent is plausible, particularly for joint conferences.

By controlling for change in the contexts that presidents create for their events, we can better explain preliminary results suggesting fairly strong journalistic biases. Before considering event context, press conferences get less print coverage over time (measured by year of conference), while ABC appears to favor Republicans. Once we account for event context in Model 2, these effects maintain statistical significance, but their substantive strength is considerably diminished. Changes in news coverage over time (Patterson 1993) and differential coverage of groups based on their partisanship (Croteau and Hoynes 1994; Entman 2004; Gitlin 1980; Groseclose and Milyo 2005) are frequently cited as evidence of journalistic bias. Unfortunately, these arguments often abstract news content away from the context of its production. Once we incorporate the context of news events, we see that journalists are highly responsive to event contexts that happen to change over time and with Democratic presidents. Like other emergent social structures (Schelling 1978), changes in newsworthiness over time or by partisan affiliation are partially the unintended byproduct of lower-level decision-making, in this case at the organizational level.

When journalists give less attention to an event because of the way it is scheduled, some sociologists label scheduling as another form of journalistic bias (McCarthy, McPhail and Smith 1996; Myers and Caniglia 2004; Oliver and Maney 2000). However, journalists do not unilaterally impose their biases on newsmakers. Journalistic question focus and the number of recent stories featuring the president have relatively weak effects on the volume of news coverage, compared to the effects of event scheduling. An organizational fields approach, based on sensemaking, helps us better theorize the effects of event scheduling as a signal. Journalists'

logistical preferences are a constraint on newsmakers who do not effectively send signals to journalists and an opportunity for those who do signal effectively. Newsmakers' signals of newsworthiness may or may not work as intended, depending on how well they understand how journalists will make sense of the signals. In any case, we would be remiss to look at a decline in coverage based on event context and assume journalistic bias without considering the agency of newsmakers to send signals to journalists.

4.2: Proportion of Presidential Quotes

Next, I turn to the proportion of presidential quoted words to all quoted words in subsequent news coverage of a presidential press conference. Quotation is a way to analyze how much command a newsmaker has over journalists' attention (Hallin 1992). Measuring quotes as a proportion is a novel way to quantify a long-standing concern in sociological studies about the ability of any one source to dominate the news (Croteau and Hoynes 1994; Entman and Rojecki 1993; Fishman 1980; Gitlin 1980; Hallin 1986) by constructing a measure of *concentration*. The proportion of presidential quotes ranges from zero (all quoted words from other sources) to one (a presidential monopoly on quotes). Press conferences are excluded from these models if they lack direct quotes, because the denominator would be zero. Four conferences from the *Times* are excluded and treated as missing at random. For ABC, 34 press conferences did not lead to subsequent sound bites. Because ABC covered seven press conferences without sound bites, the Tobit model does not fully predict whether a conference will be excluded from this analysis, so I predict exclusion from this analysis in a separate probit regression in appendix A.

The volume of coverage is added as an independent variable in these models to test whether newsworthiness influences the president's monopoly over coverage. However, a 300 word increase in coverage could mean different things at different times. If ABC expands a story

from 100 words read by the anchor to a 400 word story including a report from a correspondent, this could be a dramatic increase in the opportunities for other sources to get on ABC. If the *Times* allocates 3700 words to covering Reagan's first conference after the Iran-Contra scandal, they already allocated significant space for non-presidential quotes. An additional 300 words of space could further reduce the concentration of presidential quotes, but would be unlikely to have the same effect as 300 more words for ABC. To account for these diminishing returns, I use the natural log *(ln) of coverage volume* instead of the raw total, similar to studies describing the diminishing effects of income.

Table 2.3: OLS Regression Models for Proportion of Presidential Quotes in Coverage of Press Conferences for the *New York Times* and *World News Tonight*. (Robust SE in Parentheses).

	NYT 1	NYT 2	ABC 1	ABC 2
Words Coverage (ln)	-0.129***	-0.163***	-0.121***	-0.149***
	(0.023)	(0.039)	(0.035)	(0.042)
Year of Conf.	-0.008***	-0.006*	0.003	-0.007
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Open: Foreign Pol.	-0.005	0.041	-0.003	0.008
	(0.041)	(0.046)	(0.079)	(0.082)
Democrat	0.055	0.070	-0.162$^+$	-0.055
	(0.048)	(0.053)	(0.083)	(0.077)
Divided: 1 Opp. House	0.054	0.033	-0.115	-0.132
	(0.069)	(0.067)	(0.116)	(0.106)
Divided: 2 Opp. Houses	-0.138**	-0.119*	0.135	-0.034
	(0.052)	(0.054)	(0.103)	(0.097)
Re-election	-0.098	-0.067	0.051	0.024
	(0.067)	(0.058)	(0.091)	(0.093)
Lame Duck	0.104	0.080	-0.200	-0.130
	(0.063)	(0.062)	(0.126)	(0.119)
First Year	-0.044	-0.002	0.146	0.001
	(0.049)	(0.057)	(0.095)	(0.077)
Approval Rating	0.003	0.003	0.001	0.001
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.003)
GDP Growth	-0.014	-0.003	-0.005	0.001
	(0.025)	(0.023)	(0.052)	(0.038)
# of Prior Stories	-0.004	-0.000	-0.006	-0.002
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.006)

Question Focus: #	-0.002*	-0.002[+][B]	-0.002	-0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Question Focus: FP	-0.057	-0.038	0.195*	0.138[+]
	(0.047)	(0.051)	(0.089)	(0.070)
# of Prior Conf.		0.003		-0.006
		(0.006)		(0.009)
Evening Conf.		0.070[+]		-0.431***
		(0.040)		(0.079)
Leave WH Conf.		0.008		0.077
		(0.056)		(0.079)
Joint Conf.		-0.161*		-0.222*
		(0.070)		(0.095)
Constant	1.923***	2.026***	1.396**	1.855***
	(0.229)	(0.342)	(0.435)	(0.396)
N	101[A]	101	71[A]	71
R-Squared	0.3360	0.4089	0.3620	0.5806
Adj. R-Squared	0.2279	0.2972	0.2025	0.4354
F test on added terms		2.70*		8.46***

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < 0.001$, [+]$p < 0.1$; two-tailed tests.

A: Because average quote or sound bite length is undefined when there are no quotes or sound bites from the president, these conferences are omitted from the results above. Excluding conferences in these models results in $N = 101$ for the *New York Times* and $N = 71$ for ABC's *World News Tonight* (see also Appendix A.)
B: With less rounding, the coefficient is -.0017305 and the SE is .000975, so $p = 0.08$

Logistical contexts affect a president's ability to monopolize the opinions presented in subsequent news coverage, but do so in idiosyncratic ways that do not support the broader bull's-eye hypothesis. Similar to the models of coverage volume, we see that the effects of certain logistical contexts are quite powerful. Change in event contexts help to explain the small yet statistically significant decline in the *Times'* proportion of presidential quotes over the 29 year period of the study. As expected, joint press conferences lower the president's proportion of quotes for both news organizations. American reporters take advantage of their rare access to foreign leaders, who are given the opportunity to answer the same questions as the President of the United States, at the same time.

Holding evening press conferences leads to opposite effects in the two news organizations, which I argue are based on daily production cycles. On April 28, 2005 George W. Bush held an 8 PM press conference to make his case for privatizing Social Security. As a solo, evening conference held in the White House after a period of relatively few conferences, the event received more press coverage than any of Bush's prior conferences. Of the *Times* quotes, 464 of 670 words came from Bush, a surprisingly high number for such a newsworthy conference. Journalists' routines for emphasizing writing over finding additional sources when operating under tight deadlines (Fishman 1980) help explain Bush's relative dominance in print and should apply to other newspapers. These results do not reach statistical significance at the .05 level, possibly due to variation in which politicians stay up late to talk to the newspapers. House Speaker Tip O'Neill delegated these late night responsibilities to his Chief of Staff, even when O'Neill was Reagan's main political antagonist. Other politicians place greater emphasis on responding the same night.[16]

When ABC's *World News Tonight* covered the Bush Social Security press conference in their next broadcast, Bush had only 13 of 183 quoted words, because that broadcast aired the *day after* the conference. Because ABC's *World News Tonight* cannot cover an evening conference until the next day, my search criteria will find what scholars generally refer to as a "day two" story from the next evening's broadcast. Although the ABC search terms complicate the interpretation of results, having two different days of coverage helps us understand how the relationship between the logistics of news production and a source's ability to monopolize the points of view presented in stories is highly temporal.[17] By the second day's television news

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[16] This is not strictly a logistical issue that goes away with new technology. Adding an interaction term for evening conferences and the year of the conference does not significantly improve the fit of the model.

[17] Using a supplementary data set, such as *Good Morning America*, would create additional problems because morning shows tend to treat all hard news differently than evening programs (Hamilton 2004).

cycle, responses from other sources are more voluminous, while ABC only repeats a few presidential statements. Additional qualitative research could help explain the organizational processes for when and how news organizations seek out additional sources under severe logistical constraints.

4.3: Journalistic Coattails

In Hypothesis 3, I proposed a two-step model of journalistic coattails to explain the president's ability to monopolize the opinions presented in coverage of his press conferences. First, journalists assess the newsworthiness of an event and allocate a volume of coverage. As we saw from the first set of regression models, the logistical context of events has a strong influence on newsworthiness, along with a few control variables and other factors that could not be accounted for in this study design. I argue that journalists' determination of newsworthiness, as reflected in their allocation of the newshole, has an independent effect on the concentration of opinion presented in stories. Once reporters realize they are going to commit a relatively large section of their newshole to a press conference, norms of objectivity (Tuchman 1972) and preferences for conflict narratives (Baum and Groeling 2010; Epstein 1973) are triggered, so they seek out additional comments. (See Appendix B for an analysis of the volume of sources.)

Looking at the effect of the volume of coverage on the proportion of quotes in Table 2.3, we see strong evidence for the existence of journalistic coattails. Allocating more coverage to a single event is assumed to have diminishing returns, which is why we use the natural logarithm (ln) of coverage volume instead of the total number of words. The coefficient -0.163 for the full *Times* model does not refer to *adding* a set number of words of coverage. Instead, we will see a 0.163 decrease in the proportion of presidential quotes when we *multiply* the word count by the mathematical constant *e* (2.718). To double the decrease in the proportion of presidential quotes

we would multiply the word count by e^2 (7.389), and so on. A press conference deemed

newsworthy enough to multiply the newshole allocation by 2.718 is theoretically unlikely, unless

the original allocation was much smaller than average. Therefore, the press conference's

logistical context often exerts a stronger substantive effect on quote concentration than the

volume of coverage. Dividing coverage volume by 2.718 is more plausible, but in most cases the

reduced newsworthiness of joint press conferences will not completely cancel out the direct

effect of a joint press conference on the proportion of quotes.

Increasing coverage decreases the proportion of presidential quotes, with little variation

from conference to conference, suggesting a potentially generalizable theory of how journalists

present opinions differently based on how newsworthy they consider an event. The negative

regression coefficient means that reporters focus on the president's point of view when they are

given a small amount of space to cover a conference. A 497 word story on Bush's Sept. 18, 2003

conference only quoted Bush, even though King Abdullah of Jordan was also answering

questions about peace in the Middle East. When more of the newshole is dedicated to an event,

reporters' focus shifts to incorporating more quotes from other sources, relative to incorporating

more presidential quotes. Bush's last major press conference was held on July 15, 2008, as fears

over the solvency of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac reached a fever pitch. ABC's coverage

focused on senators interrogating Bush appointees over whether they agreed with Bush's

optimistic assessment of the economy. The *Times* expanded coverage of the story, quoting four

Democrats, four Republicans and four economists reacting to Bush's argument that a second

stimulus was unnecessary.[18] Ironically, the most influential of newsmakers has an easier time

monopolizing the opinions presented in a story when he only attracts a relatively small amount

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[18] Appendix B shows a very strong correlation between the volume of coverage and the number of quoted non-presidential sources, net of other variables.

of coverage. Because the relationship between coverage volume and the concentration of quotes controls for the direct effects of logistical context, I conclude that this relationship shows an effect of journalistic norms on the opinions contained in stories.

Based on this case, elites who create major news events appear to create journalistic coattails, allowing other sources to get into that day's news based on the norms and preferences of journalists. For the average press conference, the scales tilt in favor of the president. After major events, we see a kind of spillover (Rossman, Esparza and Bonacich 2010), where the president's newsworthiness gives more opportunities for other sources to get quoted in the mainstream news by responding to the president in some way. These journalistic coattails could be based on objectivity rituals and deflecting criticism in prominent stories (Tuchman 1972), a journalistic preference for conflict (Baum and Groeling 2010; Epstein 1973; Patterson 1992), or a combination of the two. Because each mechanism leads to a similar outcome, additional qualitative research is needed to disentangle them. Both mechanisms suggest journalists will incorporate opinions that are distinct from the president's. The *Times* only printed one quote explicitly praising a president, as President Kim Dae Jung of South Korea praised Bush's "calm composure and his very wise decisions" in a joint press conference one month after 9/11.

5: Discussion

Prior studies try to explain the inequalities in who receives news coverage by referring to the power of mainstream politicians (Bennett 1990; Bennett, Lawrence and Livingston 2006; Hallin 1986), journalistic preferences (Croteau and Hoynes 1993; Gitlin 1980), political economy (Altschull 1984; Benson 2006), or national culture (Benson and Saguy 2005). My results show that both the volume of news coverage a presidential press conference receives and the president's ability to monopolize the balance of opinion in that subsequent coverage are

strongly affected by the day-to-day processes of news production. The logistical context of press conferences influences both their newsworthiness and the president's monopoly over the opinions found in coverage, although results do not consistently follow Hypothesis 2. Additionally, I find that day-to-day determinations of newsworthiness influence whether quotations are concentrated on the president's opinion. Organizational level dynamics like event contexts and journalistic coattails could help us better explain a source's access to mainstream political news and the balance of opinion in coverage, along with macro-structural influences already identified by sociologists (Benson 2006, 2009; Benson and Saguy 2005; Croteau and Hoynes 1993; Gitlin 1980).

The importance of event contexts for newsworthiness is not necessarily surprising (Epstein 1973; Fishman 1980; Gans 1979; Klinenberg 2005; McCarthy, McPhail and Smith 1996; Oliver and Maney 2000; Oliver and Myers 1999; Tuchman 1973). However, previous studies had not addressed how journalists' understanding of the political news field links event context, newsworthiness and the concentration of opinion in stories. Instead, the balance of opinion had been theorized as the result of atomized power struggles between individual newsmakers and journalists. These bilateral interactions are important, but they are incomplete. In this study, I show that lower level patterns of social organization like the scheduling of individual news events creates a ripple effect throughout the political news field, helping to explain the degree to which a single newsmaker can monopolize the balance of opinion found in coverage. When presidents enhance their newsworthiness, whether by intent or by accident, they trigger journalists' objectivity rituals and preferences for conflict. The actions of a prestigious newsmaker can create journalistic coattails – opportunities for other sources to get into the news.

These results show that creating a major news event can be a risk for presidents, as they may inadvertently give other political actors greater opportunities to shape the public discourse over the president's event. Although this study does not directly code the opinions of other sources, the objectivity rituals and preference for conflict narratives that drive journalists to add additional sources typically push them to look for opposition to a primary newsmaker like the president. Major events are unlikely to give all sources equal opportunity to comment on the president's actions. Journalists will likely retain their preferences for officials as sources (Fishman 1980; Gitlin 1980). The volume of non-presidential sources is highly contingent on the volume of coverage (see Appendix B), but this does not directly measure the diversity of source opinions (Benson 2009). Coverage of the median press conference is surprisingly one-sided, giving presidents approximately four out of every five quoted words. However, mainstream reporters are much less likely to tolerate a president monopolizing the public discourse after a major event.

5.1: Limitations and Implications for Future Research

These results suggest scholars who are interested in explaining patterns in news content need to pay more attention to meso-level organizational theory. The organizational level is not just about the logistics, technology and deadlines found in prior theories of news routines (Epstein 1973; Fishman 1980; Gans 1979; Tuchman 1973). Concepts such as organizational fields, signaling and spillovers are necessary to understand how journalists determine newsworthiness and how much they decide to let any one source dominate the final story. Most stories originate from pre-planned news events. Neo-institutionalism gives us a way to understand how the creation of events affects a newsmaker's ability to dominate the opinions presented in subsequent coverage. Although the norm of objectivity (Tuchman 1972) and

59

preference for conflict (Epstein 1973; Groeling 2010; Patterson 1993) are often presumed to be ubiquitous in American political news, we actually see considerable variation in their application. If the organization and perceived newsworthiness of an event influence a president's power over journalists, they could also help explain other newsmakers' influence over journalists within a particular macro-political and cultural structure.

Subsequent studies can expand on the meso-level theory of political news as an organizational field that I provide here, helping to overcome some of the limitations of the present study. Content analysts often focus on the valence of statements, either on a positive/negative scale (cf Baum and Groeling 2010) or more specific frames (cf Benson and Saguy 2005). Neither form of valence coding was viable for this study. Quotes immediately following a press conference are overwhelmingly the president's point of view or some degree of opposition. With 476 stories, 29 years of American history and a multitude of issues, detailed coding of non-presidential sources or their statements is beyond the scope of this study. As a result, I cannot make conclusions about the range of opinions presented by non-presidential sources or their identity (although I address the raw total of additional sources in Appendix B). Scholars examining the coverage of a particular issue may be able to utilize this paper's analytic approach, gathering independent variables from both the organizational and macro-structural level and using a more detailed coding scheme for outcome variables (see Benson 2009; Clayman et al 2007 for exemplars). Future scholars could also address the reliance on one newspaper by incorporating additional newspapers with smaller newsholes, as they may be more or less sensitive to newsmakers' signals about newsworthiness.

By starting with news events rather than issues, this study includes a different set of news coverage than an issue-centered study like Benson and Saguy 2005. Starting with events has

numerous theoretical and methodological advantages in helping to explain the behavior of journalists. However, the event-centered approach presented here does not capture all coverage on a particular issue. Studies examining the ideas or issue frames that get in the news often get aside the organizational, material actions of producing news content. Future work could attempt to merge these approaches through a more detailed examination of how newsmakers schedule events and deploy ideological frames in an attempt to begin, end, or alter an attention cycle.

I focus on the President of the United States in this study, assuming that the prestige of the president sends signals to journalists and can spill over to nearby political actors who are also seeking media attention. I draw from similar theories of signaling (Anand and Peterson 2000) and spillovers (Rossman, Esparza and Bonacich 2010) in other cultural fields. However, the concepts of signaling and spillovers could apply more broadly. A wide range of political actors and social movement organizations could send signals to journalists through scheduling events in advance. If an increase in newsworthiness triggers journalistic norms and preferences, making it harder for a newsmaker to dominate subsequent coverage, this could apply to any newsmaker who manages to attract major media attention. The prestige that spills over to other news sources may be a quality of the news event, more than it is a quality of the newsmaker. These hypotheses, like others presented here, will require additional study.

6: Conclusion

When examining the news, sociologists are often drawn to the question of who has the power to shape media discourse. Prior studies pose this as a macro-structural question, relying on political power and often imprecise labels of journalistic bias to explain many of the broad inequities in news content. Using data from presidential press conferences, I argue we need both a meso and macro conception of the journalistic field to explain how media discourses are

61

constructed. Those with great political power do not wield constant influence over the press. Like other newsmakers, a president can obtain different levels of coverage by scheduling his events in a way that creates meaning and/or logistical barriers. When creating highly newsworthy events, presidents trigger journalistic norms regarding objectivity and conflict, creating journalistic coattails. Reporters seek out more comments from other sources, making it harder for the president to monopolize the opinions presented in subsequent coverage of the president's event. The specific ways that an elite seeks news attention can create additional opportunities for those with less power to get into the news as well.

Chapter 3: To Quote or Not to Quote:
Micro Interaction as a Potential Influence on News Content

When George W. Bush walked into the Rose Garden on September 15, 2006, he was walking into the middle of a political firestorm. Four Republicans had just broken ranks, voting with the Democrats to approve a bill that would prohibit Bush's preferred modes of interrogating suspected terrorists. Senator John McCain (R-AZ), who was tortured during the Vietnam War, publicly condemned Bush's policy by saying it would place American troops at risk of being tortured. Representative Ray LaHood of Illinois, a senior House Republican, told the *New York Times* that McCain's opposition "is a big problem…'These guys have a lot of weight and a lot of standing. McCain is a tough guy to beat on this" (Hulse 2006). Former Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Colin Powell said Bush's proposal would cause foreign nations to "doubt the moral basis of our fight against terrorism" (Zernike 2006). Bush held a press conference the next day to try and sway public opinion back to his side. After his opening statement, journalists immediately brought up Republican's criticisms. Starting with Powell's critique, the first journalist asked "don't you think that Americans and the rest of the world are beginning to wonder whether you're following a flawed strategy?"

How could Bush try to maintain influence over the news while answering hostile questions about whether he condoned torture, secret hearings and was potentially putting Americans at risk? Prior research by Clayman and Heritage (2002a) describes how journalists behave during live news interviews, often asking constraining questions to try and preclude certain answers. Their subsequent work investigates increased aggressiveness in journalists' questions over time (Clayman and Heritage 2002b, Clayman et al 2010) and during economic downturns (Clayman et al 2007). While Clayman and Heritage's book describes some of the ways that interviewees try to elude difficult questions, little work has been done to investigate

whether these evasions could influence subsequent news coverage. Lukes (1974) theorized that keeping issues out of public debate is one of the main ways that political leaders use power. News coverage published after an event could be an ideal mechanism for this broad theory, since reporters extract quotes instead of publishing complete interviews. Even though press conferences are live, few of us watch. Is there a way for George W. Bush to minimize discussion of support for torture, and for other presidents to deflect risky or embarrassing topics, based on the micro dynamics of how they answer questions?

While prior studies have not examined a link between micro social interaction and subsequent news content, they have demonstrated the coverage of press conferences is about more than the "substance" of what gets said. Press conferences are often a way for presidents to create "major" news events, in comparison to smaller photo opportunities and exclusive interviews with smaller news outlets (Kernell 1986). My first empirical chapter showed how all of these plans and the organization of a press conference creates meaning for the news event about to take place. Planning influences both the volume of news coverage and the proportion of opinions found in that coverage, independent of what gets said during the event (Grand 2011). Could the micro dynamics of directly answering some questions and dodging others create meaning as well? If so, will journalists respond to deflections by backing down, or could this inspire journalists to pounce?

Based on a corpus of 1743 statements from presidential press conferences and the subsequent coverage in multiple leading newspapers, I found reporters are initially resistant to publishing statements that do not correspond to the topic of journalists' questions, but their resistance can be worn down. In the first section of this chapter, I elaborate on the various ways that presidents try to deflect questions. One particular strategy of talking about the past instead of

the present or future is particularly common. In the second section, I use negative binomial

regression analysis to try and quantify how strongly changing the topic affects subsequent news

coverage, relative to other aspects of a statement that may affect news coverage like the topic or

substantive actions like criticizing someone. I found off-topic responses to an initial question are

repeated only 37.6 percent as often as on topic responses. However, if any journalist follows up

at some point and the president continues to be evasive, these statements were quoted 36.7

percent *more* often than on topic responses to questions asked for the first time. In the third

section, I discuss the implications of journalists skipping presidential deflections instead of

writing negative stories about presidents who deflect questions.

2: Quotations and News Interviews

Interviews with sources are the cornerstone of traditional American news coverage, but

these interviews are rarely published in their entirety. Journalists need sources to provide

information. Ideally sources will provide on-the-record quotes as well, allowing journalists to

distance themselves from the statement and maintain a stance of objectivity (Tuchman 1972).

Therefore, quoting sources at length is often seen as an indicator of a source's influence over

reporters (Grand 2011; Hallin 1992; Patterson 1993). Journalists increasingly break up quotes to

add analysis and context. Based on the case of presidential debates, Clayman (1995) argues the

ideal quote has narrative relevance, conspicuousness and extractability. The micro dynamics of

questions and answers could affect all three criteria.

I make an unusual proposition in this chapter: micro interaction will have an impact on

broader news coverage, even if the journalist writing a particular story was sitting in the audience

and did not ask the question. Prior studies of the micro dynamics of news content focus on either

description (Clayman and Heritage 2002a) or trying to explain changes in journalists' questions

over time (Clayman and Heritage 2002b; Clayman et al 2007, 2010). My study will focus more on responses than questions. While I will spend a little time trying to explain when presidents may use certain micro interactional techniques, it does not make sense to repeat the more detailed analysis found in Clayman and Heritage's book. Instead, I will try to break new ground by using micro behaviors as an independent variable to explain outcomes in the news.

Press conferences are a balancing act, located somewhere in between the typical news interview (which is never shown to the public) and live interview shows (where the interview is geared primarily as a performance for a live audience). Since Eisenhower allowed for on-the-record quotation of his press conferences with no prior approval in 1957, anything the president says is part of a live performance. However, the audience is rarely watching the performance live. Newspapers play an important role as a gatekeeper, relying the highlights (and embarrassing lowlights) of presidential press conferences to a mass audience. These events have excellent archives for what was said, along with greater potential for subsequent coverage in multiple news outlets. Reporters all get the same information at same time, which increases the chance of independent decisions about whether to publish a given statement. The presidential press conference makes an ideal case for studying whether interactional dynamics could affect subsequent news coverage.

3: Actions of Speech

Aside for signing legislation and executive orders, one of the main ways that presidents exercise power is by talking. Presidents increasingly use public speeches and press conferences to influence public opinion and thus influence legislators, instead of negotiating behind the scenes (Kernell 1986). Explaining or justifying a policy is one of the substantive actions of political speech. As we know, politicians also use speech to criticize and praise people.

Successful politicians tend to repeat various rhetorical devices, such as three part lists and

contrasts, which make speeches more memorable (Atkinson 1984) and lead to increased

applause (Heritage and Greatbatch 1986). I propose that interviews will be memorable for the

dynamics of micro-interaction as well. In this section of the dissertation, I will try to expand on

two specific kinds of press conference interaction that may be the most likely to affect

subsequent news coverage.

3.1: Refusals

When we think of Presidents of the United States refusing to answer a journalist's

question, we probably envision a showdown like Bush's confrontation with NBC's David

Gregory on September 15, 2006.[19] Gregory was the second reporter to ask Bush about McCain's

criticism of the administration's detainee policy. Gregory allowed Bush to finish his 19 statement

reply before following up, saying "But sir, this is an important point, and I think it depends…"

Bush cut him off, saying "The point I just made is the most important point." Bush goes on,

ending his turn of speech by saying "next man." Gregory repeated his question three more times

instead of handing his microphone to someone else. At this point, Bush refuses to answer more

of his questions, saying "David, next man please. Thank you. It took a long time to unravel, and

it took a long time to answer your question." The confrontation could stand out as a memorable

and extractable moment (Clayman 1995). Even if reporters do not quote it directly, they may

paraphrase the interaction or use it to characterize Bush as using "animated and unusually

forceful language" according to the *Los Angeles Times* (Gerstenzang and Levey 2006).

There are other, less confrontational ways for presidents to refuse to answer a question. In

July 1994, Bill Clinton sought and received United Nations approval to invade Haiti if necessary

to end a 1991 coup d'état. Clinton answered several questions about Haiti. However, when asked

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[19] Full video available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgSAmg57-G0

about Congressman Bill Richardson's trips to Haiti to help negotiate with the generals, Clinton said, "I have no comment about any further trips (by Richardson)." He went on to answer the next part of the question, about the Haitian general Cedras. In 2002, Bush offered a similar no comment about Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill's controversial proposal to borrow cash from federal retirement funds as a way to manage the debt ceiling. He went on to ask Congress to pass a clean bill raising the debt ceiling. Refusing to comment can be a way for presidents to avoid explicitly criticizing their allies. These statements may be somewhat newsworthy even if they are not dramatic.

3.2: Switching from Present or Future to the Past

By September of 2006, Bush's doctrine of pre-emptive war against Saddam Hussein faced increasing scrutiny. The Senate Intelligence Committee's investigation of the 9/11 attacks showed there was no link between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda. The number of American casualties was increasing. Yet Bush continued to cite the link between Hussein and Al Qaeda to justify the war. When asked why, Bush explained that Hussein was a sponsor of terrorism: "The broader point I was saying, I was reminding people why we removed Saddam Hussein from power. He was dangerous." Later in the press conference, Bush was asked about the prospect of an Iraqi civil war. He replied that his generals "believe Al Qaeda is still creating havoc." The next question asked how he measures progress in Iraq with the increasing American body count. Bush replied by highlighting the unity government, then reminded reporters of his guiding principle: "This is really the big challenge of the 21st century, whether or not this country and allies are willing to stand with moderate people in order to fight off extremists." Instead of talking about present day realities and future problems, Bush retreated to the safer ground of prior arguments he used to successfully sway the American people when he first used them.

Reporters asked follow up questions, signaling that they were not satisfied with Bush's responses and wanted to move the timeframe back to the present.

Shifting back to prior successes instead of talking about an uncertain future is a common strategy in interviews, even when things are going well. In 1997, Clinton was asked about the "soaring" stock market and whether "ordinary Americans understand the risk involved in their investments." Clinton started to reply with a joke: "Anything I say is wrong, right? If I say yes, the market drops tomorrow. If I say no, someday it will drop, and I'll be a heel." Journalists laughed as Clinton defused the "fork" of two bad answers. Instead of either future-oriented response, Clinton talked about increasing productivity and the growing economy. He also asserted that people who own stock and hold it for 30 years as part of a retirement account tend to do fairly well historically. Of course, people who invested in 1997 may or may not be doing well in 2027. Even in 2015 we can't fully predict what the stock market will look like 12 years from now.

Wiggling out of dangerous questions is a critical skill for any politician. Most evasions are closer to the confrontation of Bush example than the laughter of the Clinton example. Journalists frequently complain about politicians who repeat talking points instead of answering more specific questions. So why don't journalists keep repeating questions until they get a good answer? David Gregory's example is instructive. Presidents give permission for someone to ask a question, and they can take it away. Pursuing the same question over and over again can make for a dramatic moment. However, the story (if there is one) becomes about the interaction instead of the president's response. Journalists may not want to become the story. They may give up a line of inquiry if a president starts ducking questions. If the press conference is long enough, it will be impossible to write a story about everything a president says anyway. Reporters would

have to filter out less interesting stories, so it makes sense to start by filtering out some evasive responses where the president says little beyond old talking points.

4: Systematically Testing Importance of Interaction

Having identified ways several ways that presidents may try to avoid or deflect a particular topic, there are several potential advantages to quantifying this phenomenon. Descriptive statistics would allow us to examine which kinds of interaction strategies go with which topics or other substantive actions. For example, would presidents who are covertly deflecting a question be more likely to do so by criticizing someone? Quantification can also help us understand how these interaction strategies may impact subsequent news coverage, by treating patterns of interaction in responding to questions as a set of independent variables. Existing theory suggests the impact of interviewing and interactions on subsequent news content could apply widely, but in most cases these associations cannot be directly observed.

Presidential press conferences are an ideal test case, because the text of all press conferences for Eisenhower through Clinton is archived in the "Public Papers of the Presidents" archived by the University of Michigan This textual archive has proven to be accurate in prior studies (cf Clayman et al 2007; Grand 2011). For press conferences from George W. Bush, the text is taken from the White House's official website, because the university archives were not updated by the time of initial data collection. Fortunately, these press conferences are also of the most substantive value. They are the most likely to have a wide impact on US politics and policy. Because presidential press conferences are often but not always newsworthy, they include a greater range of variation in outcomes than most press conferences (Grand 2011).

For news coverage, this study will focus solely on newspapers in order to control for the genre of news. Putting people on camera adds another variable – presentation – to the definition

of what is "quotable." Print reporters routinely delete the unattractive parts of extemporaneous speech – uhs, ums, and other verbal fumbling – when quoting a source. Official transcripts of presidential press conferences often do the same. Television reporters do not have any editing techniques to effectively fix sound bites before placing them in a story. Speaking clearly is an additional variable for television news. In most cases, verbal fumbling is one of the first priorities for television news reporters ruling out a particular sound bite. A politician hemming and hawing in response to an aggressive question may be considered newsworthy, but this is the exception and not the rule.

Because television has different priorities, I restrict this study to four newspapers that serve as the nation's leading papers for political news: the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times* and *USA Today*.[20] Lexis-Nexis and ProQuest were used for newspaper coverage. If possible, Lexis-Nexis was used, using the search terms of the president's name and either "press conference" or "news conference." This was used for all articles in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *USA Today*. It was used for *Los Angeles Times* coverage of the 2006 press conference only. Because archives of *Los Angeles Times* articles only remain in the Lexis-Nexis database for two years, ProQuest was used for earlier *Los Angeles Times* coverage, using similar search terms.

4.1: Selection of Press Conferences

Because the goal of quantitative analysis is to measure quotability on a statement-by-statement basis, we need a large enough corpus of statements for quantitative analysis. Press conferences need to be coded in their entirety to produce useful results. The newsworthiness of

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[20] One of the goals for this project was to get historical variation in press conferences and the partisanship of the president. Therefore, most conferences come from a pre-social media era. A follow-up would be interesting, because we would expect more partisan blogs and social media users to have a different rationale for including quotes and thus different rules about what is quotable. I return to this in the discussion section, as a suggestion for future study.

what a president says in the middle of a press conference may be contingent on whether a

reporter asked something similar in the opening 10 minutes of the conference. Statements are not

completely independent observations – normally a problem in statistical inference – but with

every statement from a press conference it is easier to know which statements are more closely

connected to each other and build this in to the model.

Depending on the president and the length of the press conference, the number of

statements in a full conference ranges from approximately 400 to 550. This means relatively few

conferences are necessary to arrive at a data set large enough to analyze in a preliminary study

that does not focus on differences between presidents or news organizations. For this project,

four press conferences were chosen, resulting in N = 1743 statements. Any time the president

calls on journalists to ask questions, thanks them for arriving, or other speech along these lines

was not coded, and is not included in the N listed above. With a low number of conferences,

random sampling was not used. Instead, matched pairs of conferences were chosen in an attempt

to try and control for external variables that could affect the outcome.

- August 3, 1994. Clinton response to Democratic criticism of Clinton's health care plan
- August 6, 1997. "Unfocused" Clinton conference
- March 13, 2002. "Unfocused" Bush conference
- September 15, 2006. Response to Republican criticism of Bush's terrorism detainee plan

Two conferences from both Bill Clinton and George W. Bush were used, to try and

balance the potential effects of president's party affiliation on what gets quoted. For each

president, one conference was taken from their first term and one from the second, to balance out

potential effects that the press conference's timing within a president's administration has on

quotability. Similarly, each president has one conference where there is relatively little news the

previous day, and one conference the day after being rebuked by members of his own party.

Only one-third of the questions in these "focused" conferences were on that topic. This is an attempt to balance the effects of the day-to-day news cycle on quotability. I ran robustness checks for each pair of conferences, to make sure any findings of substantive interest were not working in opposing ways for different kids of press conferences.

In speech, it is not entirely clear when one sentence ends and the next begins. For example, there are times when the "Public Papers of the Presidents" records one long sentence while a newspaper article records the same statement as two sentences. Furthermore, it is common for newspapers to only quote one half of the longer statement. Therefore compound sentences, with multiple units of speech that could stand on their own as a grammatically complete sentence, are treated as multiple units for analysis.

5**: Quantifying Presidential Statements**

For this study, the unit of analysis is the statement. Because the punctuation marks in official transcripts are typically approximations, I defined statements as any unit of speech that can stand on its own as a grammatical sentence, regardless of punctuation in the transcript. (This mainly separates run-on speech in to manageable chunks.) Each statement from the president in his press conference was hand coded using 19 separate variables. I will begin by explaining the operationalization of the question and answer interaction format of a press conference. Then I will explain the coding of six separate rhetorical devices – most of which will be control variables. Then I will explain how I coded for substantive actions of a statement and its topic. Coding statements will allow for more descriptive analysis before I begin multivariate analysis.

5.1: Question and Answer Format

As Clayman and Heritage found, interviewees can try to **shift the topic of the question** in a variety of ways. They may overtly ask permission and/or declare a reason to change the

topic. They may use more covert strategies to change the tense or subject of discussion. Sources can also "operate on the question," explicitly reframing the topic and then responding to this second topic. For the purposes of this study, all shifts are treated in the same way. Statements are coded on a 0/1 basis, with 1 indicating a shift. All statements from the president's opening remarks are coded treated as no shift, because there is no question to evade. Any substantive action the president engages in when shifting topics, like transitioning to an attack, will be covered as a separate set of variables.

I coded three other aspects of journalist-president micro social interaction. Each statement was coded for whether or not it was a response to journalists **repeating a question**. Any statement after a repeated question is coded as 1, while all other statements (including opening remarks) is coded as 0. Statements were also coded on whether the president explicitly **refused to answer** a question. Each statement received a 0/1 code, with a 1 indicating refusal to answer the question. In their study of live news interviews, Clayman and Heritage (2002a) found interviewees often respond by using pronouns or context-dependent verbs without the specifying the subject in a prior sentence. For example, interviewees may begin to answer a question with the word "Because." These statements are less extractible, so I coded for **references to the preceding question** as a binary control variable.

5.2 Rhetorical Devices

I coded for six different types of rhetorical devices. One broad category is the rhetorical devices that Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) identify as more likely to attract applause in political oratory.[21] Contrasts and three part lists are the most common, and relatively self-explanatory. The oratory device that Heritage and Greatbatch call "headline-punch line" is also

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[21] The seventh rhetorical device, which involves the speaker's attempts to more explicitly pursue applause (Heritage and Greatbatch call it "pursuit") is omitted because Presidents do not seek to illicit applause from journalists in the press conference setting.

common. Here, the speaker says that something must be done (the headline) and then says what should be done (the punch line). In the regression models, all these oratory devices are treated in the same way, as a binary present/absent coding for a **formal oratory device**.

Because journalists choosing what to include in newspapers have preferences that don't necessarily correspond to other audiences, I coded for five other rhetorical devices that can be separated from an interaction context to use as control variables. Tuchman (1972) found journalists prefer quoting opinions in order to maintain a presentation of objectivity. Therefore, I coded for any **explicit markers of subjectivity** like "I believe," "I think," and "I hope," each of which could make the subsequent idea more conspicuous for journalists. By the same logic I coded for **declarations of importance**: any statement where the president says something is or has been important, necessary, vital, etc. or uses a verb like must, need, or similar verb signifying the importance of action. Objectivity rituals suggest any time a source provides **direct facts** or **paraphrases information**; this material does not belong in quotation marks. I coded for both of these rhetorical strategies as binary variables. Lastly, I coded for references to the **American people and American cultural values** as either absent, indirect or direct. After testing several possibilities, the final model tests for the presence or absence of an *indirect* reference.

5.3: Action of Statement

The action of statements was coded using four variables, all of which are separate from the interaction context, rhetorical devices and topic of the statement. Two variables, **attacks** and **praise**, are fairly self-explanatory and presented here as 0/1, present or absent variables. Statements were coded regarding whether or not they include **policy** discussion, in the same manner. Either explaining or justifying a policy is treated as "policy discussion." The fourth action variable included in the model is **delivery of good or bad news**. For purposes of this

paper, statements including news that the president evaluates as good or bad are placed in one category, while statements containing no news or neutral (unevaluated) news are in another category.

5.4: Topic of Statement

Statements were coded on whether or not they fell under five broad topics of news coverage, to use as control variables. **Military or armed conflict** refers to conflicts that involve the use, possible use, implied use, or buildup of military power by one or more sides. It includes all statements about the United States military. **Other foreign affairs** is a separate category, and these two categories are mutually exclusive. **Economy** is a third category, which can overlap with either international relations category. **Non-economic domestic affairs** is a fourth category, mutually exclusive from the first three. Finally, **security** is used as a fifth category. Here, security is defined broadly: any time the president describes a need for security or something that people need to be protected from, it is coded as "security." Thus, recessions and events like Y2K could fit in this category. The security category can co-exist with any other category of news. Because they are all 0/1 variables, I present the summary statistics as percentages of how frequently the variable appears in the data.

Table 3.1: Summary Statistics of all Independent and Control Variables

VARIABLE	Frequency	VARIABLE	Frequency
Topic of President's Statement		*Rhetorical Devices*	
Military or armed conflict	40.96%	Oratory devices	21.29%
Other foreign	9.64%	Facts	5.39%
Economy	18.53%	Paraphrases	28.23%
Other domestic	42.40%	References to America	6.66%
Security	13.14%	Markers of subjectivity	15.20%
		Declarations of importance	8.72%
Content of Statement		*Question-Answer Format*	
Attack	18.42%	Repeated question	13.14%
Praise	14.52%	Refusals to answer	3.50%
Policy	38.32%	References to prior question	6.42%
Good or bad news	35.34%	Topic shifts	22.26%

* Note: N = 1,743. Because statements can be classified under multiple topics, the frequencies for all topics combined add to more than 100 percent.

6: Descriptive Analysis

While politicians avoiding journalists' questions is something we expect in a news interview, we know relatively little about when those evasions take place. Are there certain topics where presidents are more likely to try and shift the topic of the question, like foreign policy? Are presidents more likely to shift the topic to engage in certain behaviors? We can imagine two hypotheticals. In one case, presidents only criticize other people if the premise of a reporter's question gives them the opportunity to be critical. At the other extreme, criticism would only be used as a prepared talking point. When the president doesn't want to answer a question directly, he criticizes someone instead. One way to examine these possibilities is to compare what presidents do once they shift the topic.

Table 3.2: Percent of Phrases coded as Topic Shifts, By Topic or Substantive Action in Statement

Condition	% Off Topic	N
All Phrases	22.26%	1743
Topics		
Military / Armed Conflict	29.13%	714
Other Foreign	18.45%	168
Economy	12.69%	323
Other Domestic	18.40%	739
Security	25.33%	229
Actions		
Attack	25.23%	321
Praise	22.13%	253
Policy	20.36%	668
Good/Bad News	25.97%	616

Table 3.2 lists the frequency of presidents going off topic, given that they are discussing a particular topic or using a certain substantive action in speech. In other words, 22.26 percent of all statements were off topic. 29.13 percent of all statements dealing with armed foreign conflicts and the military were off topic. Presidents were more likely to go off topic when talking about the military. This isn't particularly surprising. Public statements have the effect of articulating new foreign policy, so presidents may want to be more careful and duck any question that could have major consequences. Presidents may feel they have an advantage in going "off topic" when talking about armed conflicts since they often have more knowledge about what is going on than reporters (Baum and Groeling 2009). However, the off-topic responses on military matters were disproportionately from the 2006 Bush conference, when reality "snapped back" and reporters asked about topics where they were no longer at a major information disadvantage. More peaceful foreign policy (like trade) and all domestic policy have below average rates of going off topic. Tendencies are not quite as strong for substantive actions. Attacks are off-topic 25.23 percent of the time, largely because of presidents criticizing journalists.

Table 3.3: Percent of Phrases With a Particular Substantive Action in Speech, By Micro-Interactional Context of Statement

	Attack	Praise	Policy	Good/Bad News
All Phrases	18.42%	14.52%	38.32%	35.34%
Off Topic	20.88%	14.43%	35.05%	41.24%
Repeated Q	21.83%	14.41%	32.75%	34.50%
Off Topic & Repeat	24.51%	17.65%	23.53%	34.31%

Table 3.3 compares the frequency of different substantive actions in speech, based on the statement's micro-interactional context. The way that presidents behave when asked a question a second time are similar to how they behave when going off topic: more criticisms, more evaluations of events in the world as either positive or negative, and fewer discussions of policy. What stands out here is when presidents avoid the topic of a repeated question. In these cases, the rate of criticizing someone jumps from 18.42 percent to 24.51 percent. Ironically, praise is also more likely in these interactions. What plummets is explaining or justifying policy. These policy discussions were a major part of the press conferences in this study, comprising 38.32 percent of all statements. When presidents go off topic in response to a repeated question, policy discussion plummets to 23.53 percent of statements. Presidents may prefer explaining or justifying their policies in their initial response. When journalists ask a repeated question, they suggest that initial response wasn't good enough. The president may retort by ignoring the premise of the question and any broader call to talk about policy altogether.

7: Hypotheses

In this section I provide several theoretical mechanisms to explain why newspaper writers are more likely to publish or paraphrase one statement instead of another. In this study I will focus on mechanisms based on social interaction and rhetorical devices, neither of which has been examined in prior studies. My set of hypotheses is not meant to be exhaustive. Many

aspects of a statement that could make it quotable are treated as control variables, like the topic of a statement. I argue that micro social interaction can create additional meaning for a statement, having an independent effect on what gets in to newspapers. As I will explain in more detail later, the outcome of interest for these hypotheses is how many newspapers publish a particular statement, whether measured by quotes or paraphrases.

7.1: Micro interaction and negotiating topics

As I described earlier, presidents have several ways of trying to avoid topics they do not wish to talk about. One of the clearest ways to reject a topic is to refuse to answer questions on that topic. We would expect direct refusals to answer to be more likely to be quoted than other statements because they are highly conspicuous and extractable, to draw from Clayman (1995). Refusals tend to be conspicuous in any interaction, because there is a normative expectation that questions should be answered (Heritage 1984). They may be particularly important for journalists as compared to other audiences (Clayman 1990). Journalists often see themselves as watchdogs. They ask increasingly aggressive questions. A source refusing to answer a tough question may bring more attention to the issue.

Hypothesis 1: Any statement where a president refuses to answer a question will be more likely to be quoted and paraphrased than any statement that lacks an explicit refusal, net of other variables.

Explicit refusals to answer are relatively rare. Veteran sources often prefer to try and change the topic of a question. "Answer the question you wish you were asked, instead of the question you were actually asked" is a common instruction from communication strategists. This maxim is so commonly repeated that it is conventional wisdom in Washington. However, sociological research in conversation analysis suggests the "answer the question you wish you

were asked" strategy isn't as clearly beneficial as it may appear to be. When people ask a

question, they project a range of answers (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977). Journalists

carefully word their questions in a way that explicitly states a range of acceptable answers while

precluding others (Clayman and Heritage 2002a, 2002b). Interviewees can always try to wiggle

their way out of journalists' narrowing conditions. They often do.

The problem with answering the question you wish you were asked is that journalists and

the audience are likely to notice the shift. In ordinary conversation, people anticipate a range of

acceptable answers to questions. If you ask what is my favorite course to teach and I say

cheeseburgers, you would probably give me an odd look or ask if I really teach a class about

cheeseburgers. Journalists routinely complain about politicians who don't answer the question

when they go on talk shows. Jon Stewart and other talk show hosts often bond with journalists

appearing as the nightly guest by complaining about politicians who are less forthcoming.

Clayman and Heritage document how reporters may respond to these evasions during the news

interview, either by challenging the response or moving to a different topic where they are more

likely to get a direct response. But how will reporters respond in subsequent news stories?

One possibility is that journalists will show their disapproval of sources changing the

topic when it comes time to write the final story, regardless of whether they signal disapproval in

the interview. Journalists may have a personal bias against sources who "spin" them. They may

believe non-responsiveness is legitimate news.[22] Either way, journalists may have incentives to

repeat off-topic statements more often than on-topic statements. Quoting George W. Bush and

then saying, "this answer is spin" will draw accusations of bias. Journalists wouldn't explicitly

say "this answer is spin" – this would violate the principles behind journalistic objectivity rituals

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[22] Academics disagree on this topic. Scholars like Patterson (1993) and other critics of journalistic power would see this as journalistic over-reach. Many critical scholars advocate journalists being *even more* aggressive towards non-responsive politicians instead of following objectivity rituals.

(Tuchman 1972). What journalists could do is quote both the question and the response, trusting the audience to recognize that the response doesn't correspond to the question.

The other possibility is that journalists will be less likely to include off-topic statements in their stories. Off-topic responses may be less extractible than on-topic responses. Journalists may see any response that doesn't directly correspond to the question as less legitimate. Reporters hate spin, and they may want to keep spin out of their stories. If directly criticizing a source who gives an off-topic response is too difficult, refusing to publish the off-topic statement may be the easiest way to resist spin. In this study I am using presidential press conferences as an empirical case. We would expect that journalists might be more likely to defer to presidents than other sources. In the first empirical chapter I found that presidents get more of the quotations (as a volume of words) than all other sources put together. Therefore, if journalists are less likely to include a president's off-topic statement we should assume this might apply to other types of news interviews as well.

Hypothesis 2a (Increased Aggression): Journalists will be <u>more</u> likely to quote or paraphrase a presidential statement that does not directly correspond to the topic of the immediately preceding question than to quote or paraphrase an on-topic statement.

Hypothesis 2b (Avoiding Spin): Journalists will be <u>less</u> likely to quote or paraphrase a presidential statement that does not directly correspond to the topic of the immediately preceding question than to quote or paraphrase an on-topic statement.

Whether journalists draw attention to inadequate responses during the press conference could affect the quotability of these responses. For example, a journalist asked Bill Clinton a question about whether he is backing away from his commitment to universal health care during his August 1994 press conference. Clinton responded by blaming Republicans who withdrew

their support. The journalist repeated his question about *Clinton's* commitment, but Clinton didn't budge. Fifteen minutes later, another journalist circled back and asked about Clinton's commitment in a different way. Clinton stuck to his initial strategy of criticizing Republicans, refusing to talk directly about whether he has changed his goals. If avoiding off-topic statements is journalists' path of least resistance when confronted with spin, it may be possible for presidents to overcome this resistance by continuing to give off-topic responses to a particular line of inquiry. If journalists came in with a preferred agenda, they may have to give it up if the president refuses to go along. Starting with the second consecutive indirect response, journalists may concede that Clinton would not talk about his current health care goals, so they have to publish his criticism of Republicans if they want to write a story about the floundering health care bill. Hypotheses 2b and 3 fit together. If both are supported, this suggests journalists will only put up so much of a fight before accepting whatever response a president gives.

Hypothesis 3: Journalists will be more likely to quote or paraphrase an off-topic statement if the statement is in response to a question that has already been asked once before, as compared to the first set of off-topic responses to a particular question.

7.2: Other actions in political speech

Along with social interaction influencing subsequent media content, there are a wide variety of other actions an interviewee could engage in that would influence subsequent reporting. Instead of explaining all of these actions at length and providing hypotheses for each, I will choose one set of rhetorical devices and one substantive action of political speech that best exemplify these categories. I coded for six rhetorical devices and four substantive actions. The variables that do not get used as independent variables with full hypotheses will be treated as control variables.

Sociologists who study rhetoric and conversation have identified a number of rhetorical devices that should make statements more quotable. Atkinson (1984) inductively studied the content of famous political speeches and subsequent news coverage. He identified several formal rhetorical devices that make a statement more quotable, like the use of contrasts and three-part lists. Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) found these two rhetorical devices greatly increased the likelihood of a speaker receiving applause in political speeches. They theorize formal rhetorical devices should make statements more quotable. Formal rhetorical devices project a pause in speech, making that statement more conspicuous. However, it remains to be seen whether formal rhetorical devices would make a statement more quotable after controlling for other substantive actions in the statement and its topic.

Hypothesis 4: Statements that contain contrasts or three part lists are more likely to be quoted than statements that lack these rhetorical devices.

Speakers can engage in many substantive actions, but the one that has received the most attention in both academic and popular discussions is criticism. Presidents disproportionately criticize members of the opposing political party and antagonistic foreign governments, but they may also criticize members of their own party, actors outside of government, and even reporters. Because journalists often present news events as stories of conflict (cf Epstein 1973; Klinenberg 2005), they may be more likely to quote statements containing a criticism to one that does not. Who gets criticized could also play an important role. Criticizing members of one's own political party should be more quotable than criticizing opponents, since it is unexpected (Groeling 2010). However, we would expect even predictable criticisms like Bush criticizing Saddam Hussein to receive more attention than a statement that lacks a criticism.

Hypothesis 5: Statements that contain a criticism are more likely to be quoted and paraphrased than statements that do not contain a criticism.[23]

8: Estimation

For this study, I use two outcome variables. The first is whether or not a particular statement from the president is placed in quotation marks. Each of the four newspapers in the study – the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *USA Today* – was initially coded separately for not quoting (0) or **quoting** (1) a particular statement. If any part of the statement is quoted in any story in that newspaper the day after the conference, than it is coded as a quote. Otherwise, it is coded as no quote. I then combine the results for each newspaper to create a measure for the total number of newspapers (out of 4) that quote that statement.

A similar measure is used for paraphrases. The only difference is with regards to statements that are both quoted and paraphrased. News stories frequently use statements like the following: Bush said it was "urban myth" that his administration had lost focus on capturing Osama bin Laden (Rutenberg and Stolberg 2006). In these cases, a part of the statement is quoted, the "urban myth." The rest of the statement – Bush denying his administration had lost focus on capturing bin Laden – is paraphrased. I tested regression models coding these statements as both quotes and paraphrases, and other models treating these statements as quotes only (giving quotations preference over paraphrases). Because these overlaps are rare occurrences, both sets of models have similar results, so I will focus on models treating overlaps as quotes only.

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[23] As a robustness check, I ran a model with each target of an attack being treated as a separate independent variable. Many of the regression coefficients had close to similar sizes, but standard errors were much higher due to small sample sizes. I ran a second set of models, separating out members of the opposing party, the president's party, foreign actors and journalists. Most criticisms made statements significantly more quotable at the $p < .001$ level, but presidents criticizing members of their own party or journalists were not more quotable. See Appendix C.

I utilize a negative binomial regression to analyze the data. This form of regression is chosen for two theoretical reasons, both of which are confirmed by the empirical data. First, my outcome variable is a count – the number of times a statement is quoted or paraphrased. Second, the outcome is not evenly distributed. It is a rare occurrence when statements get quoted in a newspaper. As shown in Figure 3.1 below, only 326 statements (18.7 percent) are quoted at least once in one of the four major newspapers of the data set. Only five percent of the president's statements (N = 88) are quoted in multiple newspapers. Paraphrases are more common than quotes, but follow the same distribution. Only 26.8 percent of statements are paraphrased, and the most of those statements only appear in one newspaper. Less than one percent of the president's statements (16 of 1,743) appear in all four newspapers in some form.

Figure 3.1: Distribution of Quotes and Paraphrases from Four Press Conference Dataset (N = 1743)
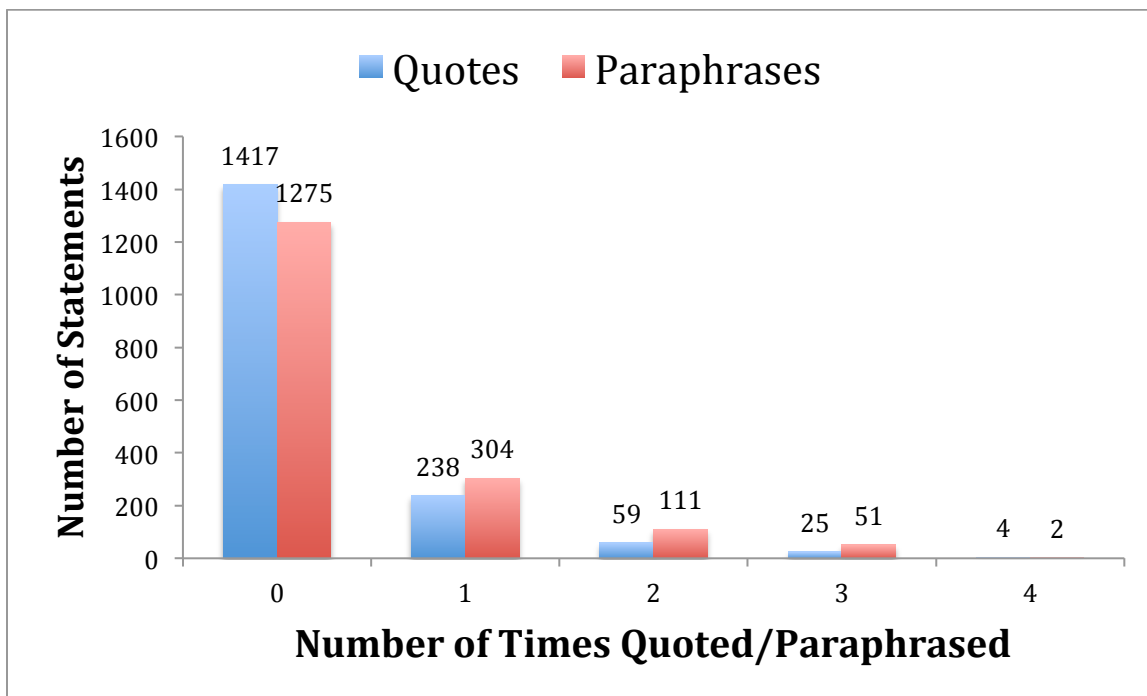
When presidents are asked a question in a press conference, they rarely give a one statement answer. Answers can be quite lengthy. However, each statement that responds to a

question is highly correlated with other statements responding to the same question. If one

statement is quoted, the next statement may be more quotable in order to produce a more

complete quotation or more accurate paraphrase. Other statements responding to the same

question may be less quotable and directly rivalrous with the quoted statement Therefore, the

standard errors for all statements responding to a particular question are clustered together as part

of a random effects model, to try and control for auto-correlation.

Full models involving paraphrases ran in to slight problems converging. Each

independent and control variable in the regression model have both a regression coefficient and

standard errors that have face validity. However, the constant for the full paraphrase model is

6.260, with a standard error of 86.32. This suggests a phrase like "I ate a ham sandwich for

lunch" – a zero for all independent and control variables – would be paraphrased in an average of

523 newspapers. The 95 percent confidence interval ranges from essentially 0 to $1.57 * 10^{76}$.

Since the range of possible outcomes is paraphrasing in zero to 4 newspapers, the constant is

impossible to achieve in reality. While any prediction of the total number of newspapers

paraphrasing a particular sentence is impossible, the regression coefficients appear to be stable

enough to shed light on my research questions.

9: Quantitative Results

Table 3.4: Negative Binomial Regression Model of <u>Quotations</u> in Presidential Press Conferences
(N = 1743 statements)

	Model 1	Model 2
Topic of Statement		
Military / Armed conflict	0.344	0.363
	(0.318)	(0.312)
Other Foreign	-0.340	-0.301
	(0.365)	(0.350)
Economy	-0.452[+]	-0.445[+]
	(0.242)	(0.240)
Other Domestic	0.120	0.117

87

	(0.262)	(0.255)
Security	0.438$^+$	0.350
	(0.226)	(0.226)
Substantive Actions		
Attack	0.789***	0.718***
	(0.133)	(0.131)
Praise	-0.049	-0.078
	(0.171)	(0.131)
Policy	0.410***	0.472***
	(0.118)	(0.120)
Good / Bad News	0.055	0.128
	(0.124)	(0.125)
Rhetorical Devices		
Oratory Devices	0.241$^+$	0.282*
	(0.129)	(0.128)
Facts	-0.552$^+$	-0.497$^+$
	(0.304)	(0.300)
Paraphrases	-0.046	-0.046
	(0.124)	(0.124)
References to America	0.332	0.420*
	(0.203)	(0.205)
Markers of Subjectivity	0.381**	0.344**
	(0.134)	(0.134)
Declarations of Importance	0.006	0.078
	(0.195)	(0.193)
Micro Interaction		
Refusals to Answer		-0.115
		(0.351)
Reference to Prior Question		0.434*
		(0.198)
Repeated Question		0.170
		(0.319)
Topic Shifts		-0.978***
		(0.229)
Repeat Q x Topic Shift		1.120**
		(0.379)
Constant	0.499	0.913
	(0.555)	(0.750)
Dispersion Term	2.484	2.484
	(0.045)	(0.045)
Log Likelihood	-999.285	-999.285

* Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, + $p < .1$

Table 3.5: Negative Binomial Regression Model of <u>Paraphrases</u> in Presidential Press Conferences (N = 1743 statements)

	Model 1	Model 2
Topic of Statement		
Military / Armed conflict	0.483*	0.544*
	(0.243)	(0.250)
Other Foreign	-0.027	0.029
	(0.197)	(0.193)
Economy	0.223	0.221
	(0.207)	(0.209)
Other Domestic	0.218	0.212
	(0.195)	(0.195)
Security	0.447**	0.493***
	(0.153)	(0.155)
Substantive Actions		
Attack	0.257*	0.234*
	(0.110)	(0.107)
Praise	-0.041	-0.037
	(0.140)	(0.138)
Policy	0.288***	0.283**
	(0.090)	(0.091)
Good / Bad News	0.329***	0.369***
	(0.094)	(0.093)
Rhetorical Devices		
Oratory Devices	-0.270*	-0.235*
	(0.114)	(0.112)
Facts	0.330^{+}	0.367*
	(0.172)	(0.171)
Paraphrases	0.101	0.088
	(0.097)	(0.096)
References to America	0.014	0.046
	(0.171)	(0.171)
Markers of Subjectivity	0.244*	0.205^{+}
	(0.118)	(0.117)
Declarations of Importance	-0.068	-0.022
	(0.156)	(0.155)
Micro Interaction		
Refusals to Answer		-0.056
		(0.311)
Reference to Prior Question		0.128
		(0.170)

Repeated Question		0.095
		(0.366)
Topic Shifts		-0.629***
		(0.152)
Repeat Q x Topic Shift		-0.095
		(0.339)
Constant	2.038	6.260
	(1.483)	(86.32)
Dispersion Term	3.609	7.583
	(1.410)	(86.24)
Log Likelihood	-1236.25	-1223.2

* Note: * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001, + p < .1
* Note 2: Constants in the paraphrase models are outside the parameters of the model. All results based on paraphrases should be taken with a grain of salt.

9.1: Building a baseline model without micro social interaction

To best establish whether the micro interaction between journalists and presidents affects substantive news content, it is useful to start with a baseline model that does not include any of the variables for micro interaction. I will start by walking through the results for these models, first for the quote model (in Table Q) and then the paraphrase model (in Table P). Negative binomial regression models are multiplicative. Looking at the first quotes model, we see attacks have a regression coefficient of 0.789. This coefficient means statements containing a criticism are quoted in $e \wedge 0.789 = 2.2$ times as often as statements without a criticism, net of other variables. Criticisms may be inherently more quotable than other statements, because they fit in to the conflict narratives of print journalism (Epstein 1973; Grand 2011; Klinenberg 2005). Specific criticisms are some of the few statements to be quoted in three or four of the newspapers in the dataset. For example, Bush commented on Zimbabwe's 2002 election by saying, "We do not recognize the outcome of the election [in Zimbabwe] because we think it's flawed." It is was one of the four statements quoted in every newspaper.

Because each independent and control variable is coded as a particular trait being present or absent, we can easily compare the substantive strength of different variables. Statements where presidents explain or justify a policy were quoted 51 percent more often than statements that lacked these policy references. Journalists have always treated on-the-record press conferences as part performance, but they are interested in substance as well. Out of the 56 articles in this study, just over half (55 percent) include policy declarations or justifications as the first quote.[24] Statements where a president includes a marker of subjectivity significantly increase quotation, helping journalists identify what comes next as material that needs to be placed in quotation marks in order to maintain objectivity (Tuchman 1972). Journalists only quote the subjectivity marker between 55 to 60 percent of the time, depending on the newspaper.

The statements that journalists choose to paraphrase are quite different from the material that gets quoted. Criticisms have the strongest effect on quotation, but the effect on paraphrasing is much less dramatic. Journalists may prefer to place criticisms in quotation marks to distance themselves from the attack – this is harder when paraphrasing. Presidents explaining or justifying a policy has less of an effect on paraphrasing than quotation. However, statements where a president describes something as either good or bad news are more likely to be paraphrased than quoted. Reporters may feel this weaker form of offering an opinion is safer to put in their own words. As we might expect, the rhetorical devices that make a statement stand out for quotation have less of an impact on paraphrases. Finally, statements on the military and armed conflicts are significantly more likely to be paraphrased than other topics. Statements on security have similar regression coefficients in both the quotes and paraphrases model, but smaller standard errors for

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[24] Note that not all 56 lead quotes come from presidential press conferences. A story on Zimbabwe, for example, may start with an account from Zimbabwe and insert Bush's quote later in the story. Because this is a study of how often a president gets quoted, I do not separate between stories focused on the press conference and stories that only make passing references to part of a conference.

the paraphrase model moves the p-value from .052 to .004. Since topics are a control variable, I will not discuss the methods issues surrounding reliance on p-values in more detail.

9.2: Incorporating Social Interaction

The second model in each table contains all the independent variables, including variables for social interaction. To start, notice how a president explicitly refusing to answer a question has little impact on whether journalists publish the refusal or not. Hypothesis 1 is not supported. Second, notice how the coefficients from the limited models are relatively unaffected in the full models. Formal oratory devices are the only variable that changes significance, as a small boost in substantive strength pushes the variable from "insignificant" (p = 0.062) to statistical significance (p = 0.028) in the quotation model, supporting Hypothesis 4. (Ironically, these statements are significantly *less* likely to be paraphrased.) Attacks are still highly quotable and widely paraphrased, compared to statements that lack criticisms, supporting Hypothesis 5.

Statements that do not conform to the topic of a journalist's question have a regression coefficient of -0.978 in the quote model, and are statistically significant at the .001 level. Negative coefficients may seem unusual with a count model, because we cannot have a negative number of quotes. In this model, negative coefficients indicate a decreasing count, getting closer and closer but never quite approaching zero. Off topic statements are quoted e ^ -0.978 = 37.6 percent as often as on-topic statements. The penalty is weaker when we broaden the model to paraphrases. However, in each model the penalty for going off topic is larger than the bonus for any substantive action – like a criticism – that attracts journalists' attention. Hypothesis 2b is strongly supported, while hypothesis 2a is rejected. As an example, consider the following question and answer pair from 2006.

Q: "Former Secretary of State Colin Powell says the world is beginning
to doubt the moral basis for our fight against terrorism…don't you
think that Americans and the rest of the world are beginning to wonder
whether you're following a flawed strategy?"
A: (in part) "And that's what's going to be necessary to protect this
country, is to listen carefully to what they [terrorists] say and stay ahead
of them as they try to attack us."

Bush's statement predicts bad news – terrorists will try to attack us – but it does not

actually propose or justify a policy or criticize terrorists. Security was one of the more popular

topics in these press conferences. Presidents providing good or bad news made a statement more

likely to be paraphrased. A journalist may mention that Bush said he was concerned about the

threat of future terrorist attacks. However, these positives are not enough to outweigh the

negative impact of Bush giving a response that has little to do with the question about Colin

Powell and morality when it comes time for journalists to decide which statements are worthy of

quotation.

There is a strong limit on how much journalists will resist quoting off-topic statements, as

shown by the interaction term for off topic statements and repeated questions. To start, the

coefficient for repeated questions measures a baseline effect for *on-topic* responses to a question

that gets asked a second time (or a third, a fourth, etc.). The effect is positive, albeit small and

not close to statistical significance. The coefficients I just described for off-topic responses are

also a baseline effect; they mainly describe responses from the first time a question was asked.

To measure off-topic responses to a repeated question, we add these coefficients together with

the interaction term. Off topic responses to repeated questions were quoted 36.7 percent *more*

often than on topic responses to questions asked for the first time, controlling for other aspects of

the statement.

The interaction term is particularly striking because presidents call on reporters to ask questions. Presidents have to power to let a reporter ask a follow up or deny it. In this regression model, my variable for "repeated questions" does not distinguish between immediate follow-ups asked by the same reporter versus a second reporter picking up on a line of questioning. In either case, journalists know their ability to pursue a particular topic and a get better answer is limited. Before the press conference begins, each reporter has promised his or her editor a certain volume of news content. If reporters keep pursuing the same topic because the initial answer was unsatisfactory, subsequent answers may not be any better. We don't know if journalists came in to the press conference with a preferred agenda, but these results imply limits on a journalist's ability to pursue an agenda unilaterally. Instead of wasting the entire press conference, journalists eventually relent. They treat responses to the second or third or fifth question as more quotable than the first response.

In the paraphrase model, the interaction term between going off topic and repeating questions is small and negative, suggesting different rules for the legitimacy of quotes versus paraphrases. Off topic responses to initial questions were paraphrased 53.28 percent as often as on topic responses. Off topic responses to repeated questions were paraphrased 53.24 percent as often – essentially no difference. Hypothesis 3 is only supported for quotations. Journalists ordinarily see off-topic responses as evasive and less credible. They do not want to publish off-topic statements in their stories. But journalists need to include some quotes from a press conference. If the only statements they could possibly quote are off-topic, then journalists relent. Using quotations in order to display objectivity (Tuchman 1972) trumps their aversion to publishing evasive responses. A journalist who wants to write about Republicans' criticism of Bush's torture policy in 2006 needs to quote Bush, even if Bush never directly responds to the

criticism from his party. After inserting a quote, the journalist has done his or her ritualistic duty and can discard the rest of Bush's response in the final story.

The relative lack of change in coefficients from the limited model to the full model suggests that the meaning created through patterns of social interaction is largely independent of the meaning created by talking about particular topics, using particular substantive actions (like attacks) or particular rhetorical devices. One possibility is that journalists weigh the social interaction context and the rest of the statement on a scale. Off topic statements can tilt the scale towards exclusion, but other positives can tilt journalists back towards inclusion. Another possibility is that journalists use a two-step decision-making process. The interaction context determines whether a statement is a legitimate response – a direct and on topic response to the journalist's question. Print journalists may sort statements in to categories of valid and invalid response, and then look to write a story based entirely off the valid response pool. If the valid response pool isn't enough – it often isn't – then journalists will go to the "close as I'll get" pool of persistent evasions.

10: Discussion

In September of 2006, George W. Bush called a press conference to try and stave off a wave of criticism about his policies regarding the treatment of suspected terrorists and deteriorating peace in Iraq. At one point, Bush explained that he felt the Geneva Conventions' definition was "vague." "What does that mean, outrages against human dignity?" James Gerstenzang and Noam N. Levey summarized the conference in the *Los Angeles Times* by saying "the president's one hour news conference dealt almost exclusively with issues related to terrorism and Iraq." This is the 41st sentence in a 47 sentence story, and it is the only time these reporters use the word Iraq. Of the 17 solo Bush press conferences I studied in the first empirical

95

chapter of my dissertation, this press conference received the *least* news coverage in the *New York Times*. Bush facing the press – which was acting like a tribune of the people (Clayman 2002) – should have attracted widespread attention. Holding the conference on a Friday would take away some news coverage, but shouldn't take this much. Could Bush's skill in social interaction have cooled the potential firestorm?

My study suggests that journalists acting aggressive towards powerful politicians in news interviews is more about the live performance than subsequent behavior. Reporters ask increasingly aggressive questions (Clayman and Heritage 2002; Clayman et al 2007, 2010). They follow up on poor responses. But leading newspapers rarely hold presidents accountable for repeated evasions in the final news story. Labeling a president as evasive may be seen as a violation of objectivity rituals and draw complaints from the president's supporters. Completely ignoring the president is not a valid threat, since any news organizations that follows through on some sort of boycott would look foolish unless every news organization follows suit. Journalists can lay traps for Bush and Clinton by wording tricky questions and exerting normative pressure for a response. But if Bush and Clinton could escape all the hostile questions without a major gaffe, they could show off that they were accountable. Reporters have to produce some news story. They tend to start by crossing out evasive responses. However, if the only option is an evasive response, reporters have no choice but to publish it.

My regression model does not separate between different forms of off topic responses, but the Bush 2006 press conference suggests shifting questions by talking about the past may be the safest ground for politicians. Instead of talking about what is happening right now, or what may happen in the future, politicians can keep repeating slogans and responses that were successful months or years ago. Turning back to the past is relatively transparent and obvious as

rhetorical strategies go. Reporters will be annoyed, since news should be new. But there is relatively little that reporters can do about their annoyance while maintaining their objective stance. Gaffes and gotcha moments are far less likely if a politician repeats what he has already been quoted as saying – the press has already vetted these stories. Refusing to answer a question or telling a reporter he has the wrong priorities can lead to a dramatic moment and call attention to the conflict. Politicians who repeat their priorities no matter how many ways a reporter asks a question are so boring they can defuse hostile reporters.

Topic shifts based on shifting chronological perspective and creating boredom may be more important now than the time period I studied, due to the growth of social media. Bush's controversial 2006 press conference was largely forgotten because there were few people who would watch and comment about it online in real time. An interesting comparison is Indiana Republican Governor Mike Pence's Sunday morning interview on ABC's *This Week* in March 2015. Pence went on *This Week* to explain why he signed a "religious freedom" bill that many argue will allow private businesses to discriminate against gays and lesbians. In general, Sunday morning talk shows receive sparse attention. However, Pence attracted national headlines, widespread social media attention, and immediate corporate boycotts. One explanation for the rapid response to the interview was that each time George Stephanopoulos asked whether Indiana's new law would allow discrimination, Pence tried to shift the topic, saying what this law was "really about" was protecting religious freedom. By shifting the topic through explicitly challenging the interviewer's priorities, Pence helped create an argument that made national news.

Political partisans frequently complain that mainstream journalists are too aggressive with their side, but don't do enough to hold opposing politicians accountable when they write

news stories. Some of this is because people tend to see the news as biased against them (Vallone, Ross and Lepper 1985). At the same time, news audiences probably do not stop to consider that asking questions live on camera is a very different performance than writing a news story. Live interviews try to balance neutralism with aggressiveness (Clayman and Heritage 2002s). When writing a news story, journalistic aggressiveness often takes a backseat to the moderating rituals of objectivity. My results imply that there is little direct connection between aggressive questioning and aggressive reporting in mainstream media, because objectivity rituals play a strong moderating effect. With the rise of social media, I would expect an indirect effect. Journalistic aggressiveness during the interaction is now easy for activists to share online. Activists do not back down like professional journalists, for better and for worse (see the next chapter). Journalists could then treat these online activists as news sources – embedding their tweets as a way to maintain objectivity. The micro dynamics of interaction during news interviews may have a stronger effect on social media users than objective journalists, but more work needs to be done to test this hypothesis.

11: Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined whether the type of interaction between presidents and journalists affects subsequent news coverage, independent of what a president says. By using press conferences as a case, I can compare what gets quoted to what does not on a sentence-by-sentence basis. I found that journalists at major newspapers are very sensitive to statements that do not correspond to the topic of a president's question and are much less likely to publish these statements. Presidents do not have the power to get whatever they want published in the news. However, presidents have the power to keep avoiding journalists' lines of questioning. Repeating a question is a form of aggressiveness, because it shows the initial response was inadequate in

some way. The aggressiveness during the interaction does not carry over to subsequent reporting. Reporters give in to presidents who continue to make off topic statements, treating spin as better than nothing.

Chapter 4: Overlap or Echo Chamber?

Comparing Elite Media, Partisan Blogs and Other Bloggers Preferences from the 2008 Election

Less than a month before the 2008 United States presidential election, Republican candidate John McCain held a rally for increasingly angry supporters in Minnesota. His campaign was struggling, so several people spoke out to encourage a more confrontational campaign strategy. McCain passed the microphone to one woman who said, "I don't trust Obama. I have read about him and he's an Arab." McCain shook his head and replied, "No ma'am. He's a decent family man, a citizen that I just happen to have disagreements with on fundamental issues. That's what this campaign is all about." The crowd booed McCain, the man they wanted to be president. Every time audience members claimed that Obama was a "liar" or a "terrorist," McCain praised Obama's decency, and the crowd booed. The outburst received widespread media attention, becoming a flashpoint for a wide range of politicians and commentators to discuss the emerging divisions within the Republican Party.

This unique combination of social identity and booing helps illustrate a critical difference between traditional "objective" journalism and other reactions to political speech. Booing is a common way for crowds to disaffiliate with a political speaker, building collective disagreement with the speaker's ideas (Clayman 1993). New partisan media encourages hosts to show outrage towards political opponents as a way to connect with their audience (Berry and Sobieraj 2013). In most areas of social life, people can actively show when they feel an action or idea has crossed their preferred social boundaries, using some sort of overt criticism to reinforce the boundary (see Lamont and Molnar 2002 for a review). Journalists following objectivity rituals do not have this opportunity. They are supposed to write in a way that distances the writer's

personal opinions from the final story, which can deflect accusations of bias (Tuchman 1972).

Many scholars have focused on how new media sites present information, but few studies have

examined whether new media organizations' ability to boo, mock and "troll" will systematically

change what they choose to write about in the first place.

With the proliferation of new websites dedicated to political news and commentary, it is

difficult to say how many of these sites pursue a completely independent set of things to write

about on a day-to-day basis during an election. Early theories of partisan media predicted a series

of partisan "echo chambers," with critics like Sunstein (2001) predicting massive self-

segregation and a lack of topical overlap. Multiple case studies show that partisan websites carve

out a niche for covering particular issues of social identity omitted by major media organizations.

Conservative bloggers introduced the concept of "anchor babies" (Ignatow and Williams 2011).

Progressive bloggers investigated the role of corporate-funded think tanks in producing Florida's

"Stand Your Ground" law and other similar laws after Trayvon Martin's death (Graeff et al

2014). Another possibility is that large partisan websites choose to write about events or

statements because they provide an opportunity to make opponents looks bad (Baum and

Groeling 2008) and/or demonstrate outrage (Sobieraj and Berry 2013). Another possibility is the

dynamics that cause reporters to focus on electoral politics instead of current policy (Grand

2011; Grossman and Kumar 1979) may apply to new media as well. Before tackling issues of

framing, stance and presentation bias it is important to find out whether elite media

organizations, large partisan blogs, smaller media organizations and smaller blogs are writing

about the same set of topics and speakers.

Drawing from the Memetracker database of over one million online news organizations

and blogs from the 2008 general election (Leskovec, Backstrom and Kleinberg 2009), I find

large news organizations and partisan blogs often relied on the same phrases as building blocks for writing about politics. Individual stories utilize different partisan frames and analysis on this foundation, as we would expect. My data is uniquely suited to test whether these differences in presentation are built on a common foundation – a common news agenda – for story selection. Large partisan blogs emphasized all areas of politics. They also had a distinctive pattern of repeating the statements of political *opponents* instead of friendly politicians. Elite newspaper and television network websites preferred repeating statements initially made by Obama, McCain or Palin versus any other speaker. Their interest in particular topics, like gender or foreign policy, was partially explained by which topics the candidates chose to talk about. Differences between what partisan blogs and large media organizations chose to write about are important to understanding how omission of a particular viewpoint means different things in different formats. However, the differences between people who write about U.S. politics as a vocation pale in comparison to the wide range of other media organizations and blogs in the dataset. Aside for large partisan blogs, the rest of the blogosphere was less likely to repeat most statements regarding politics – even politicians talking about how to cope with an unprecedented economic crisis. They resemble the people who booed McCain in person, reacting more to certain aspects of identity politics by separating their beliefs from the "transgressive" politician.

2: Necessity of Gatekeeping Mechanisms

Few if any scholars of journalism would argue that news content is a direct reflection of the inherent "newsworthiness" of ideas. Finding potential stories is a social process, which influences whether stories will be deemed worthy of publication (Epstein 1973; Gans 1979; Klinenberg 2005). Even if journalists knew about every potential story, they would lack the time to debate every alternative and the staff to pursue every lead. Given news organizations' limited

attention, they often defer to public officials as news sources (Benson 2009; Croteau and Hoynes 1994; Fishman 1980; Gitlin 1980; Oliver and Maney 2000). Some websites may completely rely on copying other websites instead of original reporting, but they suffer similar problems. No one can read everything that is written on the Internet, so online writers who take ideas from others still need to be selective about where they take ideas from. Every writer must be selective.

Selection biases – preferences for publishing certain kinds of information while avoiding others – are deceptively difficult to study (see Groeling 2013 for a review). People seeking media attention change their behavior. In many ways, it is probably for the best that journalists respond to the changing behavior of others seeking attention. Imagine what would it be like if some group of people writing about "current events" did not change their behavior in response to new events. Unfortunately, this complicates social scientific research on media content. When we see differences in content, how much are writers applying their own preferences and how much is there a common reaction to some external change? Studies that rely on a particular case or small number of cases for traditional content analysis often struggle to separate selection biases from potential changes in the behavior of sources. The behavior of sources is often ignored completely, and all variation in media content is attributed to the journalists' preferences. If we analyze a sample of events instead, we see sources' decisions have an independent effect on journalists' allocation of news coverage and the balance between sources (Grand 2011). Any analysis of whether journalists and partisan bloggers will select different topics to write about needs to find some way to control for the fact that different politicians will speak about different issues.

The Memetracker database initially developed by Leskovec, Backstrom and Kleinberg (2009) allows for a novel solution, using the repetition of phrases across a wide range of media

websites and blogs to see which ideas are considered "newsworthy" by a particular group of writers. Their algorithm matched variations on a phrase and combined them into "phrase clusters" by treating words that commonly appeared together as a social network. Their main goal was creating a data mining algorithm and dataset, explicitly leaving it to social scientists to follow up on analysis. Along with analyzing the pace and flow of diffusion, the dataset is valuable to filter out many forms of presentation bias to focus on selection bias. Assume we have three writers. A professional reporter writes a neutral story describing McCain getting booed by supporters in Minnesota after saying "he's a decent family man, a citizen." The liberal blogger portrays this as an example of a xenophobic right wing base that is going off the rails. The conservative blogger can't believe McCain's reply and wants something different. Holistically, these are very different stories with different meanings. Focusing on the differences is important, but it reinforces the idea of partisan echo chambers with vastly different content. In my hypothetical example, each writer has the same foundation: McCain talking about Obama by saying "he's a decent family man, a citizen." The Memetracker database can help us sort out whether audiences are exposed to different agendas or different partisan takes on the same ideas which form the backbone of a news agenda during an election.

2.1: Avoidance and Disapproval as Logic of Disassociation

Sociologists, communication scholars and political scientists have mainly developed theoretical concepts of inclusion and exclusion in the media based on studying the "objective" era of American media. In this era, journalists had a long-standing norm of presenting multiple positions as a way of distancing themselves from opinion and the resulting criticisms (Tuchman 1972). When professional norms skew towards inclusiveness, it makes sense to argue that exclusion is an explicit rejection of a group of people or their professed ideas (Fishman 1980;

104

Hallin 1986). Exclusion is a common theme for sociologists studying the media portrayal of social issues, where news organizations consistently privileged the status quo over more progressive alternatives (Benson 2006, 2009; Benson and Saguy 2005; Gitlin 1980; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Hunt 1999). In these cases, it is often difficult to know whether journalists are rejecting an idea as compared to the relatively low status of people promoting the idea. Reporters' well-established preference for highly ranked officials (Benson 2009; Fishman 1980; Gans 1979; Grand 2011; Oliver and Maney 2000) may matter more than the ideas people talk about.

I argue it helps to understand the concept of media exclusion as disapproval by considering the logic of association and disassociation found in many cultural fields with ambiguous value. Podolny (2010) argues that when quality is ambiguous, cultural producers try to distinguish themselves as elites by only associating with high prestige cultural goods. They explicitly separate themselves from lower prestige actors. Journalists' decisions about which sources to exclude could make more sense as a prestige-based logic of disassociation than a judgment on the source's ideology or insight. During an election, even sitting presidents struggle to get public attention if they are not running for office again (Grand 2011; Grossman and Kumar 1979). If the logic of association and disassociation is a part of why media producers exclude particular sources, we would expect this status-based exclusion to be the most prevalent for large newspapers and television networks. Since elite news organizations often have fewer ways to brand themselves with a particular position or aesthetic style than other websites, and "quality" is fairly ambiguous, they have to complete based on prestige.

Hypothesis 1: Elite media organizations will be more likely to use phrases initially said by any member of a presidential ticket than other sources, net of the topic.

2.2: Trolling – Inclusion as Disapproval

One alternative to media organizations ignoring sources they disagree with is for a writer to explicitly focus on a particular politician or idea as a way to show their disapproval. In face-to-face interaction, people have many ways to show disapproval without explicitly saying "I disapprove of X!" People can use body language (Goffman 1959) or ask someone to repeat a question (Clayman and Heritage 2002). Groups can boo (Clayman 1993). All of these actions can make sense to people in the interaction, because they have observed prior steps in the interaction. Media publications and blog posts have a specific start point. It is very difficult to start by writing "Worst. Argument. Ever." The audience needs to know what someone is writing about before the critique can make sense. As a result, one of the main ways to critique someone online is by briefly quoting their objectionable posting, then trying to show why it is outrageous.

Berry and Sobieraj (2013) argue this form of outrage is particularly prevalent in partisan media. The large volume of criticism, incivility and anger in these formats suggests a different logic for who gets included and who gets avoided. In order to make criticisms and anger understandable to the audience, a writer must start by explaining what is objectionable. While traditional media organizations historically exclude figures that transgress social boundaries, I propose that many online writers will disproportionately *feature* statements they consider transgressions. Repetition is necessary to call attention to social boundaries. Because this study involves websites, not on air content, the partisan tendencies of cable networks like Fox News and MSNBC may not be as pronounced (Baum and Groeling 2008). Online, we would expect partisan blogs to focus disproportionately on the partisan figures from the other side of the aisle. **Hypothesis 2:** Leading partisan blogs will be more likely to use phrases initially said by members of the *opposing* party than other sources, net of the topic.

2.3: Disapproval of Topics, Not Speakers?

With an increase in audience fragmentation, it makes sense for people writing online to specialize in particular topic areas. Hamilton (2004) argues traditional news organizations emphasize niche marketing when choosing topics to cover. We would expect this tendency to be even stronger online. Because journalists often decide how newsworthy a potential story is *and then* decide how many opinions to include (Grand 2011), I propose that topical specialization should be independent of including or avoiding particular sources. Media organizations and bloggers choose to specialize in particular areas, like race or the economy or pop culture, *and then* evaluate potential stories based on their chosen specialization. These specializations may represent calculated marketing decisions, underlying aesthetic or normative interests, or a combination of the two. Interest or disinterest in particular sources would apply would apply in similar ways for every topic.

One likely area for specialization is a broad range of social issues. Downs (1972) argued that these issues only get covered if they fit at the right time within journalists' attention cycles. Many sociologists use case studies regarding the exclusion of progressive stances on social issues (Benson 2006, 2009; Benson and Saguy 2005; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Hunt 1999) to argue that issues of race, gender, sexuality and social class may be more broadly excluded from mainstream media. Because these studies mainly focused on comparing the range of ideas presented on a social issue, and technology to gather a wide range of news stories was limited, there are few studies directly comparing the volume of news coverage on social issues relative to other topics. Between Downs' limited attention cycles and the limited range of viewpoints found in coverage, we can infer that statements dealing with race, gender and sexuality may receive

less attention than other topics. However, people may attract considerable media attention by taking extreme positions on religion (Bail 2012).

Overall, partisan blogs and Internet native media sites may be better suited to fill these topical niches, if they only target a smaller subset of readers. Cheap or free digital publishing has been a major boon for moral entrepreneurs looking for a place to publicize their ideas on new, medium sized media sites (Ignatow and Williams 2011). Audiences seeking more discussion of social issues, more outrage and more boundary making could be an untapped market waiting to be filled by partisan web content. Individual bloggers may see blogging as a way to express their identity and preferred social boundaries, pursuing these niches even if they have no intent of profiting from their writing. Identity politics may even draw in bloggers who are concerned about issues like race, gender, sexuality or religion even if these bloggers have little interest in writing about war, the economy or the election.

Hypothesis 3: Websites of mainstream media organizations are significantly less likely to print phrases referring to social issues or social identity than other topics, net of the speaker.

Hypothesis 4: Blogs and Internet native publications like the *Huffington Post* are significantly more likely to print phrases referring to social issues or social identity than other topics, net of the speaker.

While social issues and identity may be a niche topic, economic issues may draw more universal interest. James Carville famously explained Bill Clinton's victory in 1992 by saying "It's the economy, stupid!" In the August 2008 to January 2009 period of this study, we would expect an election would focus even more closely on economic issues, due to the unprecedented financial crisis. Two days before their first debate, the crisis grew so dire that Barack Obama and John McCain took a break from campaigning to lobby colleagues in Congress to vote in favor of

emergency legislation to buy up to $700 billion in distressed assets. Prior research suggests journalists would be eager to follow this topical agenda. Journalists print more stories about economic issues after specific events that influenced the national economy (Behr and Iyengar 1985). White House correspondents are also more critical during recessions (Clayman et al 2007). Since nearly everyone across the world had at least some contact with the declining economy, we can propose that it would be particularly relevant to non-journalists as well.

Because of the massive collapse of the financial market raised questions about government intervention, I propose statements about the intersection of politics and the economy may be an outlier in the Fall and Winter of 2008. Economic news may be an outlier in the United States in most historical contexts, because figures on unemployment and other economic indicators are released on a monthly basis. However, economic proposals on the campaign trail were similar to other campaign proposals. Legislation on the Troubled Assets Relief Program was a pressing policy issue. These statements need to be treated differently than individual business talking about their new products. We would expect statements about politics and the economy to jump to the top of the news agenda during an economic crisis.

Hypothesis 5: On average, phrases related to politics and the state of the economy will be repeated more frequently than phrases dealing with other subjects, regardless of the speaker or group of writers. (This leaves out businesses talking about their own firms and products, such as Steve Jobs discussing health concerns while CEO of Apple.)

3: Data Sources

Data from this study was taken from the Memetracker archive developed by Leskovec, Backstrom and Kleinberg (2009), three computer scientists focused on advanced data mining and text matching techniques. They took articles originally copied from every mainstream media

website that is a part of Google News (20,000 sites) and 1.65 million blogs, through the Spinn3r API, a professional web scraping service.[25] Leskovec, Backstrom and Kleinberg treated the text like a tree structure, breaking parts of phrases into nodes and connecting them through one-directional ties. Their goal was to create a strictly nested, hierarchical relationship of phrases and "phrase families" by deleting ties until each starting node leads to a single end point, but deleting no more ties than necessary. Each of these mini networks of words was treated as a separate "phrase cluster." The Memetracker algorithm was designed to capture synonyms and place them together. For example, only 51.55 of people typing John McCain's famous gaffe "the fundamentals of our economy are strong" actually got the quote correct. Some writers used "the economy" instead of "our economy." Others ended with "our strong" or included other typos.

The Memetracker algorithm is an invaluable text-matching tool for catching these surprisingly common typos that could disrupt other computational text matching techniques, but it is not foolproof. To be included in the Memetracker database, phrases had to include at least 3 words and be used at least 5 times. While the Memetracker algorithm excels at aggregating the variations of a phrase that often occur during live-blogging, the algorithm has four types of mistakes that lead to over-aggregation: common English idioms, oppositions, double-barreled phrases, and long speech transcriptions. Most of these problems are based on the Memetracker rule that each phrase cluster must include at least three analytically distinct phrases. For this study, I started with the 1000 most commonly occurring phrase clusters in the original Memetracker database, correcting ambiguities while making as few changes as possible.

- Idioms: "I love you" was placed in the phrase cluster for Rihanna's hit pop song "Hate That I Love You So," making the song appear to be the most popular phrase in

110

the dataset. Before analyzing the Memetracker data, I manually recoded each idiom as an analytically distinct phrase, removing it from the rest of the cluster.

- Oppositions: McCain's campaign bus nickname "The straight talk express" was put in a phrase cluster for Obama's debate joke "The straight talk express lost a wheel on that one." To correct this, all phrases directly opposing the rest of the phrase cluster were turned into separate phrases for analysis.

- Double-barreled phrases: The Memetracker algorithm placed every instance of people saying "God Bless America" or "God Damn America" in the phrase cluster with Rev. Wright's "Not God bless America, God damn America." However, fewer than 3 percent of all webpages in this cluster used the full phrase. In these cases, each potential stand-alone "barrel" was treated as an analytically distinct phrase if it contained more than 5 of the total webpage hits for the cluster. All other web pages were included with the initial, aggregated cluster.

- Long speech transcriptions: Some websites transcribed long speeches, like Obama's victory speech, verbatim. This created a bug in the Memetracker algorithm, where consecutive statements would be added together in a larger phrase cluster with up to 177 phrases. In these cases, each phrase and its synonyms were turned in to a new phrase if they constituted at least 5 of the total webpages for the cluster. If no single phrase (and its variants) contained 25 of the webpages for the cluster, I argue there is no default underlying cluster, and all the small leftover phrases were dropped from the analysis.

After processing clusters using these, I had 2814 analytically distinct phrases appearing on 1,433,849 web pages. If a webpage included multiple phrases from the sample, it appears

111

separately for each phrase, since the unit of analysis involves phrases and not webpages. Because the popularity of phrases (both in the original Memetracker database and the cleaned version I analyze) follows a power law distribution, a random sample of phrase clusters from over 100,000 in the original database could produce skewed results and overlook phrases of theoretical interest. Any cut point of starting with the X most popular phrase clusters begs the question "what if the next few hundred phrase clusters are fundamentally different?" A topic or speaker that leads to a large volume of online discussion but few commonly used phrases will be omitted from this database. For example, sports are a major part of newspapers and the blogosphere, but are a minor part of this study due to myriad ways people describe the plays in a game.

A smaller analysis of the next 1,000 most common phrase clusters suggests that my sampling procedure includes two separate categories of phrases more often than a random sample would. Cultural works are over-represented in my dataset because titles of works do not present multiple combinations of words to choose from like speeches do, enforcing a unique form of homogeneity that can be controlled for. Live transcription of major speeches (like convention floor speeches) are over-represented as well. The original Memetracker phrase cluster algorithm over estimates the popularity of these phrases due to its problems with long speech transcriptions. As a result, I included somewhat unpopular phrases from Obama and Palin's major speeches, while other phrases of similar popularity would not be in the sample. My results likely provide a conservative estimate of the popularity of their statements. A separate programming bug in the Memetracker algorithm treated every letter with an accent mark as punctuation, removing them from phrases just like periods and commas. This bug made it impossible to effectively process the small number of non-English phrases with Roman

characters in the dataset, so they were dropped entirely. Overall interest in foreign policy among smaller bloggers will be underestimated.

Manually fixing the problems with the original Memetracker database is worthwhile, because sound bite length phrases are increasingly the basis for stories and postings in an age of digital publishing. Based on how cumulative advantage works in cultural industries, widely repeated phrases should get famous (or infamous) in a way that a series of less repeated phrases do not (van de Rijt et al 2013). In other words, a Sarah Palin criticism of Barack Obama that gets repeated on 5000 web sites may be more influential than a speech with 10 criticisms, each of which gets repeated on 500 web sites. Traditional sampling from a set of news organizations, using stories as the unit of analysis, would miss this influence. Given the wide range of things people could read online, the effect of seeing the same phrase over and over again may be even more important in recent elections. Media sites on Google News and blogs do not represent the entirety of online publishing, but they can play a critical role in spreading political ideas to less engaged voters because blogs are visible on search engines while Facebook and Twitter posts are not.

4: Variables

4.1: Outcome Variable

The outcome variable for all regression models is the total number of times a phrase gets used in a particular set of websites. Each URL was counted separately. If "Joe the Plumber" was mentioned on 20 separate redstate.com posts, I would add 20 phrase uses to the conservative blog tally. The frequency of actual phrases follows a power law distribution with a median of 254 appearances across all types of sites and a mode of 5, the smallest possible size in the original Memetracker database (which we would expect). Specific groupings of sites, like major

113

U.S. newspapers or conservative blogs, share the unequal power law distribution. An increase in phrase usage could suggest increased popularity of an idea, increased concentration of writers repeating the same phrase and ignoring alternatives, or both. Using phrase repetition as an outcome variable captures both politicians' desire to stay "on message" and the danger of diluting a message by providing too many alternatives for journalists and bloggers to pick from. Differences between types of websites suggest varying preferences for particular groups of websites, while broad trends across all types of websites suggest a difference in the phrases available to any writer.

4.2: Independent Variables

All regression models in this study use two different types of variables, one for the topic of a phrase and one for the initial speaker. Phrases were initially coded for a broad area: politics, culture, both, and other. Political phrases received additional coding, which will be described shortly. The "culture" category includes statements from performers, titles of works (particularly songs), lyrics, and weekly religious quotations. A number of phrases overlapped politics and culture, such as Palin's appearance on *Saturday Night Live*. In regression models, politics and culture were not treated as mutually exclusive. While some cultural critics argue that all culture is political, news organizations tend to treat politics and cultural works as separate until a source asserts an overlap. I use their stricter strict standards. Phrases in the "other" area include economic news not directly related to government regulation or intervention (such as Steve Jobs' leave from Apple), crime, and scientific discoveries. Common English idioms and phrases that could not be assigned a distinct category were included in the "other" category as well, comprising 33.3 percent of the database.[26] The "other" category will be treated as the baseline

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[26] For example, the phrase "Ring of Fire" was used on 1,634 websites. Presumably most of these references were to the famous song by Johnny Cash. However, geologists also use the "Ring of Fire" to refer to an area of intense

level of repetition. The culture category is a separate control, because frequent repetition of the titles of artistic works would otherwise skew the baseline results.

The remaining 1,351 political phrases received a more detailed second round of coding. 245 phrases dealing with foreign policy and the military were placed in one category, based on a long traditional of media scholarship that these stories are treated differently in the press (cf Baum and Groeling 2009; Entman 2004 for some examples). Economic policy (273 phrases) was separated from the three phrases explicitly referencing social class. In 2008, politicians focused on the solvency of the banking system, unemployment and broad discussions of Bush's economic policy. Explicitly focusing on economic inequality was surprisingly rare, given how the issue has grown in subsequent elections. Various areas of social identity like race and gender, along with areas of social policy like education, were initially coded under a broad "social issues" category and more specific coding.

After testing several operationalizations, I separated specific references to race, gender, sexuality and religion (non-exclusive categories allowing for intersectionality) from more holistic measures of a candidate's identity and other forms of social policy, like education. The phrase "Yes we can" was a rallying cry for Obama's coalition, but it does not specifically reference identities like race or class. Republicans found their own symbolic figure late in the campaign, "Joe the Plumber," which was the third most popular phrase in the dataset. Politicians may also broadly question the social identity and background of their opponents, such as McCain asking "who is the real Barack Obama?" Because these holistic and indirect symbols may resonate with audiences differently than more specific statements on identity, I placed them in

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volcano and earthquake activity around the Pacific Ocean. Due to the ambiguity, this phrase was coded as "other" and not culture. Since "other" is the omitted category, placing "Ring of Fire" and other common yet ambiguous phrases into this category may bias the results slightly lower for all independent variables dealing with phrase topics, particularly cultural phrases.

their own category. Issues of social policy like education, crime and health care were placed in a separate category. All other political phrases – disproportionately statements about changing the political process – comprised 10.4 percent of the database. See Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Summary of Phrases by Speaker Type and Topic Type

Phrase Type	N
All	2814
Obama	294
McCain	124
Palin	105
Other Dem	134
Other Rep	204
Other Sources	1957
Culture	607
Other Pol	326
Race	85
Gender	80
Sexuality	42
Religion	92
ID: Holistic	113
ID: Other	113
Pol & Econ	273
Foreign Policy	245
Other Topics	937

Along with topical coding, phrases were coded by the initial speaker of a phrase. Looking only at the initial speaker allows us to gain some leverage on what kind of statement it is, even though different writers could use the same phrase in many different ways. Obama, McCain and Palin are each treated separately. However, Joe Biden is included with other Democrats, because his 11 phrases were not a large enough category for statistical analysis. President Bush is included with other Republicans, since lame duck presidents often lose their traditional status of being highly newsworthy (Grand 2011). Unlike many studies that test for biases in news coverage by comparing the newsworthiness of one partisan source to another, I compare partisans to the phrases from a wide range of non-partisan figures. Career bureaucrats, foreign

leaders, entertainers, song titles, and idioms that cannot be attributed to a distinct "original speaker" are all part of the omitted category.[27] By comparing partisans to an omitted category and not each other, we can get a better grasp on the importance of partisan electoral politics, as compared to other potential sources and ideas seeking media attention.

5: Descriptive Analysis

The breadth of the Memetracker dataset slows for novel comparisons. Along with comparing large media websites to large partisan blogs, I can compare the groups who write about national US politics as a vocation to all other media sites on Google News and over one million blogs. The dataset is particularly valuable for analyzing how many different webpages will use the same identical set of words, or something extremely similar to each other? Two webpages using a particular set of words does not mean the writers have the same holistic view of a topic. They may repeat the same words, and then present the broader topic in diametrically opposing ways. My cleaning and coding of a sample of the Memetracker data makes the dataset far more useful for answering sociological questions. Regression analysis can help to establish causal inferences about what makes a particular group of websites more or less likely to repeat a particular phrase. Before doing these regressions, there is a lot we can learn just by looking at the distribution of how often a phrase was repeated on different websites over a six month span.

The first step in this analysis is to separate websites in to different categories of writers. 17 elite news organizations were chosen, based largely on their network centrality in Wikio rankings, without consideration of the news organization's ideology or whether they are "old media" as opposed to "new media." Defining elite status by network centrality allows for incorporation of organizations like Gawker Media, which have considerable traffic and may

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[27] I made one exception to this rule for a joint statement Obama and McCain made encouraging senators to vote for the Troubled Assets Relief Program, because this phrase is clearly attributable to a pair of original speakers co-signing the same statement at the same time.

influence bloggers, even if they lack prestige. These groups were *then* separated by their primary medium: print, television or Internet-only. All other professional media organizations on Google News are put in to a fourth media group. All writers for a particular media organization are treated the same way, regardless of whether their byline says "blogger" or staff reporter, because they appear on the same website. Eight leading liberal and conservative blogs were separated from the rest of the blogosphere, based on Wikio listings for network centrality. It is important to have multiple blogs to construct an index, because individual partisan blogs can be highly idiosyncratic (Baum and Groeling 2008). All other blogs are placed in a third category for blogs.

Major Print Media: Sites with a national politics desk, which emphasize production as part of a daily print news cycle. New York Times, Washington Post, LA Times, USA Today, Politico

Television: The online textual versions of television networks' news coverage, which were often secondary to over-the-air content. ABC, CBS, BBC, MSNBC (also covers NBC online), CNN, Fox News[28]

Internet Native News: Large media sites designed solely as online platforms, including some balance of original reporting, commentary and short summaries of stories initially published elsewhere. Huffington Post, Gawker, The Daily Beast, mashable.com, boingboing.net, Slate and TMZ.

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[28] Many readers will question the placement of Fox News (and possibly MSNBC) with other TV networks. The distinction between the network's website and their on-air content is critical here. foxnews.com largely resembles other major news organizations, but with vastly fewer repetitions of McCain and Palin phrases. The website also has 0.04 correlation with leading conservative blogs, far and away the lowest correlation of any two groups of writers in this dataset. foxnews.com appears to be quite different than their on-air content, so any analysis of "Fox News" would yield grossly misleading conclusions.

Smaller Media: All other news sites among the 20,000 in the Google News aggregator. This category includes smaller and mid-sized newspaper websites, local television stations, and foreign news organizations publishing in English.

Leading Liberal Blogs: Eight of the largest blogs according to Wikio's rankings in 2008, with a reputation for emphasizing progressive politics. Daily Kos, Think Progress, Media Matters, Fire Dog Lake, Salon.com, Crooks and Liars, Talking Points Memo, alternet[29]

Leading Conservative Blogs: Eight of the largest blogs according to Wikio's rankings in 2008, with a reputation for emphasizing conservative politics. Pajamas Media (instapundit), Michelle Malkin, Redstate, Hotair, National Review's Corner blog, Powerline, Breitbart, Townhall.

Other Blogs: All other blogs in the Memetracker database. Note that some of these blogs may be as partisan as leading liberal or conservative blogs. Others may focus on other topics, like music or sports, rarely if ever mentioning politics.

Table 4.2: Basic Descriptive Statistics for Phrase Use, By Group of Writers

	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
Lead Print	5.40832	11.8206	2	0	209
TV	8.84861	23.8987	4	0	737
Other Media	169.885	323.508	86	0	7044
Web Native	2.61052	12.3874	1	0	357
Left Blog	1.98863	6.24633	0	0	128
Right Blog	3.86176	11.8809	1	0	426
Other Blog	317.137	651.198	134.5	0	17709
Total Phrases	509.541	963.855	254	5	20305

Each group of writers has extreme levels of inequality in how often they repeated phrases during the six months of data collection. "I love you" was the most popular phrase, appearing on

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[29] Both Salon and National Review's Corner blog are included with partisan blogs, as they tend to be geared for partisans. Cable news outlets tend towards partisanship as well, but these tendencies are stronger on air than online.

20,305 separate webpages. "Yes we can" was second with 19233 pages, and "Joe the Plumber" was third with 15059 pages. However, the median phrase only appeared on 284 separate URLs. Each group of writers has strong levels of inequality in phrase usage, with a median far lower than the mean. Large liberal blogs completely ignored the median phrase. The standard deviation is greater than the mean, which suggests a "power law" distribution. My sampling from the largest of Leskovec, Backstrom and Kleinberg's "phrase clusters" could have biased the sample in favor of commonly phrases. After cleaning the data and separating phrases that are analytically distinct, my dataset has a mode of five phrase uses, the minimum to be included in the original algorithm. The level of inequality in my sample is similar to the distribution in the original data set.

Extreme inequality in how often a particular phrase gets used online is hardly a surprise. Recent studies of how frequently people appear in the news (van de Rijt et al 2013) and the number of sources quoted in coverage of presidential press conferences (Grand 2011) have shown similar distributions. Entertainment culture also has similar distributions of success. A few superstars earn far more than the average performer in the field. In both news and entertainment we would expect to see a similar mechanism of ordinal selection as part of a superstar effect (Rosen 1981). If you can buy two movie tickets for the same price, why see the second best movie when you can see the best? Of course, different people have different tastes. They will disagree on what the "best" movie is. Multiple movies can generate a profit. News and political information appear to have similar dynamics. Why quote a less interesting source instead of a more interesting source? Why use a less insightful or provocative quote when you can choose a better one from the same speech? If people have similar tastes about which

quotations are newsworthy, even if those tastes aren't completely identical, we would expect extreme inequality.[30]

Large sites like the *New York Times* print a higher volume of material and use more of these phrases than the average blog. The ten major media organization websites have 2.8 percent of all the URLs in my dataset. This is a large share for any ten websites, but it also shows how small a piece of the pie any ten websites will have in a big data set with over 1 million websites from 2008-09. It is unclear whether concentration would increase or decrease in a Facebook or Twitter dataset collected for the 2015-16 election. If people increasingly share links with a single click and add less of their own commentary, concentration could increase. If people voice their own opinions via Twitter, concentration could easily decrease.

Table 4.3: Mean Phrase uses, by Group of Writers and Initial Speaker or Topic

	Print	TV	O. Media	Web N.	O. Blog	L. Blog	R. Blog	N
All Phrases	5.41	8.85	169.89	2.61	317.14	1.99	3.86	2814
Obama	7.48	12.89	217.06	2.31	266.57	2.45	7.08	294
McCain	8.07	11.16	170.58	3.68	167.22	3.90	5.19	124
Palin	7.26	14.60	177.17	3.13	319.05	5.20	5.51	105
Other Dem	4.87	9.68	119.94	1.69	149.94	1.86	5.17	134
Other Rep	6.90	10.91	144.79	2.71	208.22	3.22	4.13	204
Other Sources	4.71	7.52	168.46	2.61	356.42	1.51	3.10	1957
Culture	5.50	8.29	208.85	3.94	374.20	1.42	2.68	607
Other Pol	5.84	10.45	152.09	2.05	216.97	2.62	4.85	326
Race	6.64	10.67	134.18	5.29	206.52	2.42	4.29	85
Gender	6.10	11.98	157.44	2.16	280.78	3.48	11.63	80
Sexuality	5.26	4.14	117.71	2.36	245.24	2.10	3.50	42
Religion	4.27	7.72	117.09	1.88	291.50	2.14	9.38	92
ID: Holistic	10.86	20.80	281.76	5.65	520.23	6.65	7.72	113
ID: Other	5.81	9.78	171.31	2.27	286.90	2.97	4.11	113
Pol & Econ	7.38	10.92	191.34	2.22	205.74	2.44	6.28	273
Foreign Policy	5.41	7.89	133.81	2.39	205.71	2.40	4.09	245

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[30] It is unclear how much these inequalities would grow during a news cycle. Following the pack and writing about what everyone else is writing about could be a professional necessity for journalists (Crouse 1973) and have network externalities (David 1985; Katz and Shapiro 1985) for commentators. However, these benefits could fade quickly as phrases become "old news" and are replaced by never phrases.

	Print	TV	O. Media	Web N.	L. Blog	R. Blog	O. Blog	N
Other Topics	3.99	6.72	151.94	1.96	377.18	1.14	2.26	937

* Note: The total number of phrases per speaker is greater than 2814 because of the joint Obama-McCain statement on the Troubled Assets Relief Program.
** Note: The total number of phrases per topic is greater than 2814 because race, gender, sexuality and religion are not mutually exclusive.
*** Note: While t-tests to compare means seem appealing, results using untransformed counts are inappropriate for data with a highly skewed distribution.

Table 4.4: Percentage of Phrases with Zero Uses, by Group of Writers and Initial Speaker or Topic

	Print	TV	O. Media	Web N.	L. Blog	R. Blog	O. Blog	N
All	32.27	22.99	0.36	46.45	56.79	34.26	0.25	2814
Obama	18.71	10.88	0.00	41.50	49.32	13.95	0.00	294
McCain	21.77	12.10	0.00	49.19	40.32	17.74	0.00	124
Palin	30.48	11.43	0.00	43.81	32.38	21.90	1.90	105
Other Dem	29.85	14.18	0.00	41.79	50.00	14.18	0.75	134
Other Rep	23.04	7.84	0.00	42.16	47.06	29.90	0.00	204
Other Sources	36.18	28.26	0.51	47.93	61.68	40.78	0.20	1957
Culture	42.01	33.61	0.99	46.13	69.85	45.96	0.33	607
Other Pol	28.53	13.50	0.00	42.33	44.17	21.47	0.00	326
Race	22.35	9.41	0.00	28.24	43.53	16.47	0.00	85
Gender	25.00	13.75	0.00	47.50	45.00	18.75	0.00	80
Sexuality	45.24	28.57	0.00	52.38	61.90	38.10	2.38	42
Religion	51.09	22.83	1.09	44.57	47.83	29.35	0.00	92
ID: Holistic	26.55	14.16	0.00	38.05	35.40	23.89	0.88	113
ID: Other	30.97	17.70	0.00	35.40	40.71	23.01	0.00	113
Pol & Econ	19.78	14.29	0.00	50.92	57.14	16.85	0.37	273
Foreign Policy	26.12	17.55	0.41	46.53	42.45	28.98	0.82	245
Other Topics	33.72	26.57	0.21	50.05	63.18	43.54	0.00	937

The next two tables show different aspects of the inequality of phrase repetition by speaker and topic. Table 4.3 shows the mean number of times that a particular group of writers repeated a phrase by a particular speaker or on a particular topic. These summary statistics show Democrats other than Obama were among the least quotable partisan politicians in August 2008 through January 2009, which is not entirely unexpected. Partisan blogs appear to prefer repeating statements by opposing politicians, but regression analysis is necessary to see if this pattern

holds after controlling for topic. Table 4.4 presents the percentage of phrases that were ignored entirely by a particular group of writers. Large liberal blogs and leading Internet native media sites like the *Huffington Post* are the most likely to exclude phrases in this dataset, a sign of a smaller newshole. When we put together the 20,000 media sites on Google News' aggregator as of 2008, they will only ignore 0.36 of phrases. However, large news organizations are a small enough group that they will miss phrases, particularly outside of politics. Regression analysis is necessary to determine if these news organizations follow politics broadly or follow specific leading politicians.

One of the basic assumptions of an "echo chamber" theory of partisan media is that partisan sites would have little overlap with the content of mainstream media organizations. If we think of content holistically, the differences seem obvious. Andrew Breitbart's conservative startup *Big Government* has a very different tone and framing than the liberal *Daily Kos*. One possibility is that these websites choose completely different things to write about, and then offer partisan portrayals. Another possibility is that they share some part of an agenda. Opposing partisans can be interested in identical topics, but for different reasons, attaching different partisan interpretations and framing to the topic. If conservative and liberal blogs are at opposite ends of a spectrum, we can also think about where mainstream media organizations lie on that spectrum. This metaphor is a common way to think about partisan bias. In 2008, conservative pundits regularly argued the mainstream media agenda was closer to liberal blogs, particularly after one anonymous reporter sent an e-mail to the large conservative blog *Instapundit* saying "Off the record, every suspicion you have about MSM being in the tank for O is true…Editor refuses to publish anything that would jeopardize election for O."

A relatively simple way to try and quantify the degree of overlap is through correlation. Using correlation has two advantages. First, we know that conservative blogs repeat the average phrase more often than liberal blogs, but less often than large newspapers or TV network websites. Correlation is ideally suited to these different scales. Second, overlap between mainstream media, partisan blogs and the rest of the blogosphere may not be causal. If a wide range of writers is watching Sarah Palin's speech at the Republican National Convention and writing about it immediately, one writer does not cause a change in the other's behavior. Unfortunately, a direct Pearson correlation is misleading for variables with the extreme non-linearity we see in phrase usage. Because all writers have similar power law distributions, we could take the logarithm of phrase usages, and then calculate a Pearson correlation coefficient. This would drop any phrase that does not get repeated at least once by each group of writers – a majority of the phrases in this analysis – because the logarithm of 0 is undefined. An alternative is to take the logarithm of phrase uses plus one, providing a value for every phrase. While this alternative is not ideal, results are similar in each case, suggesting the logarithm of phrase uses plus one is an acceptable ballpark measure.

Table 4.5: Correlation matrixes for log(phrase uses +1)
For all Phrases:

	URLs	Print	TV	O. Media	Web N.	L. Blog	R. Blog	O. Blog
URLs	1							
Lead Print	0.6061	1						
TV	0.6169	0.6472	1					
Other Media	0.8503	0.6597	0.7119	1				
Web Native	0.6275	0.5400	0.5361	0.5682	1			
Left Blog	0.9275	0.5308	0.5008	0.4413	0.5678	1		
Right Blog	0.5086	0.5657	0.6430	0.6461	0.4600	0.4353	1	
Other Blog	0.5406	0.4745	0.4463	0.6287	0.5684	0.4750	0.3577	1

For Political Phrases (N = 1351):

	URLs	Print	TV	O. Media	Web N.	L. Blog	R. Blog	O. Blog
URLs	1							
Lead Print	0.6473	1						
TV	0.6943	0.5936	1					
Other Media	0.8666	0.6306	0.6943	1				
Web Native	0.6709	0.5436	0.5208	0.5620	1			
Left Blog	0.6311	0.5224	0.4751	0.4565	0.6420	1		
Right Blog	0.6844	0.5131	0.5914	0.7222	0.4549	0.3651	1	
Other Blog	0.9095	0.5394	0.5482	0.6173	0.6321	0.6411	0.5004	1

Table 4.5 contains two separate correlation matrixes based on the logarithm of phrase uses plus one. The top matrix is for all phrases, whether they deal with politics, pop culture or any other topic. The bottom matrix is restricted solely to political phrases. In both cases, we see considerable overlap between partisan blogs and leading professional media websites, with correlations ranging from 0.475 to 0.643. Contrary to what we may expect from conservatives' accusations of bias, the correlation between leading conservative bloggers' and leading professional media phrase use is greater than the correlation between leading professional media sites and large liberal blogs. The correlations do tend to be lower for political phrases, suggesting more disagreement regarding politics than other issues.

We can also use correlations to try and place the aggregate groups of smaller media sites and blogs, relative to well-known partisan blogs. The postings of smaller media sites are more closely correlated with conservative blog postings than large media sites. One possibility is that there is a cluster of conservative websites in the "other media" category. Another possibility is that both smaller media sites and conservative blogs found Obama disproportionately newsworthy, but for different reasons (smaller media sites follow a star, conservative blogs criticize him.) These two groups also treated Palin as ordinary, while other groups of websites treated Palin like a star. The postings of smaller blogs are closer to leading liberal blogs,

particularly for politics. One interpretation is that there is an overall liberal tilt to the blogosphere. Another possibility is that liberal blogs produced the least content, so they are more closely correlated with bloggers who disproportionately avoided many political phrases.

I argue that while partisan postings often have different framing and valence than journalists pursuing objectivity, people writing about politics during an election often have a common foundation for their postings. It helps to think of children playing with building blocks. They could start by putting any blocks together, but the companies that make building blocks often recommend specific starter sets for beginners. If children like playing with the blocks, they may ask their parents for more advanced sets based on they other things they enjoy. In a political campaign, politicians running for office continually provide journalists and commentators with a common set of quotes to start off stories. Because direct transcription is boring, journalists and commentators add their own ideas and preferences to the common set of quotes. As readers, we often focus on the different framing and positive or negative valence of a story, overestimating difference and missing the common agenda. The "bag of words" approach I use here is much better suited to assess similarity and difference between writers who regularly focus on national US politics by comparing them to a massive data set of writers with a wide variety of interests. Statements have some level of newsworthiness that can be directly compared from one group of writers to the next, even if each group of writers presents statements, speakers and issues in radically different ways.

6: Analytic Strategy

Because of the extreme inequality in how often a particular phrase gets used, I will use negative binomial regression models for all regressions. These models are specifically designed for power law distributions, where most observations have a low value for the dependent

126

variable. The first set of regression models will focus on the cleaned dataset of 2,814 phrases, without separating different groups of writers. Subsequent regression models will deal specifically with use of phrases by professional media, leading partisan bloggers, and other blogs. I will explain those groupings later in the paper, before presenting those regression models.

7: Results

Table 4.6: Negative Binomial Regression Models of All Writers' Phrase Use (SE in parentheses)

	Model 1	Model 2
Culture	0.127*	0.107*
	(0.052)	(0.052)
Race	-0.407***	-0.238$^+$
	(0.118)	(0.123)
Gender	-0.104	-0.103
	(0.123)	(0.134)
Sexuality	-0.370*	-0.333*
	(0.116)	(0.165)
Religion	-0.213$^+$	-0.122
	(0.115)	(0.124)
ID: Holistic	0.433***	0.603***
	(0.104)	(0.116)
Social Policy	-0.130	-0.010
	(0.104)	(0.109)
Pol & Economy	-0.242***	-0.108
	(0.072)	(0.086)
Foreign Policy	-0.421***	-0.349***
	(0.075)	(0.081)
Other Pol.	-0.327***	-0.231**
	(0.067)	(0.076)
Obama		0.019
		(0.081)
McCain		-0.330**
		(0.109)
Palin		0.125
		(0.122)
Palin & Religion		-0.795*
		(0.338)

Other Dem		-0.535***
		(0.105)
Other Rep		-0.380***
		(0.091)
Constant	6.296***	6.304***
	(0.033)	(0.033)
Dispersion	1.120***	1.104***
Term	(0.026)	(0.025)
Log Likelihood	-20281	-20255

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001, [+] p < 0.1, two tailed tests

7.1: Building a Baseline Model for Total Phrase Usage

I begin by presenting two regression models examining all phrase uses from the final Aug. 1, 2008 through Jan. 31, 2009 dataset. Subsequent analyses will focus on particular sets of writers, but it is useful to start with a baseline model as a point of reference. Because blog postings are 63.35 percent of all webpages in the dataset, the baseline model will be skewed towards bloggers' preferences. These bloggers were *not* selected because of their content, so we should not necessarily think of a "political" blogosphere. Baseline model 1 only incorporates variables for the topic of a phrase. Negative binomial regression models, like logit models, are multiplicative. The independent variables I use – topic and initial speaker – are binary conditions. When the condition is true, we would multiply the expected number of webpages repeating a phrase by e ^ b, where b is the regression coefficient. For example, if a phrase includes a cultural reference, it is used e ^ $.127 = 1.135$ times more often than phrases that do not mention politics or culture. In other words, phrases focused on the title of a cultural work or a performer's statement were repeated 13.5 percent more frequently than phrases that do not fall under any of the ten categories I test for.

Most political topics have negative coefficients, which require further explanation. A phrase cannot be published a negative number of times. Negative coefficients mean the average phrase on a particular topic will be repeated less often than phrases on topics that are not of

theoretical interest. For example, statements dealing with the intersection of politics and the economy were used $e \wedge -0.242 = 0.785$ times as often as phrases that did not mention politics or culture. Concepts like "too big to fail" and McCain's claim that "the fundamentals of our economy are strong" were used widely and gained cultural resonance. However, the average political framing of the economy was repeated 21.5 percent less often than non-political phrases. While my sampling procedure does not allow me to analyze every phrase on the Internet, it does incorporate a wider range of success and failure than most approaches. 2008 was a watershed election for online discussion of politics, yet Model 1 suggests the repetition of political phrases was still modest compared to other topics. Figure 4.1 illustrates the results for all topics side by side, comparing each topic of theoretical interest to the baseline of topics with less theoretical interest.

**Figure 4.1:** Odds Ratios for All Writers' Phrase Use, By Topic. (N = 2814). Phrases not dealing with politics or pop culture are the baseline for comparison.
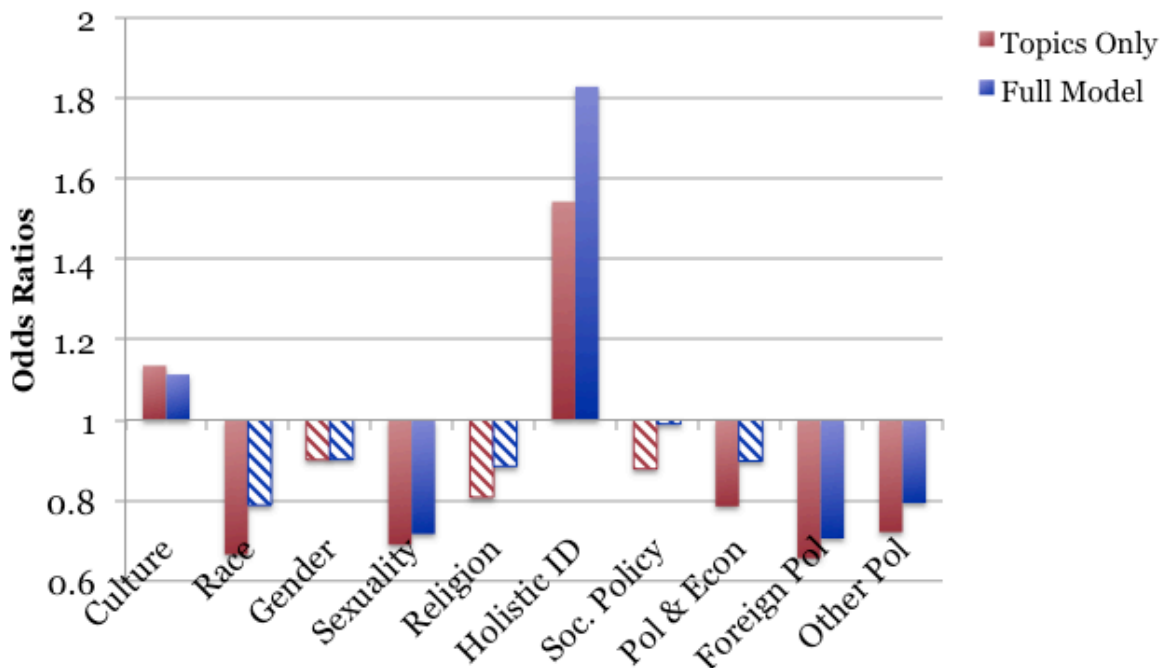
* Note 1: Shaded bars represent results that are not statistically significant at the p < .05 level.
* Note 2: Results for all writers in the dataset are heavily skewed to the preferences of non-elite bloggers, because my database has over 1 million of these blogs.

Baseline model 2 adds variables for the speaker and an interaction term for Sarah Palin's statements on religion. I tested a wide range of interaction terms, but only the interaction between Palin and religion was significant. Even after controlling for the relative lack of interest in repeating phrases on most political topics, the statements of politicians were still unpopular. (See Figure 4.2 below to compare all partisan speakers side-by-side, relative to all other phrases.) The average McCain statement was repeated 28.1 percent *less* frequently than non-partisans' statements. Comparing presidential candidates' average statement to other speakers seeking our attention is a bit of a misnomer. Candidates' "failures" will probably still garner some attention on the Internet and appear in the dataset as a small number. Other speakers' failure at attracting an audience could get ignored completely, so any web scraping algorithm will not capture them. Results suggesting a relative lack of interest in prominent speakers could reflect a genuine lack of interest, a censored sample, or both. The lack of interest in political topics suggests a common substantive interpretation, not just issues with the data. If any subsequent models for specific groups of websites (like television network websites) have a positive result for candidates, this illustrates a strong preference, since my measure may be biased against candidates.

Figure 4.2: Odds Ratios for All Writers' Phrase Use, By Speaker. (N = 2814). Phrases not attributable to a specific partisan politician are the baseline for comparison.
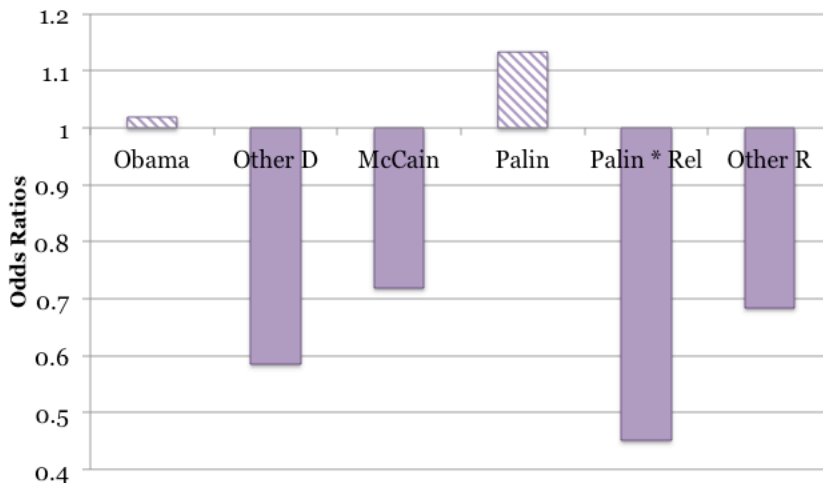
* Note 1: Shaded bars represent results that are not statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.
* Note 2: Results for all writers in the dataset are heavily skewed to the preferences of non-elite bloggers, because my database has over 1 million of these blogs.
* Note 3: Biden included with other Democrats since he only had 11 phrases in dataset.

  Comparing the two models, we some moderation in writers' preference for particular topics after controlling for the speaker, but all patterns of avoiding a particular topic persist. This suggests writers' preference to include some topics and avoid others is somewhat independent of their preferences for certain partisan politicians. The main exception is race. Before controlling for speaker, statements explicitly referring to race were second only to foreign policy as the least commonly repeated topic. After controlling for specific partisan speakers, websites' avoidance of phrases involving race is diminished by over one-third. The effect is no longer statistically significant ($p = .054$). Partisan politicians' public statements on race appear to have made the topic more newsworthy in 2008. My model does not separate the importance of Obama speaking versus other partisans speaking about Obama's race.

7.2: Applying Baseline to Different Groups of Writers

7.2.1: Traditional Media – Follow the Politicians?

  We would expect national news organizations like the *New York Times* and television networks to follow two broad rules, treating their online coverage as an offshoot their primary offline coverage. First, we would expect these websites to emphasize the statements of members of a presidential ticket over any other source. Even George W. Bush may struggle to get attention as a "lame duck" president (Grand 2011; Grossman and Kumar 1979). Second, national news organizations tend to avoid covering social issues outside of particular "attention cycles" (Downs 1972), and an election could consume journalists' attention. These trends may be in conflict with each other during the 2008 general election and its aftermath. Obama's race and religious beliefs

were frequently discussed throughout the election, albeit usually by people other than Obama.

Sarah Palin explicitly campaigned as a "hockey mom" and champion of small town values.

Table 4.7: Negative Binomial Regression Models of Traditional Media Organizations' Phrase Use (SE in parentheses)

	Leading Print		Television		Other Media Sites	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Culture	0.238**	0.256***	0.124[+]	0.144[+]	0.296***	0.299***
	(0.079)	(0.079)	(0.074)	(0.074)	(0.056)	(0.056)
Race	0.451*	0.394*	0.417*	0.351*	-0.183	-0.140
	(0.176)	(0.185)	(0.165)	(0.174)	(0.127)	(0.132)
Gender	0.403*	0.149	0.541***	0.296	0.051	-0.125
	(0.183)	(0.203)	(0.170)	(0.184)	(0.131)	(0.142)
Sexuality	0.244	0.231	-0.535*	-0.560*	-0.323[+]	-0.295[+]
	(0.249)	(0.249)	(0.238)	(0.239)	(0.177)	(0.177)
Religion	-0.007	0.039	0.061	0.097	-0.294[+]	-0.239[+]
	(0.174)	(0.187)	(0.161)	(0.173)	(0.123)	(0.133)
ID: Holistic	0.961***	0.778***	1.093***	0.910***	0.569***	0.548***
	(0.153)	(0.172)	(0.144)	(0.163)	(0.111)	(0.124)
Social Policy	0.328*	0.258	0.343*	0.237	0.070	0.077
	(0.155)	(0.162)	(0.147)	(0.152)	(0.111)	(0.116)
Pol & Economy	0.598***	0.413***	0.462***	0.298*	0.212**	0.166[+]
	(0.126)	(0.128)	(0.101)	(0.122)	(0.077)	(0.091)
Foreign Policy	0.264*	0.131	0.129	0.007	-0.161*	-0.208**
	(0.112)	(0.122)	(0.105)	(0.112)	(0.080)	(0.086)
Other Pol.	0.351***	0.239*	0.412***	0.286**	-0.035	-0.084
	(0.100)	(0.116)	(0.093)	(0.105)	(0.071)	(0.082)
Obama		0.295*		0.310**		0.308***
		(0.122)		(0.112)		(0.086)
McCain		0.286[+]		0.127		-0.007
		(0.160)		(0.153)		(0.116)
Palin		0.371*		0.498**		0.189
		(0.178)		(0.169)		(0.130)
Palin & Religion		-1.290*		-1.296**		-1.000**
		(0.536)		(0.482)		(0.361)
Other Dem		-0.145		0.027		-0.290**
		(0.159)		(0.147)		(0.113)
Other Rep		0.157		0.087		-0.181[+]
		(0.134)		(0.126)		(0.097)
Constant	1.401***	1.395***	1.928***	1.920***	5.041***	5.040***

	(0.051)	(0.050)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.036)	(0.036)
Dispersion	2.316***	2.299***	2.068***	2.054***	1.271***	1.257***
Term	(0.073)	(0.073)	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.030)	(0.029)
Log Likelihood	-7346	-7338	-8645	-8636	-17160	-17139

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, [+] $p < 0.1$, two tailed tests

Table 4.7 shows separate regression models for leading print organization websites, television network websites and all other media sites on Google News, side-by-side. If a particular topic or speaker is repeated more frequently by most organizations, this suggests a combination of cultural resonance or a topic or speaker that has unusual concentration with few quotes to choose from. I will start by discussing results for speakers, which are represented visually on the next page in Figure 4.3. Television network websites and smaller media websites repeated the average Obama phrase in the dataset significantly more often than they repeated the average phrase said by a non-partisan figure. Obama got more attention than other Democrats, particularly from smaller media organizations. Palin's average statement received even more media attention from the websites of large traditional media organizations. TV network websites repeated Palin's statements 64.5 percent more often than non-partisans' statements. No group of media websites was significantly more likely to repeat McCain's statements ($p = .081$ for large print sites). Smaller news organizations avoided other Democrats as compared to non-partisans, and showed some avoidance of other Republicans ($p = 0.062$).

133

Figure 4.3: Odds Ratios for Traditional Media Organizations' Phrase Use, By Speaker. Phrases not attributable to a specific partisan politician are the baseline for comparison.
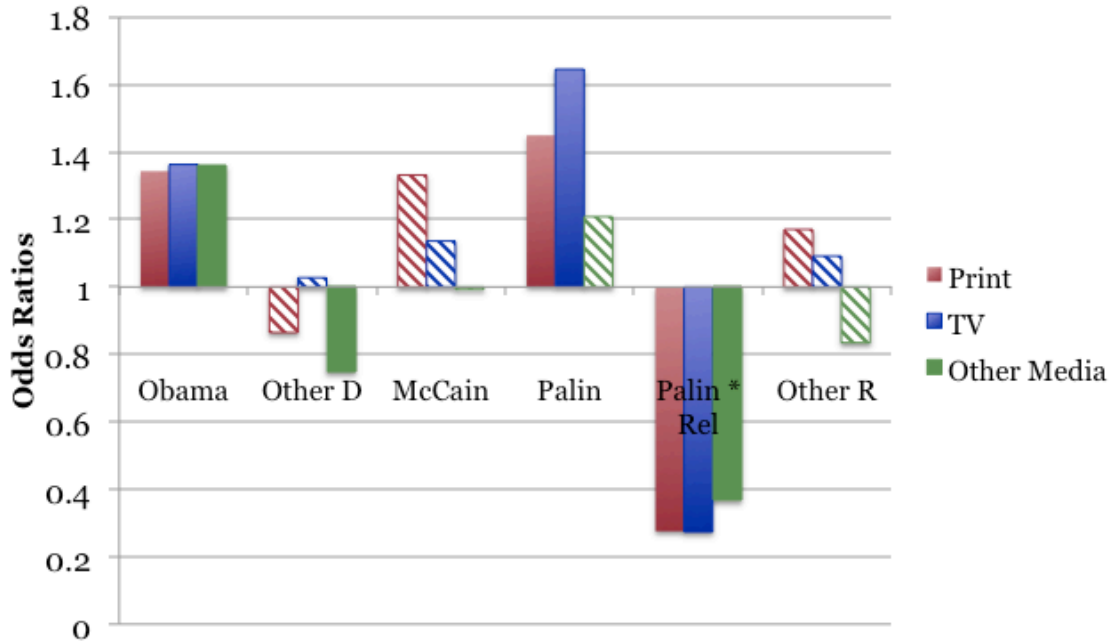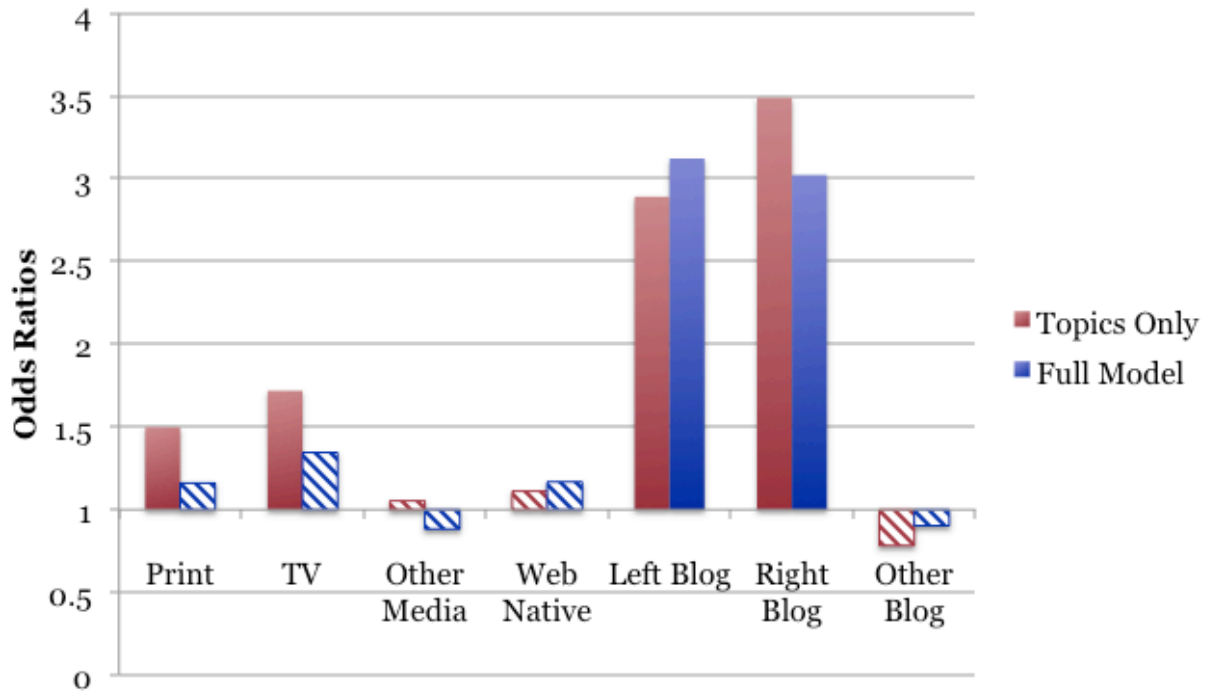

* Note 1: Shaded bars represent results that are not statistically significant at the p < .05 level.
* Note 2: Biden included with other Democrats since he only had 11 phrases in dataset.

Hypothesis 1, which predicted media organizations would show widespread interest in presidential tickets, is inconsistently supported by the data. Obama received fairly consistent attention. Palin attracted wide attention from larger news organizations, as long as she didn't talk about religion. However, McCain's was unable to consistently receive media attention for his statements. One possibility is that news organizations wrote off the McCain/Palin ticket to some degree once their poll numbers slipped. Another possibility is that Obama was more skilled at crafting catchy phrases. Bias is difficult to interpret with this data, because attention is not always positive. Phrases like "drill baby drill" and "thanks but no thanks" (to the "bridge to nowhere") were far more popular than McCain's "straight talk express." Unfortunately for Palin, her gaffes on foreign policy were also widely repeated across the Internet. Another way to interpret these results is that the largest news organizations had the largest newsholes, so they may have covered a wider range of stories and not be as reliant on particular key sources.

Figure 4.4: Odds Ratios for Use of Phrases Regarding Gender, By Group of Writers. Phrases not dealing with politics or pop culture are the baseline for comparison.
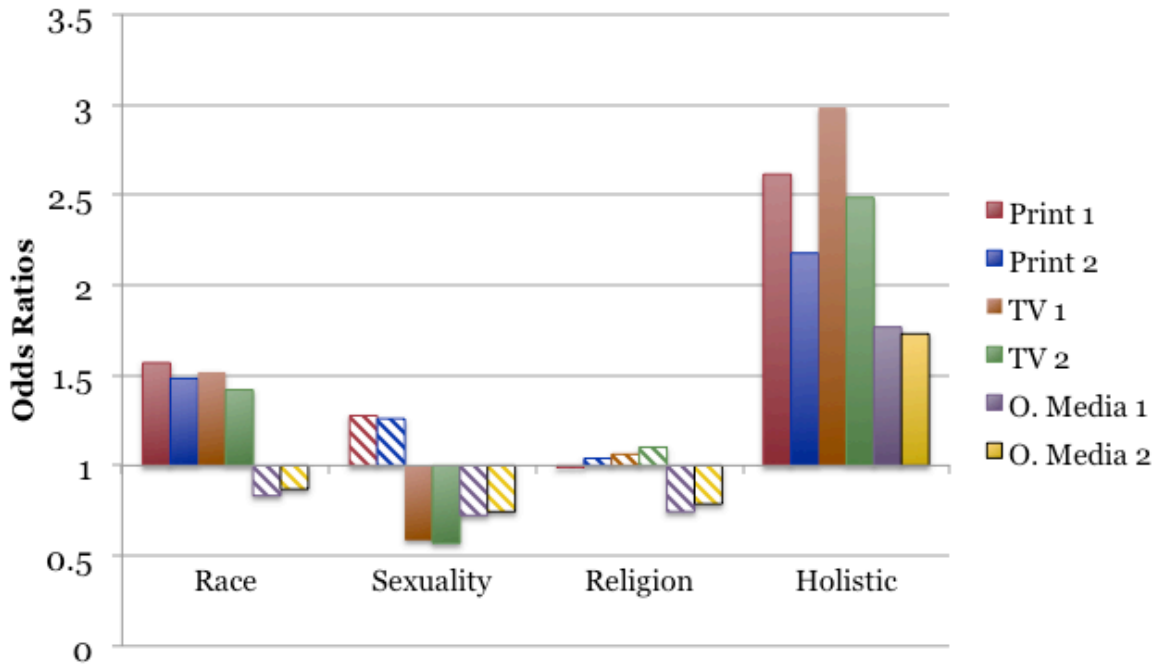

* Note: Shaded bars represent results that are not statistically significant at the p < .05 level.

Figure 4.4 illustrates different groups of websites' preference for statements regarding gender. It draws from regression models for large partisan blogs as well. I will describe the complete results for partisan blogs momentarily, but a sneak peek helps us to understand when mainstream news organizations are more likely to discuss gender and other issues of social identity. Without controlling for who was talking about gender, large media organizations appear to be inherently interested in the topic. After controlling for speaker, the strength of the effect drops considerably and is no longer statistically significant, even at the .01 level. Reporters' interest in gender could be initial curiosity about Palin's background, her promoting her identity as a "hockey mom," and McCain aide leaks about her being a "diva." Large partisan blogs maintain a much stronger focus on gender relative to topics outside politics and culture, even after controlling for the speaker. The partisan blogs may be more inherently interested in

discussing identity politics, while large news organizations sometimes wait for cues from leading

politicians.

Figure 4.5: Odds Ratios for Use of Phrases Regarding Other Social Identities, By Group of
Writers. Phrases not dealing with politics or pop culture are the baseline for comparison.

* Note 1: Shaded bars represent results that are not statistically significant at the p < .05 level.
* Note 2: Two bars for each group of websites corresponds to Models 1 and 2 from Table 4.7.

My results suggest an alternative to prior theories of journalistic attention cycles and

national culture to explain the salience of social identity on news websites. Because the

coefficients for race only slightly decrease when we compare Model 2 to Model 1 for large

media organization websites, this suggests some level of inherent interest in race. However, any

attention cycle (Downs 1972) or effect of national culture (Benson and Saguy 2005; Jarvis 2005)

does not carry over to other media websites, which come closest to supporting Hypothesis 3.

Phrases that tap in to many aspects of social identity at once are the exception. Slogans

promoting broad solidarity like "yes we can" or "Joe the Plumber" and broad implications of

extremism like "who is the real Barack Obama" were repeated dramatically more often than

specific references to social identity. Broader statements of social identity may attract a wider

range of initial attention. The media sites in my dataset are not using hashtags, yet a particular

group of phrases may benefit from a Matthew effect and continue to be repeated throughout the

election. Older theories of framing tend to emphasize broad cultural values on a national level

and more holistic frames (Entman 1993, 2004). As digital technology allows for the rapid

sharing of information, specific phrases may transcend broader frames and attract a

disproportionate amount of attention paid to that concept.

Figure 4.6: Odds Ratios for Use of Phrases Regarding Various Political Topics, By Group of Writers. Phrases not dealing with politics or pop culture are the baseline for comparison.
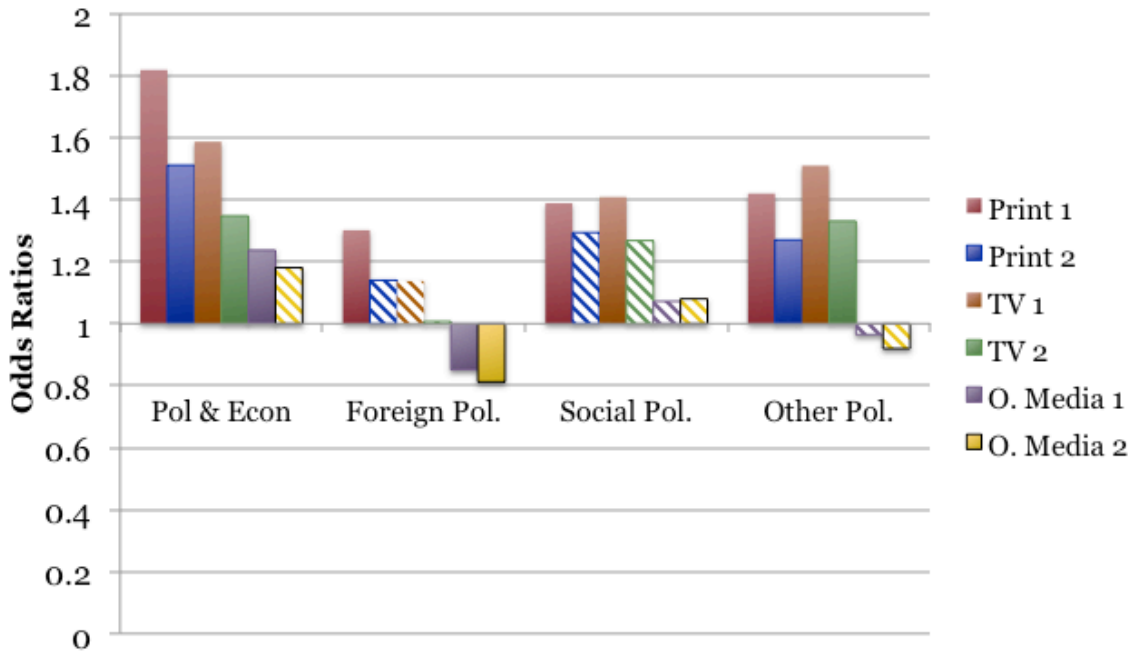

* Note 1: Shaded bars represent results that are not statistically significant at the p < .05 level.
* Note 2: Two bars for each group of websites corresponds to Models 1 and 2 from Table 4.7.

During a massive and unprecedented economic collapse, phrases about a political

response to the crisis or any other form of economic policy were repeated significantly more

often than non-political, non-cultural phrases. To a certain degree these statements were

considered inherently interesting, net of the speaker, supporting Hypothesis 5. However, the

strength of the effect diminishes by 35.5 percent for television network websites, 31 percent for

large print websites and 21.7 percent for other media websites after controlling for the identity of

the speaker. There are limits to the "inherent" importance of statements about the economy. My

results cannot definitively say which partisan speakers talking about the economy had the most

resonance because there are only 273 total statements on politics and the economy in the

database.[31] It is plausible to guess that reporters cared more about what presidential candidates

said than other politicians, but it is also plausible that the difference is between all politicians and

any non-partisan source (like bankers and homeowners) saying what the government should do

to fix the economy. My results show that reporters had an inherent interest in the economy, but

some of this interest was contingent on who talked about the economy.

The pattern of repeating phrases based on who is talking and not just what they say

repeats for phrases dealing with foreign policy, social policy and other politics. In each case,

these effects are more clearly pronounced for the websites of large media organizations as

opposed to smaller websites. Traditional national media organizations appear to be the most

deferential to the topical agenda that politicians put forward as important. Other media sites can

offer breadth as an aggregate group. At the same time, they are more inherently selective about

which phrases from national political debates they choose to repeat. They avoid foreign policy,

even while political candidates debated whether the US should continue involvement in multiple

wars.

7.2.2: New Media Sites – Setting Independent Priorities

In the prior section, we saw that when mainstream media websites were interested in a

particular topic, their interest declined after controlling for the identity of the speaker who

initially uttered the phrase. Social issues and identity received some attention, but often received

less than other political topics. I hypothesize that both of these trends will work differently for

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[31] Any interaction term would need to have the massive effects we see with Sarah Palin and religion to be statistically significant.

leading partisan blogs. We would expect these sites to focus more closely on social issues and identity, as topics that would motivate their base readership. At the same time, these sites heavily emphasize outrage (Berry and Sobieraj 2013). Therefore, we would expect them to emphasize opposing politicians' statements – targets for the outrage. I included sites like Gawker and the *Huffington Post* in Table 4.8 not just because they are Internet native media organizations, but also because they resemble liberal blogs in many ways.

Table 4.8: Negative Binomial Regression Models of Leading Web-Only Media Organizations and Leading Partisan Blogs' Phrase Use (SE in parentheses)

	Leading Web Media		Liberal Blogs		Conservative Blogs	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Culture	0.620***	0.613***	-0.021	-0.020	0.051	0.056
	(0.093)	(0.093)	(0.103)	(0.103)	(0.076)	(0.077)
Race	0.677***	0.744***	0.745***	0.829***	0.616***	0.609***
	(0.206)	(0.212)	(0.225)	(0.235)	(0.166)	(0.174)
Gender	0.106	0.155	1.062***	1.138***	1.249***	1.106***
	(0.222)	(0.241)	(0.230)	(0.257)	(0.173)	(0.181)
Sexuality	0.110	0.116	0.594^+	0.595^+	0.414^+	0.460^+
	(0.298)	(0.297)	(0.318)	(0.318)	(0.236)	(0.236)
Religion	-0.078	-0.005	0.535*	0.512*	0.885***	1.005***
	(0.209)	(0.225)	(0.220)	(0.237)	(0.163)	(0.175)
ID: Holistic	1.009***	1.006***	1.750***	1.705***	1.210***	1.192***
	(0.182)	(0.207)	(0.192)	(0.217)	(0.144)	(0.162)
Social Policy	0.096	0.163	0.948***	0.982***	0.581***	0.530***
	(0.187)	(0.200)	(0.197)	(0.207)	(0.147)	(0.155)
Pol & Economy	0.124	0.050	0.750***	0.682***	1.010***	0.974***
	(0.130)	(0.158)	(0.138)	(0.169)	(0.109)	(0.119)
Foreign Policy	0.172	0.046	0.732***	0.653***	0.578***	0.553***
	(0.135)	(0.155)	(0.142)	(0.153)	(0.107)	(0.114)
Other Pol.	-0.019	0.014	0.820***	0.843***	0.749***	0.689***
	(0.120)	(0.136)	(0.127)	(0.150)	(0.094)	(0.108)
Obama		-0.105		-0.190		0.253*
		(0.148)		(0.156)		(0.110)
McCain		0.418*		0.313		-0.055
		(0.197)		(0.203)		(0.151)
Palin		0.337		0.606**		0.145
		(0.218)		(0.224)		(0.169)

Palin & Religion		-0.692		-0.301		-1.506**
		(0.625)		(0.632)		(0.506)
Other Dem		-0.493*		-0.527**		0.079
		(0.196)		(0.205)		(0.146)
Other Rep		0.016		0.012		-0.257*
		(0.167)		(0.170)		(0.127)
Constant	0.672***	0.674***	0.143*	0.143*	0.827***	0.825***
	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.066)	(0.066)	(0.049)	(0.049)
Dispersion	3.174***	3.144***	3.603***	3.540***	1.960***	1.937***
Term	(0.113)	(0.112)	(0.147)	(0.145)	(0.067)	(0.066)
Log Likelihood	-5296	-5287	-4608	-4596	-6492	-6480

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, + $p < 0.1$, two tailed tests

Figure 4.7: Odds Ratios for Large Online Organizations' Phrase Use, By Speaker. Phrases not attributable to a specific partisan politician are the baseline for comparison.
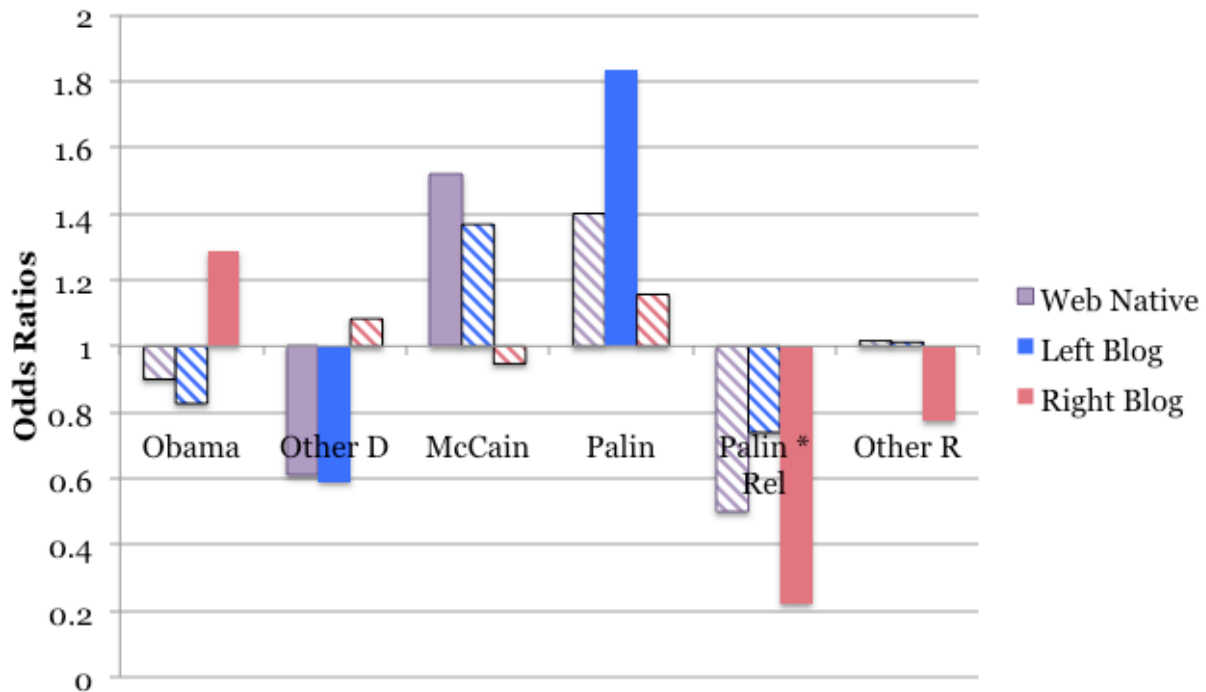
* Note 1: Shaded bars represent results that are not statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.
* Note 2: Biden included with other Democrats since he only had 11 phrases in dataset.

Looking at the full models in Table 4.8, we see that leading partisan web sites repeated the statements of one prominent political opponent significantly more often than non-partisans' statements. (See also Figure 4.7.) Repeating an opponent's statement is often a necessary precondition for criticizing them, because the reader may not otherwise know what the critique is

about. Leading conservative blogs disproportionately repeated Obama's statements, but they were not significantly more likely to repeat statements by McCain or Palin. Leading liberal blogs emphasized Palin and then McCain ($p = .124$ for McCain result), but they did not emphasize Obama's statements. Each of these sites avoided repeating statements from less prominent politicians of *their own* party. Leading Internet native media sites resemble liberal blogs, but put McCain before Palin. Both groups of left-leaning sites also placed more emphasis on the identity of the speaker than their conservative counterparts. Hypothesis 2 is largely supported and appears to extend to a wider range of media organizations than previously theorized.

While traditional, objective news organizations distance themselves from a position they see as illegitimate by ignoring it in their stories, leading new media sites may *prefer* to repeat these statements as a way to show disagreement. The finding that online only sites emphasize political opponents fits some of what we already know about new media's reliance on outrage (Berry and Sobieraj 2013). My findings present a more systematic comparison how new media sites and their legacy media counterparts treated the exact same phrases. All new media sites disproportionately focus on phrases initially said by people on the other side of the political spectrum, constructing boundaries through arguing why opposing partisans are "wrong." Other prestige industries like boutique jewelry also construct boundaries by telling the customer when their taste is wrong (Podolny 2010). Compared to many cultural and prestige-based industries, "objective" journalists are the outliers, because they ignore sources they dislike instead of explicitly constructing boundaries through condemnation. Objectivity rituals – and the resulting implication for social scientists that avoiding sources equals disapproval – may be historically contingent and fading.

Figure 4.8: Odds Ratios for Use of Phrases Regarding Other Social Identities, By Group of Writers. Phrases not dealing with politics or pop culture are the baseline for comparison.

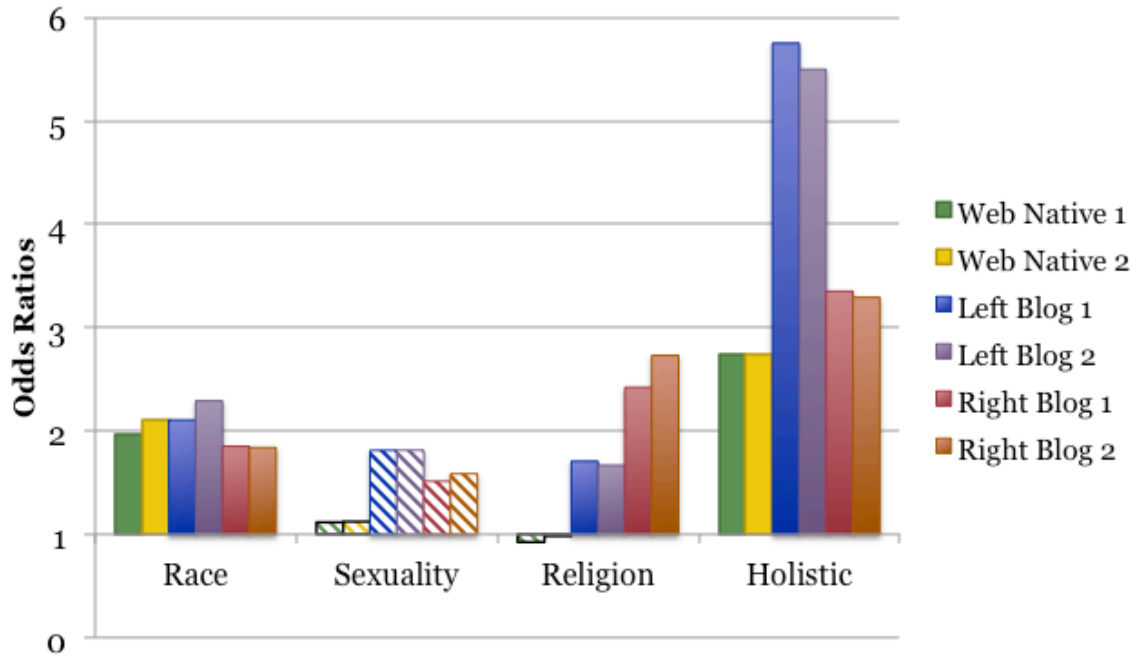* Note 1: Shaded bars represent results that are not statistically significant at the p < .05 level.
* Note 2: Two bars for each group of websites correspond to Models 1 and 2 from Table 4.8.
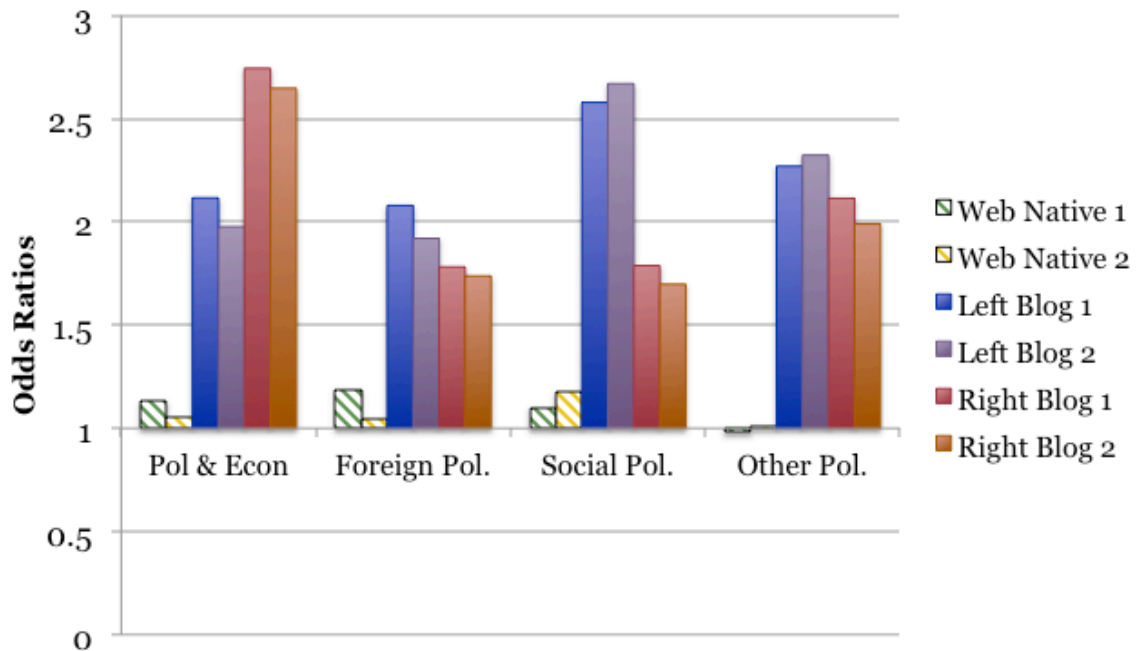
Figure 4.9: Odds Ratios for Use of Phrases Regarding Various Political Topics, By Group of Writers. Phrases not dealing with politics or pop culture are the baseline for comparison.

* Note 1: Shaded bars represent results that are not statistically significant at the p < .05 level.
* Note 2: Two bars for each group of websites correspond to Models 1 and 2 from Table 4.8.

142

Large partisan blogs emphasized almost every political topic, which suggests that they rarely branch out to current events that are not directly related to politics. Leading liberal blogs repeated phrases at least 92 percent more often if they dealt with race, gender, social policy, foreign policy, holistic identity constructs, or a wide range of "other" politics, net of the speaker. Conservative blogs repeated phrases on one of these topics at least 74 percent more often. Statements regarding the economy were among large conservative blogs' biggest priorities, but emphasized slightly less than phrases dealing with gender or religion. Liberal bloggers are known for their concerns over inequality, but they repeated phrases dealing with race, gender, social policy and miscellaneous political issues like "cleaning up Washington" more than they repeated phrases dealing with a political response to the economic collapse. Partisan blogs prioritized some aspects of social identity more than the economy, supporting Hypothesis 4. At the same time, partisan blogs were more likely to repeat statements about the economy than non-political topics, suggesting old theories about the economy dominating the agenda during an economic downturn (Behr and Iyengar 1985) have some crossover to partisan media. Hypothesis 5, on the universal prominence of the economy, is supported for most large politics-oriented websites.

Large Internet native media organizations emphasized Republicans' phrases like liberal blogs did, but these market-oriented sites focused more narrowly on race and pop culture instead of emphasizing a wide range of social identities or political issues. Some of these null results are surprising. These sites did not follow other large media websites' interest in the economy, despite the economic collapse. Gawker Media has a site dedicated specifically to feminism (jezebel.com), and all of Gawker's sites combine to form a large portion of the "leading web media" category, but sites in this group did not emphasize gender more than other non-political,

non-pop culture topics. The robust discussion of a wide range of social identities and social issues that I proposed in Hypothesis 4 appears limited to partisan blogs in 2008 and early 2009. However, the character of many of these "Internet native" websites has changed rapidly, particularly as compared to mainstream media organizations. Increased reliance on Facebook to spread stories online and changes to Facebook's "News Feed" algorithm could give large online publishers considerable incentives to emphasize social identity and boundary making over other political topics in subsequent elections.

Comparing the topic-only Model 1 to the topic-plus-speaker Model 2, we see that new media organizations' preference for particular topics is largely independent of the identity of the speaker. In other words, large new media sites decided which topics they want to write about and stuck to their own preferred agenda. My methodology of gathering a large range of topics and speakers shows that when presidential campaigns tried to change the agenda, partisan bloggers and their large web media counterparts barely budged. Prior studies have been largely unable to test this possibility, because their case study approach makes it extremely difficult to separate disapproval of a speaker from disapproval of the specific positions they are taking. When Hallin studied opposition to the Vietnam War, protesters' identity was synonymous with their anti-war position as opposed to positions on race or gender. Because new media sites' preference for particular topics is largely independent of which partisan sources they repeat, this implies repeating and criticizing opposing politicians is a distinct part of the agenda. Critiques and trolling occurred *regardless of which topics a politician chose to emphasize*.

7.3.3: Other Blogs – Wait, There's an Election?

Table 4.9: Negative Binomial Regression Models of Bloggers Phrase Use, Exempting Large Partisan Blogs Used in Prior Analysis (SE in parentheses)

	Model 1	Model 2
Culture	0.048	0.008
	(0.057)	(0.058)
Race	-0.594***	-0.335*
	(0.131)	(0.136)
Gender	-0.244[+]	-0.123
	(0.137)	(0.149)
Sexuality	-0.416*	-0.373*
	(0.184)	(0.183)
Religion	-0.209	-0.107
	(0.128)	(0.136)
ID: Holistic	0.330**	0.651***
	(0.115)	(0.129)
Social Policy	-0.261*	-0.066
	(0.115)	(0.121)
Pol & Economy	-0.589***	-0.316***
	(0.080)	(0.097)
Foreign Policy	-0.593***	-0.425***
	(0.082)	(0.090)
Other Pol.	-0.539***	-0.350***
	(0.074)	(0.084)
Obama		-0.195*
		(0.091)
McCain		-0.633***
		(0.121)
Palin		0.071
		(0.135)
Palin & Religion		-0.687[+]
		(0.374)
Other Dem		-0.736***
		(0.116)
Other Rep		-0.552***
		(0.101)
Constant	5.915***	5.930***
	(0.036)	(0.037)
Dispersion	1.375***	1.348***
Term	(0.032)	(0.031)
Log Likelihood	-18809	-18771

$* p < 0.05$, $** p < 0.01$, $*** p < 0.001$, $^{+} p < 0.1$, two tailed tests

Despite widespread interest in the 2008 election, the results from Table 4.9 help to illustrate that most areas of politics were not repeated in the blogosphere as much as various phrases from pop culture and other fields. Some blogs in this "other blogs" category may be like leading partisan blogs or traditional news outlets. Some blogs may emphasize other areas and occasionally mention politics. As an aggregate group, most areas of politics were repeated less often than other topics. Most partisan speakers were repeated far less often than non-partisans. These effects are multiplicative. For example, any John McCain statement on foreign policy would be repeated 34.7 percent as often as a non-partisan talking about something other than politics or pop culture. For comparison, Britney Spears talking about her musical comeback would suffer no penalty. Some bloggers use the medium as a place to repeat political ideas, generate original commentary, and have discussions about political issues that are not emphasized in the mainstream media. However, a majority of bloggers avoided political phrases during the time of the 2008 election.

Given the overall lack of interest in politics as compared to omitted category of phrases, it is valuable to consider which topics are *not* significantly more likely to be excluded. Statements dealing with gender, religion or social policies like immigration and health care were not significantly different from non-political, non-cultural phrases. However, any statement dealing with race, sexuality, foreign policy or other areas of politics were repeated significantly less often than statements on non-political topics. Phrases on the intersection of politics and the economy were repeated significantly less often as well, although it should be noted that more personal statements of economic woe were placed in the omitted category unless they explicitly referenced a political response to the crisis. The only exception to these trends was simple catchphrases that captured several aspects of political identity in a holistic phrase. These holistic

phrases like "yes we can" and "Joe the Plumber" often symbolized a political coalition of 2008. Each of these holistic phrases was repeated 91.8 percent more often than the baseline phrase, net of the speaker. Since bloggers could repeat any phrase and just pick their favorites – even if they rarely talk about politics – developing a broad catchphrase was critical to getting broad audience attention.

Pundits often talked about 2008 as the rise of a new Obama generation, younger and more connected to the Internet, but I found that the average Obama phrase was repeated less often than the average phrase not uttered by a partisan politician. The Obama result needs to be put in to context. His phrases were repeated 17.8 percent less often, while McCain's phrases were repeated 46.9 percent less often. For the most part, anything a partisan politician said was repeated less often than phrases from other sources, even after controlling for bloggers' general lack of interest in political topics. Sarah Palin was the main exception; avoidance of her phrases was small and insignificant. However, this may not be a positive sign of Palin's political influence. She may have been disproportionately popular among bloggers because she was an easy target for comedians' mockery on shows like *Saturday Night Live.*

When social scientists look back at the 2008 election, an economic collapse and ongoing wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan stand out as the major issues. Democrats and Republicans presented clear alternatives on how to tackle these issues – particularly whether to wind down wars. However, these were *not* the topics that got bloggers to go to their computers. Foreign policy may be an inherently specialized topic, since smaller media sites were also less likely to repeat these phrases. We would expect bloggers to pay attention to the economy. People were losing their jobs and homes across the country. One possibility is that bloggers discussing the economy wrote about their own personal hardships instead of a governmental response. Another

possibility is that people turn to blogs to write about issues of social policy (like health care or immigration) and social identity that do not receive as much attention elsewhere. The niche filling explanation is also incomplete: no group of writers tried to fill a niche on sexuality and gay marriage.

A third possibility is that bloggers prefer talking about clear and simple to understand "outrageous" statements. When Sarah Palin presented herself as a maverick and reformer, Barack Obama replied "you can put lipstick on a pig, it's still a pig. You can wrap up an old fish in a piece of paper and call it change; it's still going to stink. After eight years we've had enough." People immediately began debating whether Obama's remark was sexist. "Lipstick on a pig" was barely used online before Obama's remark, yet it ended as the 7th most popular phrase in the data set. Counter insurgency and financial derivatives are far more complex topics. People can certainly form opinions on war the economy without studying them in detail. However, bloggers may not want to repeat phrases in areas they don't fully understand. They aren't writing about politics as their vocation. We assume the topics that full-time partisan bloggers choose to write about are a reflection of their political priorities. Professional journalists are paid to learn something about new complex policy issues, so they can write about it. The topics that other bloggers choose to write about may be a function of how easy it is to write about the topic, not necessarily political priorities, since most of these bloggers are writing about politics in their spare time. By the same logic, social media users may be more likely to share emotional stories about the transgression of social identity boundaries because those stories rely on readers' prior experience in a society instead of forcing the reader to learn about new and complex phenomena.

8: Discussion

My results suggest that large news organizations and large partisan blogs are often closer to each other than smaller media sites or blogs in the topics each site chooses to emphasize. While prior research focuses on comparing professional journalists to large partisan blogs, my study tries to put these differences in perspective by including the wide range of content found on the publicly searchable Internet. I found that large partisan blogs have a strong preference for nearly any aspect of politics over any other topics, while professional media sites have weaker preferences and other blogs tend to avoid politics relative to other topics. In 2008 and early 2009, partisan blogs and elite media organizations both placed considerable emphasis on the economy over other topics. It is hard to say how much of this is due to the specific economic crisis and how much is a broader overlap. Television network websites and partisan blogs emphasized similar areas of politics – even identity politics – suggesting a common agenda. The biggest difference between national media organizations and large partisan blogs is partisan bloggers' distinct preference to repeat opposing politicians while shunning weaker members of their own side. Other bloggers tend to avoid writing about politics relative to other topics.

My study helps to show both the potential and some of the limitations of using large-scale online data collection to explain the resonance of political and cultural ideas. A generation of sociologists has theorized that social problems are treated differently in the news than other forms of politics. We would expect these differences to start growing in the 2008 election as online-only media grows in prominence. Massive scale online data collection makes it easier to make comparisons across topics and media organizations that traditional content analysis cannot. The Memetracker database gives a common metric – repetitions of a particular phrase or its synonyms – that allows for analysis of millions of webpages. Writers who prefer to repeat

phrases on the same topic or by the same speaker have similar definitions of newsworthiness.[32]

This data set is poorly suited to explain different portrayals on different websites, but it is ideally suited to test whether elite media organizations, large partisan blogs and the rest of the blogosphere pursue a similar issue agenda over an election season.

My regression approach differs from most textual analyses of media content because it is better suited to analyze both similarity and difference. Most content analyses often start by theorizing difference along a major axis of comparison: different cases, different media organizations, different nations, and prior social theory. The differences are often valuable to document, because they help generate new theories. However, comparison often requires the cases to be closer to each other than the broad universe of things a news organization writes about. Large scale computer-aided textual analysis often repeats this focus on difference by employing "topic modeling" – a set of sophisticated computational tools that identify sets of phrases that commonly appear in one group of texts and do not appear in others. Instead of inductively classifying phrases, my goal is to deductively assess which phrases are more or less likely to appear on a particular kind of website, based on the phrase's topic and the initial speaker. Conducting separate regressions on each group of writers allows us to analyze both similarities and differences.

Many studies of media exclusion rest on an assumption that getting coverage is better than not getting coverage. This distinction is rarely questioned. However, my results suggest the way we interpret findings of media exclusion are specific to an era of journalistic objectivity that

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[32] Separate regression models using the timestamps of each webpage's initial publication suggest writers within any grouping publish the same phrase in rapid succession. The rapid timing is only possible if writers in a particular group of websites have similar definitions of newsworthiness, so they can immediately write about new information without having to copy peers' finalized stories. Any convergence on which topics are the most salient part of a campaign are more likely to occur on the campaign bus or plane between events (cf Crouse 1973) or e-mail coordination than copying specific stories after they are published.

may be in decline. Objective journalists are supposed to include all relevant sources, even if this is just a ritual to deflect criticism (Tuchman 1972). Due to limited time and resources, journalists rarely meet this ideal (Benson 2009; Fishman 1980; Grand 2011; Klinenberg 2005). If journalists' ritual is to include all relevant sources, then systematic exclusion from the media suggests journalists feel a certain set of sources are illegitimate (Fishman 1980; Hallin 1986). Newer political writers and commentators publishing online rarely follow objectivity rituals. They can mock and criticize opponents, explicitly challenging their legitimacy, instead of having to ignore the sources they feel are illegitimate. Therefore, systematic exclusion of particular sources should have a different meaning in new media. Large partisan sites are more likely to repeat the statements of political opponents than the sources they favor. When one group of large partisan sites avoids a source that is getting attention elsewhere, it is more likely to be a tacit *endorsement* of their stance than a tacit rejection.

One of the first things people notice about partisan sites is their emphasis on outrage, but my results suggest these sites' preference for specific topics is almost completely independent of their preference to repeat the statements of opposing politicians. Without controlling for initial speakers, large conservative blogs repeated phrases dealing with race 85.15 percent more often than phrases not mentioning race. After controlling for the initial speaker, conservative blogs repeated phrases dealing with race 83.94 percent more often. Large liberal blogs and Internet native media sites repeat phrases on race slightly *more* often after controlling for the speaker. This dynamic holds for any other topic. When we imagine writers choosing what to write about, we may imagine them pulling balls out of a machine. Elite media sites are like bingo, but the machine is biased to have more B numbers (following the campaign trail) and fewer Os (other sources). Large partisan websites pull stories from two *separate* machines. One machine is

disproportionately loaded with race, gender and the other *topics* that motivate partisan writers. The other machine is loaded with the *speakers* that motivate partisan writers, who are disproportionately opposing politicians.

While my big data approach cannot specify motivations for partisan writers' behavior, I can offer two overlapping hypotheses. One hypothesis is that new media sites are all new market entrants looking to carve out niches that are not fulfilled by a somewhat homogeneous traditional media. As Berry and Sobieraj (2013) argue, political outrage is a market niche that was unfulfilled by traditional news organizations. At the same time, it may help for sites to establish particular topical niches and specialties to distinguish themselves from other sites engaged in similar forms of outrage. Note how sites like the *Huffington Post* emphasized race, holistic forms of social identity and pop culture instead of emphasizing all forms of politics and ignoring pop culture. The second hypothesis is that large partisan publishers have particularly strong prior held beliefs for which topics are the most important to write about. Because these writers are not dependent on access to political elites, they can follow their preferences without having to follow the politicians' agenda to maintain access.

As online publication becomes a larger part of how people engage with political ideas, scholars will have to debate the merits of large-scale online data collection versus more detailed analysis of particular publications. Many sociologists continue to embrace the model of focusing on mainstream elite media content, using the themes found in content to gain theoretical leverage about other aspects of political culture and social problems. I show the topics that leading newspapers and television emphasize are contingent on what political elites talk about, instead of being a direct reflection of some broader national political culture. Furthermore, people who write about politics everyday emphasize different issues than people who only occasionally write

about politics. One of the main advantages of large-scale online data collection is to compare media and blogging elites to the topics that emerge from a large user base. Instead of talking about liberal or conservative blogs as an "echo chamber," it is more accurate to say that everyone who wrote about national politics for a large website fits in to a broad echo chamber when compared to the rest of the blogosphere. People who do not write about politics for a living often place a lower priority on politics than other issues they choose to write about online.

9: Conclusion

My study is the first to use a massive online data set to compare the relative popularity of phrases on different topics, initially made by different speakers, across a wide range of websites, for six months of an American presidential election and its aftermath. Comparing traditional media sites to various new media sites shows how unusual the journalistic practice of avoiding dispreferred opinions is. Partisan new media sites disproportionately emphasize statements initially made by politicians from the opposing party. Partisan sites also focus on a wide range of political topics, irrespective of what politicians discuss, while elite traditional media websites focus more specifically on the statements of presidential tickets. Despite the massive economic collapse of 2008, writing about the intersection of politics and the economy was disproportionally confined to people who write about politics on a daily basis. Different websites often have conflicting rules for how to respond to a particular idea, suggesting different writers all play an active role in constructing the meaning of political ideas found in their postings.

Chapter 5: Comparing Sociology's Production Approach to a Reader's Perspective on News

In this dissertation, I presented three separate empirical studies. Because each study uses a different data set and a different level of analysis, I will start my concluding chapter by reviewing some of the most important findings from each empirical chapter. In their own way, each study highlights the continued importance of a production of culture perspective for studying news. In the last two decades, analyzing news production has taken a back seat in sociology to more holistic, interpretive studies using news content as a way to understand other aspects of culture on a national level. However, the production approach may make a comeback with the increased use of online data sets. In this concluding chapter, I will try to outline how the broad insights from my dissertation could be used to could be merged with the research interests of other cultural sociologists, producing a better way to study changes in media coverage of structural inequality and identity politics. I will also discuss some of the substantive implications of my findings for media consumers, stepping outside the debates in academic literature.

1: Review of Empirical Findings

1.1: Riding Journalistic Coattails

Cultural sociologists increasingly describe journalism as a "field" with close ties to the fields of politics, economic markets, and national cultures, drawing from Bourdieu (cf Bail 2012; Benson 2006, 2009; Benson and Saguy 2005). These newer sociological theories give a starting point for explaining the relationship between the cultural meanings found in news content and broader structures of social inequality. (These theories are largely based on traditional media, not online content, an issue I address in Chapter 4.) Scholars who examine the day-to-day processes of news production would argue the Bourdieusian field approach overlooks crucial aspects of the news production process, reducing news content to a reflection of other social structures. In my

first empirical chapter, I bridge the theoretical gap between these approaches by asking whether power is embedded in specific practices, like planning news events in advance. Do symbolic actions in creating a news event in advance have consequences for the range of opinion found in subsequent coverage? To answer this question, I gathered data from 105 US Presidential press conferences from 1981-2009 and the next day's coverage in both the *New York Times* and ABC's *World News Tonight.*

My study has two primary and interconnected findings. The first finding is that journalists interpret decisions about where and when to hold an event as signals of newsworthiness. A considerable amount of variation in how much news coverage a president received can be predicted *without knowing anything about what a president said*. As older ethnographies showed (Epstein 1973; Fishman 1980; Gans 1979; Tuchman 1973), journalists often have to reserve space in a newspaper or broadcast, guessing how much news a source will produce at their event. These early ethnographies explained their findings as a function of limited 1970s technology. Scholars may assume that leaving Washington D.C. should not change the newsworthiness of a press conference in the 1990s or 2000s, because technological barriers to coverage have gone away. However, presidential decisions like leaving the White House or holding a joint press conference continue to have a major effect on the volume of news coverage. The scheduling and preparation of a news event shape journalists' evaluations of how newsworthy the event will be. American presidents create meaning and thus exert considerable influence over how much coverage they receive before speaking a word at their press conferences.

The second finding from this chapter is that as coverage volume goes up, the opinions in news stories are less concentrated on the president's point of view, as measured by the

concentration of quoted words. "Objective" news stories are supposed to include a balance of opinions (Tuchman 1972 for theory; Benson 2009 for another empirical study). However, the *New York Times* gave the president 75.7 percent of all quoted words in the next day's coverage, on average. For ABC, the figure was 69.5 percent. Newspaper and television journalists were more concerned with inequalities in their coverage (or claims of unequal treatment) in stories they deem important. The newsworthiness of a story was a powerful predictor of how many sources would be included and how much balance we would see between the president and other sources. The robustness of my finding across stories on war, the economy, and a wide range of other topics suggest that the concrete ways that sources use power has an independent effect on the range of opinions found in news coverage. Sources who create a lot of attention for themselves also create opportunities for political opponents to get in to the news.

1.2: To Quote or Not to Quote

A wide range of sociologists, communications scholars and political scientists have developed theories about the relationship between journalists and their sources as a potential influence on news content. In Chapter 2, I showed that one of the ways newsmakers can try to use power is by signaling the importance of their events. We know that journalists use interviews with sources to get most of the information they convey to the audience. During live interviews for an overhearing audience, we know that both journalistic interviewers and politicians being interviewed converse in specific ways, largely for the benefit of the audience (Clayman and Heritage 2002a). However, there is relatively little empirical study of how the micro interaction between journalists and sources can influence subsequent news content. Will particular patterns of questions and answers affect how journalists write about the interview, even in the absence of

a dramatic moment (cf Clayman 1995) that exemplifies the performance aspect of news interviews?

I use presidential press conferences as a dataset, because most interviews are not available for researchers to compare the statements that get published to all the statements that get ignored in subsequent coverage. Analyzing four press conferences on a statement-by-statement basis, I found that any statement where a president criticizes someone, explains or justifies a policy is more likely to be quoted than statements that lack these substantive actions. Several rhetorical devices also make a statement significantly more likely to be quoted. My main research question in this chapter focuses on micro interaction, controlling for these other aspects of speech. During any formal or informal setting, when people ask questions, they expect a certain range of responses. Professional journalists often try to ask questions that preclude safe options (Clayman and Heritage 2002a, 2002b; Clayman et al 2007). Heads of state often try to move away from candid responses towards prepared remarks.

For all that journalists complain about being fed "talking points" and "deceptive" answers, I found journalists will only put up limited resistance before backing down and quoting whatever a president says. When a president goes off topic, that statement is quoted only 37.6 percent as often in leading newspapers the next day. Another way journalists may signal that they consider the president's response is inadequate is by repeating the question. After this point, the penalty for off topic responses goes away. Because presidents will only answer so many questions and could always cut off a press conference early, journalists back down from the aggression they typically display at these events (Banning and Billingsley 2007; Clayman and Heritage 2002b; Clayman et al 2007). Political sociologists have long theorized that keeping topics out of public debates is a form of power (Lukes 1974). I show how this power is deployed

157

through micro interaction. The best example comes from September 2006, when George W. Bush deflected accusations that he condoned torture by saying CIA officers needed protection. He responded to questions about increased violence in Iraq by saying Saddam Hussein was dangerous. The president's responses were designed to be vague, pushing reporters to other stories with better quotes. Independent journalists are often expected to be a watchdog on political power. However, political leaders who are skilled in micro interaction can thwart these watchdogs by feeding them table scraps.

1.3: Blogging Through an Election

In 2008, some conservative pundits argued the media was "in the tank" for Obama, but it is unlikely that traditional journalists would add explicit pro-Obama slant to their coverage. One possibility is that the topics emphasized by mainstream media organizations were much closer to the topics emphasized by large liberal blogs than their conservative counterparts. I offer a novel way to test this folk wisdom based on an adaptation of the Memetracker database of 20,000 news organizations and nearly one million blogs. To begin with, I recoded the 1,000 largest "phrase clusters" of the Memetracker database by hand, separating out a wide range of ambiguities that machine learning continues to struggle with. I also coded what topic each phrase dealt with and who the initial speaker was, if there was a clear initial speaker. My new sample of 2,814 phrases used from August 2008 through January 2009 gives a common database to compare selection biases across different types of media organizations. Will leading liberal blogs and traditional media organizations both pay more attention to Barack Obama than the Republican ticket of John McCain and Sarah Palin, for example?

Simple analyses suggest that partisan blogs have some overlap with each other, and with large mainstream media organizations. The number of times large traditional media

158

organizations repeated a phrase on its website has a stronger correlation with the number of times that large conservative blogs repeated a phrase, as compared to large liberal blogs.[33] The correlations do tend to be lower for political phrases, suggesting more disagreement regarding politics than other issues. Smaller media websites' use of political phrases is more closely correlated with large liberal blogs than legacy media organizations, suggesting a shared interest in Obama (but likely for different reasons). Meanwhile, other blogs' use of political phrases is more closely correlated with large liberal blogs than legacy media or large conservative blogs. This could reflect a liberal tilt in the blogosphere. However, correlation could be misleading here. As a group, bloggers repeated political ideas less than other topics in 2008, and large liberal blogs were the most likely to ignore a particular phrase. The correlation could be based on mutual disinterest, independent of partisan ideology.

Running a series of negative binomial regression models helps to sort out what makes a particular group of writers repeat a particular phrase more or less often. Of every group of online writers, large liberal and large conservative blogs have the most distinctive sets of preferred topics. Partisan blogs on either side of the aisle are closer to *each other* than the websites of large traditional news organizations, repeating phrases dealing with politics nearly two and a half times as often as phrases not dealing with politics. Leading newspaper and television websites emphasized race and gender more than non-political topics – a departure from established theory that found social issues are often downplayed in the news media (Downs 1972). Smaller media websites emphasized the economy but otherwise avoided politics. As an aggregate group, bloggers repeated political phrases significantly less often than non-political phrases. 2008 may have been the first election where many Americans had the technical capacity to publish their

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[33] As I explain in more detail in the chapter, I took the correlation of log(phrase uses + 1) instead of the raw number of phrase uses, because the number of times a group of websites repeats a particular phrase follows a power law distribution.

own feelings about politics online, but this doesn't mean bloggers would use this technology to talk about the election. Future studies about online discussions of politics may want to consider the relative salience of politics versus entertainment and other current events.

My study also allows me to test how often a particular group of websites repeated a particular politician's quotes, controlling for what that politician decided to talk about. The websites of traditional media organizations emphasized the presidential tickets over other partisan politicians and non-partisan speakers. This finding is hardly surprising, based on what we already know about political news during a campaign. However, partisan blogs were only more likely to repeat politicians on the *opposing* presidential ticket. These large partisan websites were significantly less likely to repeat the statements of politicians on their own side who were not on presidential tickets. Writing about the other side – presumably to criticize them – was independent of partisan bloggers' preference for particular topics. In other words, conservative bloggers were interested in Obama regardless of what he chose to talk about, and liberal bloggers were disproportionately interested in Sarah Palin. Liberal bloggers' interest in Obama and conservative bloggers' interest in McCain was not significantly different than their interest in non-partisans. Future studies of partisan media may want to follow up, testing whether critiquing opponents occurs at a relatively constant rate, regardless of how frequently those politicians are featured on the websites of large traditional media organizations.

2: Why Production of News?

All of my individual findings help answer a single, core research question – why is one thing news while another similar thing is not. In the first empirical chapter, I study press conferences. In the other chapters, I study sentences and phrases. When people try to explain the news, one of the first things they try to explain is "why do some things get more attention than

others?" It's hardly a novel core research question for social scientists. However, this research question has slipped from the core of sociological inquiry regarding news. With the growth of cultural sociology, many sociologists saw the news as a potential data source to make broader statements about cultural inequality (Bail YEAR; Benson 2009; Benson and Saguy 2005; Ferree et al 2002; Lamont and Thévenot 2000). Along the way, this mindset has co-opted the core research question "why is the news a certain way?" Older sociological studies' focus on organizational routines and relationships with sources (Epstein 1973; Fishman 1980; Gans 1979; Tuchman 1973) has been shoved aside. Cultural sociologists increasingly rely on "framing" – a way of interpreting and categorizing the meanings found in news content – to try and explain why that content exists instead of some other form of news.

An incident from when I started writing this chapter best illustrates the dangers of naively using news content (or a lack of coverage) to make broader statements about culture. On January 6, 2015, a homemade explosive blew up outside the NAACP office in Colorado Springs. Fortunately, no one was reported injured and the building only suffered minor damage. The story made a few headlines in traditional media outlets. Initial coverage focused on the headline and barely went beyond a minimal description. Within a day, many online activists noticed the discrepancy between mainstream media coverage and their own Twitter feeds, which were full of posts under the hashtag #NAACPBombing. As the self-described organizer and digital campaigner Dante Barry (@dantebarry) put it on Twitter, "Keep in mind #NAACPBombing (deliberate) happened yesterday AM & is NOW becoming natl news bc of Twitter. Let that settle for a moment." Ironically, Barry's tweet was one of the first embedded in the next wave of stories, appearing on sites like *Buzzfeed* and *The Daily Dot*, asking whether the mainstream media dropped the ball.

For Barry and other online activists who mobilized after the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, the lack of mainstream media coverage about the #NAACPBombing was interpreted as another sign of racial inequity. The lack of news coverage fit squarely with the slogan "Black Lives Matter." Violence against blacks – in this case the oldest black civil rights institution – did not appear to be taken as seriously by the mainstream media. In most tweets and new media criticism, the sparse amount of traditional news coverage was held up as a sign of racial inequality. At the same time, racial inequality was used to explain the lack of news coverage. It's a circular argument. It's also a weirdly de-contextualized argument to explain a *lack of news coverage*. Would we expect the bombing of an NAACP office to get more coverage in January 2014 or January 2015, after months of activism and news coverage of race relations? If social issues mainly get attention based on "attention cycles" (Downs 1972), the bombing should get more attention in 2015 than it would have in 2014. Could there be some other reason to explain the relative lack of coverage?

If we think about how news gets produced, there are several explanations for why the NAACP bombing would not get much coverage from traditional media organizations. There were no injuries and minimal damage to the building. Reporters could summarize the story in a sentence. To give more news coverage, journalists needed to make contact with someone who wanted to talk about the bombing and would give more information. However, the potential news sources who were closest to the bombing did <u>not</u> want to attract major media attention. NAACP chapter president Henry Allen Jr. was initially "hesitant" to call the bombing a hate crime, according to *Newsweek*. He waited for the FBI to conduct a full investigation about whether his office was the intended target. The FBI waited as well. Other NAACP leaders and online activists were more direct and immediate in labeling the bombing a hate crime.

The quick and sudden outrage regarding media coverage of the #NAACPBombing illustrates why we need to study the process of how news gets produced and not just the final content. Activists saw many themes that were in their Twitter feeds but omitted from the news: intent and motive of the bomber, victimization and outrage, shock, sadness, and sympathy. These activists probably haven't taken classes or written a dissertation on how news stories get produced. They filled in the explanation that makes the most sense based on their experience, race and racism. Race plays a major role in how crime is portrayed in the media (Hunt 1999; see also Dixon 2011 for a review). Unfortunately, the non-academic explanations based *solely* on racial inequality ignored the social process that leads to news content. Traditional journalists are very restrained when it comes to issues of blame, motivation, and showing emotion (Tuchman 1972). They would even qualify whether the NAACP office was the "intended" target of the explosive until an investigator or the victim said there was intent. Journalists may have wanted to emphasize all the themes that activists wanted out of the news, but we will never know. Reporters needed sources' cooperation to fully cover the story. The potential sources did not cooperate, placing the investigation of a crime ahead of attracting widespread attention via the news media.

2.1: News as End vs. Means to an End for Sociological Research

Professional academics tend to agree that news content is the result of some production process, as opposed to being a reflection of the importance of events in the world. However, academics who study news content do not always treat the production process as meaningful. Many scholars try to use news content as a database for studying social movement activity (McCarthy, McPhail and Smith 1996; Myers and Caniglia 2004; Oliver and Myers 2000) and/or broad attitudes in a society, such as "national culture" (Benson and Saguy 2005; Ferree et al

2002; Lamont and Thévenot 2000). These studies hold the potential to use media content to shed light on other aspects of structural inequality. Unfortunately, these studies often focus on themes in media content, following Entman's (1993, 2004) model of counting frames. Sociologists and communications scholars doing interpretive content analyses are more rigorous in terms of case selection and inter-coder reliability, but they often cut sources out of the final theory. Professional scholars often fall in to the same trap as activists giving spur-of-the-moment reactions to current events, reducing their theories of news production to journalists preferring certain ideas (or ideologies) while being biased against others.

The salience of particular ideas or positions in a society probably has some effect on news coverage, but one of the most important lessons of studying news is that there is no straight line from being in a particular position in a society to getting better or worse treatment in the news. Critical media scholars often place potential news stories are placed in a binary category of hegemonic mainstream news or a more progressive alternative (Croteau and Hoynes 1993; Entman and Rojecki 1994; Gitlin 1980; Hallin 1986; Hunt 1999). This categorization may be useful for comparisons, but it can also cause scholars to overlook all of the advantages money can buy. Sources who represent "the mainstream" have usually acquired some degree of power and prestige, which separates them from other members of a society that hold similar opinions (Fishman 1980). They can hire a staff to plan and promote events in advance, write speeches, and practice how to respond in interviews. The President of the United States is probably the most powerful person in the world, but even he cannot be assured of getting the news coverage he wants. Planning events in advance and deciding whether or not to directly respond to questions have a strong and independent effect on news coverage. Critical approaches could

make a more sophisticated argument by following Hunt's lead and examining *how sources promote contesting interpretations of the same event by seeking media attention.*

2.2: Merging Perspectives in Same Study

It can make life easier to imagine a world where journalists had perfect information and could make decisions just based on which stories were the most important. Readers would have more certainty in their assumption that if news organizations ignore a story, it is because they are biased. Studying media production would be much easier! Like members of any profession, journalists would probably enjoy this increase in power. Imagine having access all the information that sources normally try to hide. We know that news content is largely based on reporters' collaboration with sources, and sources have some amount of power to keep issues out of the public spotlight. Unfortunately, the breadth of influences on the media production process make it difficult to fit enough steps in to one study. No single study can do everything. Unfortunately, some scholars' response to this problem is to treat the production process as a black box.

I'd argue this assumption is overly limiting and unnecessary for a wide range of sociologists. My dissertation is entirely quantitative, largely focusing on objective features of media content. Hunt's study of the OJ Simpson case is qualitative and much more interpretive. Both approaches take the production process seriously. At the same time, both approaches try to account for ways that macro structure could influence the production process. Hunt focuses on specific cultural frames of black criminality, racial inequality and celebrity. I focus on economic change and comparing broad categories, such as discussion of race as opposed to gender or foreign policy. We both argue that reporters start with certain preferences, but they are highly responsive to the behavior of sources. Even though many of our premises and research questions

are different, there is a common goal of trying to integrate an interest in the production of culture with the possibility that journalists will try to impose certain preferences on the news because they are part of a particular culture. In the next section, I will try to outline specific ways that subsequent scholars could build on this shared foundation.

3: Studying Inequality in News from a Production Perspective

3.1: Historical Limits to Feasibility

While early sociological studies of the news tried to understand how journalists see the world differently than readers, the next generation of studies shifted towards the reader's perspective. The shift can be traced back to a series of social movements studies that asked whether activists and social movement organizations would be treated differently in the news than establishment figures. Downs (1972) argued that journalists would only pay attention to issues like the environment during limited "attention cycles." Gitlin (1980) argued the media was biased against the outsider activists of Students for a Democratic Society, and Hallin (1986) found anti-war protesters only gained media coverage after members of Congress began opposing the Vietnam War. Subsequent content analyses found progressive social movements did not receive sympathetic news coverage (Croteau and Hoynes 1994; Entman and Rojecki 1993). Ethnographies consistently found that reporters defer to officials as sources. Molotch and Lester (1975) found some exceptions for breaking news, but even this exception was incomplete. Between all of these studies, a new research paradigm was born: sociologists could study news coverage of social problems and social movements by comparing the representation of activists to the representation of establishment perspectives on a particular topic.

Focusing on particular case studies was methodologically feasible, but had unfortunate consequences. Sociologists started taking it for granted that various social problems would

receive different kinds of news coverage than other hard news. However, this conventional wisdom was never tested empirically. It would take too much manual data collection to compare several topics of interest to social movements scholars with several years of news coverage regarding establishment politics. All the studies that focused on social movements agreed that progressive movements received less favorable coverage than elected officials. However, they offered competing explanations for *why* movements received worse coverage. Scholars like Gitlin argued the media was biased against the ideology of Students for a Democratic Society. Hallin argued journalists' willingness to put anti-war voices on television was based on whether the anti-war movement had gained "mainstream" support from members of Congress. Do journalists react to the ideas, or the power of the person articulating the idea? Because studies focused entirely on comparing social movements to the establishment take on a particular issue, they struggled to analytically separate the influence of ideas from the influence of sources.

In the late 1980s, Snow and Benford (1988) and Gamson and Modigliani (1989) proposed that framing could be a way to solve these problems. As they adapted Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974), they argued one of the main things that social movement organizations and other political actors try to do is present social situations selectively. These social movement scholars proposed studying the process of how movement organizations present themselves, along with studying the way journalists choose from possible presentations of a situation and how that presentation affects the audience. Unfortunately, research in the social movements "framing" paradigm fell short of this ideal almost immediately. Gamson and Modigliani focused almost exclusively on the behavior of journalists, instead of the collaboration between sources and journalists. Entman (1993) treated all frames the same in his analysis, whether they were attributed to sources or placed in the journalist's own words. To be fair, it is hard to know how

exactly to fit sources in to theories relying heavily on cultural resonance. Journalists could be simultaneously interested in imposing their preferred values on the news and highly responsive to the way that sources present social problems.

One way to try and clarify how framing works is to think about journalists' preferences as a set of if : then behavior rules. In this approach, journalists are sensitive to the way that sources describe current events. If we know what sources said, we can analyze how much journalists follow sources' lead. We can see if there are certain things that journalists jump on, even if they are a minor part of a source's emphasis. The potential advantage of an if : then approach to studying framing is that discursive frames can be treated as an independent variable alongside other parts of a source's communication strategy, like holding events at a particular place or trying to avoid the topic of a journalist's question. Framing could be more closely integrated with a production approach, instead of treating the production approach as a completely separate phenomenon.

3.2: New Questions in the Relationship Between Power, Ideology and Exclusion

After the NAACP bombing, activists asked why mainstream media organizations treated the bombing differently than other crimes against white victims, which would presumably receive more attention. Sociologists who are interested in studying social problems have asked similar kinds of questions for a generation. They focus on two dimensions of "outsiderness" – the prestige of a speaker (elite vs. non-elite) and the speaker's ideology (mainstream or not mainstream). We could imagine placing these two dimensions in a 2x2 grid. However, the elite speaker / mainstream ideology box and the non-elite speaker / not mainstream ideology boxes have been have been much more popular. In the 1970s, having mainstream versus "extreme"

political positions may have correlated very strongly with being an elected official as opposed to an activist.

In today's political climate, there is less of a connection between mainstream ideology and elite status. Several prominent Republicans have questioned whether Barack Obama is "really" a Christian instead of taking Obama's word for it. Many observers – including some conservatives – argue this criticism goes too far. The continued debates over Obama's faith may fit in an "elite politician / ideas outside the mainstream" box. The rise of low cost publishing gives more activists the opportunity to fill the "outside political voice / mainstream political ideas" box. Now that all four squares of the 2x2 box are filled, we can try new studies comparing how journalists respond to politicians and activists in each box. A 2x2x2 (or 2x2xN) cube could be even better, adding new media organizations versus MSM as a third axis for comparison.

The only reason for sociologists doing comparisons to constrain themselves to the same two boxes is convenience. Data collection is more scalable now. We can gather news stories from more boxes at once. By comparing different topics while controlling for the speaker, I found the taken-for-granted "the media treats social issues differently than hard news like the economy" assumption might be dated. In the 2008 election and its aftermath, the largest traditional media organizations repeated ideas dealing with race and gender more than other current events. New media organizations appear to specialize more. Partisan blogs specialize in politics (overlooking other current events), while the *Huffington Post* emphasized a combination of race and pop culture. Sociology's original contribution to the interdisciplinary study of journalism was in studying organizations. Many insights from the news routines school were ahead of their time, and would now fit squarely within institutionalist organizational theory.

With changes in the organization of news production, there is a wide range of research questions that sociologists may be uniquely suited to explain. With the wide range of political information available online, "legacy" media organizations like the *New York Times* may compete in an international prestige market as much as they compete to sell physical copies, which could lead them to emphasize different stories than *The Huffington Post* or *Buzzfeed*. Large partisan sites may act as information brokers, reading a wide range of mainstream news stories and then copying the ones that further a partisan agenda. Sociologists who look at social problems or representations of inequality in the news have predominantly come from social movements or other critical schools within the discipline. With the changes in media economics, partisan discussion of social problems is increasingly a commodity with potentially growing audience (Boczkowski and Mitchelstein 2013; Stroud 2011). Economic sociology – specifically branches dealing with organizational behavior – may be better suited to explain changes in media content and compare new media to legacy elites.

Another solution would be to leverage sociology's strengths in ethnography and conversation analysis to study the processes of how news gets produced on a micro level. There are relatively few ethnographic studies of how reporters use Twitter and other social media as a part of their job. Each box in a 2x2x2 grid could benefit from greater description of how news in that box gets produced (or ignored). There is also more work to be done on how people who want to communicate with a large audience use social media to bypass traditional media organizations. Conversation analysis may have unique insights regarding online diffusion. There is a growing trend to take ideas out of their original context and spread them online. For example, many conservatives spread Obama accidentally saying "my Muslim faith" in a live TV interview. Is there something about how Obama said "my Muslim faith" in the context of

170

interaction that makes it more extractable? Could Clayman's (1995) study of memorable moments from debates help predict live-tweeting?

4: Broader Implications For Political Discourse

In the previous section, I outlined various implications of my dissertation for other sociologists who are interested in studying news – in particular the relationship between news and social inequality. If we want to understand *why* journalists make particular decisions and *how* they do their job, we need to separate our perspective as people who read news from the perspective of people who produce news. Of course, most sociologists' interaction with the news will only be as a regular reader. Relatively few sociologists study news. In this last section of the dissertation, I will try to summarize how better understanding the perspective of writers helps us to understand what we are exposed to as readers. As online publishing develops, "writers" is a much broader group than professional journalists. My dissertation examines the beginning of this shift, with the rise of the blogosphere. What might we expect for the future?

One of the biggest differences between 2008 and prior elections was the relative prominence of identity politics. Issues like race and gender were widely assumed to get secondary coverage, relative to the economy. In an era with strong party branding and partisan identity, maybe horserace coverage of elections has lost some steam because the horses don't move as much? Other scholars may want to investigate this possibility. My dissertation shows that a wide range of social issues were popular on both the left and the right. Large mainstream media organizations also emphasized race and gender, but they did not emphasize sexuality or religion. Across the Internet, phrases that symbolized multiple aspects of social identity in a party coalition like "yes we can" and "Joe the Plumber" were far more popular than any other kind of phrase. The bundle of topics that I found in traditional media organizations and large new

media outlets for the 2008 election was different than what other scholars have found in prior elections.

While mainstream media and newer partisan outlets may be unified in paying more attention to identity politics, we would also expect increased echo chambers since the 2008 election. My 2008 data showed a kind of echo chamber in *who* partisan websites choose to write about. Independent of what politicians talk about, partisan bloggers preferred to write about opponents while ignoring members of their own party. Searching for and denouncing "transgressors" was a goal in and of itself. Emphasizing broad debates about culture, belonging and representation is good business for these sites. Shocking headlines could attract additional web traffic as people click on the links. As sharing and social media engagement has become a more important metric for websites, partisan outrage has several advantages over more neutral reporting. Emotional stories and posts geared towards specific niche audiences tend to get more likes, shares and comments than more neutral reporting on the same topic. As of writing this dissertation in March 2015, it is unclear whether the reliance on social media engagement metrics will continue. Market research suggests social media engagement with a story someone posts has little if any correlation to people actually reading the linked story.

My dissertation shows some of the ways that presidents can exert considerable power over the press, but these advantages are diluted with new media's emphasis on identity politics. Presidents can create events in a way to try and manipulate subsequent news coverage. They can avoid damaging questions from reporters by strategically avoiding the specific premise of the question. But politicians cannot completely duck an army of partisans who want to engage in identity politics. John McCain told a Minneapolis crowd that Obama is "a decent family man, a citizen that I just happen to have disagreements with on fundamental issues. That's what this

campaign is all about." McCain got booed by his supporters. Barack Obama tried to downplay issues of race and identity, but his accidental utterance of "My Muslim faith" got taken out of context on conservative blogs. When Sarah Palin embraced identity politics, liberal blogs pounced on everything she had to say. Even Obama got in on the act, comparing Palin branding herself as a maverick reformer to "putting lipstick on a pig." Candidates could receive more attention online for engaging in identity politics than discussing other issues. However, the attention was often negative. People questioned whether "lipstick on a pig" was sexist. If a candidate in 2016 recognizes the risks and tries to avoid discussing identity politics, they can't completely shut off the faucet of a hostile echo chamber.

One possible trajectory is that identity politics continue to become a larger part of online political discourse, as media sites cater to audience demand. New media sites have incentives for outrage and other first person narratives, which dovetail with discussions of identity and belonging. Traditional media sites may show a similar kind of selection bias – treating individual statements from candidates about identity politics as more newsworthy – while maintaining an objective presentation of these statements. Candidates may embrace identity politics as a way to stand out in primaries. In this scenario, both sides may harden around issues of identity. People who use social media to express identity politics may develop a "ragehole" – similar to a journalist's newshole, these social media users produce a certain number of posts on identity per week. These posts mainly criticize perceived transgressors. Social media users who often post about identity may seek out like-minded individuals and purge opposing partisans from their social networks. People who do not enjoy identifying with either echo chamber may get sick of the mudslinging. They may compare friends filling the "ragehole" at a relatively constant rate to a car alarm that is constantly ringing, and decide their only option is to walk away from

following the political process. The cycle would reinforce itself, as the only people left following politics are people who enjoy identifying with a side and some of the mudslinging.

The most likely alternative I foresee is social media users getting sick of watching friends and family posting political outrage, so they begin to sanction "excessive" online political discourse similar to enforcing some tranquility around the Thanksgiving dinner table. Social media platforms are programmed with like and favorite buttons. They are designed to make agreement easier than disagreement. Right now, this helps cliques based on identity politics emerge. But it is possible that these cliques are emerging due to pent up demand from people who never had a chance to publish their own ideas. As self-publishing on social media becomes more routinized and less novel with each election, the emphasis on cultural identity may wane. People may get sick of the outrage that echo chambers promote. They may get sick of seeing similar posts day after day, year after year, and ask friends to show less outrage. Politicians can't effectively clamp down on partisan echo chambers. However, social media users can mature and allow new forms of online political discourse to emerge.

Appendix A: Predicting Press Conferences Excluded From Second ABC Analysis in Presidential Coattails Study (see pages 51-57) Due To Lack of Sound Bites

Table A.1: Probit Regression Model for Whether ABC's *World News Tonight* Does <u>Not</u> Include a Sound Bite after a Presidential Press Conference.

	B	SE
Year of Conf.	-0.091**	0.033
Opening: Foreign Pol.	1.318***	0.382
Democrat	0.607	0.389
Divided: 1 Opp. House	1.490*	0.665
Divided: 2 Opp. Houses	0.297	0.496
Re-election	-0.152	0.455
Lame Duck	0.998^+	0.569
First Year	-1.062^+	0.625
Approval Rating	-0.018	0.016
GDP Growth	0.216	0.237
# of Prior Stories	-0.054	0.038
Question Focus: #	0.003	0.009
Question Focus: FP	-0.490	0.433
# of Prior Conf.	0.063	0.048
Evening Conf.	-0.646	0.466
Leave White House	-0.049	0.408
Joint Conf.	0.965^+	0.521
Constant	0.812	1.494
Log-likelihood	-43.88**	

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, $^+ p < 0.1$; two-tailed tests

  Press conference which lack a subsequent ABC sound bite fall into two categories: 27 conferences lacked any sort of coverage, and seven were covered in short stories that lacked any sound bites. Because the Tobit results only help to predict the 27 conferences that are completely ignored by ABC, a separate model is needed to help explain why some conferences are present for the analysis of coverage volume but not the analysis of quote concentration. I use a Probit model here, instead of the logit models more common in sociology, because the Probit model fits more closely with the Tobit model used earlier. Positive coefficients mean subsequent sound bites are less likely. Looking at the results, we see that joint press conferences and having one

house of Congress controlled by the opposite party make it less likely we will see a sound bite on ABC news following a press conference. These results are not surprising, as they also predict a decrease in coverage volume and an increased likelihood that the conference will not receive any coverage.

More recent press conferences are more likely to lead to a subsequent sound bite, a somewhat unexpected result that requires more explanation. The year of the press conference has little correlation with the volume of ABC *World News Tonight* coverage, controlling for other variables ($p = 0.763$). I argue the best substantive explanation for these results is that Reagan's press conferences were covered differently than subsequent presidents. His series of prime time press conferences from 1982-86 would often be summarized in a quick story the next evening, as part of a story on more current events. These stories would qualify as coverage of the conference, even though there is no sound bite. For more recent conferences, ABC appears to have instituted a norm that any press conference that receives even a minor amount of coverage should include a sound bite. 1990s developments such as having joint press conferences or a Democratic president (largely Clinton in this data set) make coverage less likely. The emerging norm of quotation is stronger, dampening the relationship between joint conferences or partisanship and whether a conference leads to subsequent sound bites.

Although press conferences are not randomly excluded from the models predicting the proportion of quotes in ABC coverage, exclusion is unlikely to significantly bias the results. Variables that predict a lack of subsequent sound bites do not also have a significant association with the proportion of quotes for press conferences with valid data. In most cases, the lack of sound bites can be explained by a complete lack of coverage by ABC. Seven conferences received coverage but not a sound bite. Conferences without a sound bite averaged 160 words

176

per conference, compared to a mean of 589 words for conferences with sound bites. A t-test reveals this difference is statistically significant ($p = 0.003$). The theory of journalistic coattails proposes that reporters will begin by quoting the president, and then incorporate additional sources as they allocate more coverage to an event. When network news allocates minimal coverage, they may eschew sound bites altogether, using only an anchor's voice over. To the degree that missingness affects the results, they support the main theoretical argument I advance in the body of the chapter.

Appendix B: Counting the Number of Additional Sources in Coverage of Presidential Press Conferences

The primary analysis for this article separates quotes and sound bites into two categories, presidential and non-presidential. By treating all non-presidential quotes as equivalent to each other, it is easier to measure fluctuations in the president's dominance over other sources. In the body of the paper, I show how the level of quote concentration is affected by the context of news events. I also find that quotes are less concentrated on the president as the volume of news coverage increases, suggesting that newsworthy events create "journalistic coattails." One important limitation of this approach is that because non-presidential quotes are aggregated, this measure cannot assess theoretical questions about the diversity of non-presidential sources or their viewpoints.

To try and explain some of the diversity (or lack thereof) found among non-presidential sources who get quoted in this study, I will conduct a separate analysis of the number of additional sources who get quoted after each presidential press conference. In my theory of journalistic coattails, I proposed that when journalists allocate a large volume of coverage to an event, they would seek out additional sources for comment. Therefore, the number of additional sources quoted is a theoretically useful proxy for the range of opinions found in the news. Coding the identity of each non-presidential source and quote would be more precise, but is not viable to construct a coding scheme for 533 source appearances and an even greater number of quotes over a 29 year historical span. One major advantage of counting sources is that the count has a similar meaning and interpretation for any set of topics covered in the news. However, the number of sources quoted may not have a perfect correlation with the range of viewpoints covered.

The number of non-presidential sources quoted after a press conference, like other outcome measures, is aggregated at the level of the press conference. If a source was quoted multiple times in the same story, they count as one source. Similarly, in the rare instance that a non-presidential source is quoted in multiple stories on the same day, they are treated as one source. Anonymous sources are counted. Each is assumed to be a separate source, unless the text of the article attributes two comments to the same source. A group of actors making a joint statement instead of speaking as individuals, such as a diplomatic communication or letter signed by multiple notables, is treated as one source. Spokesmen were treated separately from their bosses, particularly the White House Press Secretary, who only speaks after a presidential press conference to clarify mistakes made during the conference. Conferences that did not lead to a subsequent news story are treated as missing data, to mirror decisions made in the primary analysis.

Because the number of non-presidential sources quoted after a press conference is not normally distributed, we need a specialized regression model known as negative binomial regression to best estimate the variables that are associated with an increase in the number of sources quoted. For both news organizations, having zero non-presidential sources is among the most common outcomes, one additional source is the next most common, and so on. (The *Times* has a strong outlier favoring three additional sources, while ABC has a mode of zero.) With the abnormal distribution, an OLS model or a Poisson model will give somewhat inaccurate results. A negative binomial model will give the most accurate results. Because a negative binomial model estimates the natural logarithm of the number of additional sources quoted and not the raw total, all variables have a *multiplicative* effect, rather than an *additive* one. I will explain this in more detail shortly.

If a decrease in the president's monopoly over being quoted means a larger number of sources get into the news, we would expect to see the same independent variables achieving statistical significance for both outcomes. However, we would expect regression coefficients to take opposite signs. If increased coverage volume leads to a decrease in the proportion of presidential quotes, it should also lead to an increase in the number of non-presidential sources who get quoted. Alternatively, a decrease in the proportion of presidential quotes could indicate one secondary source who gets the remainder of quotes. If this were the case, increased coverage volume (and the other key independent variables) would not have a strong relationship with the number of sources quoted.

Table B.1: Negative Binomial Regression Models for Number of Non-Presidential Sources Quoted in Coverage of Press Conferences for the *New York Times* and *World News Tonight*. (Robust SE in Parentheses).

	NYT 1	NYT 2	ABC 1	ABC 2
Words Coverage (ln)	1.282***	1.251***	1.497***	1.619***
	(0.108)	(0.138)	(0.201)	(0.235)
Year of Conf.	0.037***	0.024*	-0.005	0.020
	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.015)	(0.015)
Open: Foreign Pol.	-0.016	-0.138	-0.188	-0.315
	(0.114)	(0.122)	(0.272)	(0.320)
Democrat	-0.230	-0.246[+]	0.329	0.171
	(0.151)	(0.149)	(0.256)	(0.253)
Divided: 1 Opp. House	-0.078	-0.139	0.230	0.819
	(0.257)	(0.290)	(0.295)	(0.360)
Divided: 2 Opp. Houses	0.227	0.075	-0.260	0.110
	(0.152)	(0.169)	(0.237)	(0.265)
Re-election	0.023	-0.063	-0.396	-0.366
	(0.137)	(0.127)	(0.287)	(0.322)
Lame Duck	-0.135	-0.112	0.772**	0.752**
	(0.238)	(0.220)	(0.271)	(0.289)
First Year	0.038	-0.098	-0.452	-0.007
	(0.134)	(0.166)	(0.291)	(0.273)
Approval Rating	-0.001	0.001	-0.006	-0.013
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.013)	(0.012)
GDP Growth	0.104	0.068	0.133	0.127
	(0.059)	(0.051)	(0.092)	(0.084)

# of Prior Stories	-0.002	-0.012	0.020	-0.007
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.020)	(0.021)
Question Focus: #	0.005*	0.005*	-0.004	-0.005
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Question Focus: FP	0.306*	0.255[+]	-0.422*	-0.266
	(0.143)	(0.136)	(0.179)	(0.194)
# of Prior Conf.		-0.031		0.037
		(0.026)		(0.024)
Evening Conf.		-0.299*		0.666***
		(0.138)		(0.194)
Leave WH Conf.		-0.256[+]		-0.400
		(0.152)		(0.279)
Joint Conf.		0.379*		1.181***
		(0.191)		(0.344)
Constant	-9.634***	-8.479***	-8.711***	-10.02***
	(0.956)	(1.162)	(1.853)	(2.071)
Alpha	0.024	0.008	$6.36*10^{-8}$	$7.28*10^{-8}$
	(0.042)	(0.040)	$(1.08*10^{-7})$	$(3.52*10^{-7})$
N	102[A]	102	77[A]	77[A]
Log pseudo-likelihood	-192.2***	-187.2***	-95.84***	-91.23***

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < 0.001$, [+]$p < 0.1$; two-tailed tests.

A: For this study, N is based on the number of conferences that result in at least one news story in the respective publication. Because some of these stories do not quote anyone, the N for this set of regressions will be different than Table 2.3 in the body of the dissertation.

The negative binomial regression model presents coefficients as log odds. To turn log odds into a more easily interpretable number, we must take the mathematical constant e (2.718) to the power of that coefficient. For example, the coefficient for a joint press conference in the *New York Times* is 0.379. Taking e to the 0.379 power ($e^{0.379}$) equals 1.460. To know how many non-presidential sources are quoted after a joint press conference as compared to a solo press conference, we *multiply* the baseline result by 1.46 *instead of adding* the number 1.46 to a total, as we would with OLS. Because the effects are multiplicative, we would need to make assumptions about the value of *every* independent variable before we could say whether multiplying by 1.46 means a change from 2 additional sources to 3 or a change from 10 additional sources to 15. When we want to compare the substantive strength of one effect to

another, it is easiest to describe the coefficient in terms like a 46 percent increase, without making assumptions about the values of all variables.

Looking at Table B.1, we see the variables that best explain change in the president's ability to monopolize the opinions presented in coverage of his press conference are also the strongest predictors of how many other sources will be quoted in those stories. Joint press conferences, as expected, lead to an increase in the number of non-presidential sources quoted. ABC has a much larger effect, increasing the number of sources by 225.8 percent as opposed to 46 percent in the *Times*. The small range of values for the broadcast could explain the large effects for ABC. Going from one source to two only adds one source, but it is a 100 percent increase. Evening press conferences decrease the number of sources quoted in the *Times* but increase the number of ABC sources, probably due to the effects of daily production cycles described in the body of the paper.

There is a strong relationship between coverage volume and the number of non-presidential sources quoted, suggesting journalistic coattails bring a large range of sources into the news. Because the natural log of coverage volume is used in these models, a multiplicative change in the volume of coverage leads to a multiplicative change in the number of sources. Multiplying the volume of coverage by *e* (2.718) would lead to multiplying the number of non-presidential sources quoted in the *Times* by 3.945. It would lead to multiplying the number of sources on ABC by 5.047. Journalistic coattails have a major impact on the diversity of sources found in subsequent coverage. Allocating additional coverage volume does not necessarily guarantee an increased diversity of opinion. However, these preliminary results show a strong enough relationship that future scholars may want to investigate the relationship between the volume of coverage and the range of opinions presented in the news.

Appendix C: Attack the Foreigner!

While attacks are more likely to be quoted than any other statement, the president criticizes many different groups of people during a press conference. Foreigners, as an aggregated group, were the most likely to be criticized. Out of 321 statements that contained an attack, 37.38 percent were attacks on foreign actors. Attacks on journalists (16.51 percent) and people from the opposing political party (16.20 percent) were the next most common. To a certain degree, this large number is an artifact of placing all foreign actors into one category. Clinton's 1997 condemnation of terrorist attacks in Israel and Bush's 2002 disapproval of Ariel Sharon's terrorism policy are in the same category. Bush made 77.5 percent of the statements criticizing foreigners in this data set. However, the majority of these attacks came from the 2006 "detainee policy" conference, where close to one out of every seven Bush statements criticized foreign actors. Clinton attacked foreign actors more than any other group in his 1997 conference. In the basic regression model, all attacks are considered as equivalent to each other regardless of the target. In table A1, I present an additional model for quotations that separates several targets of theoretical interest. Following Groeling (2010) I separate members of the president's own party and opposing party as distinct groups. Since presidential criticisms of foreigners may trigger a rally around the flag effect, I treat them as a separate group as well. Because journalists may be less inclined to publish criticism about other journalists or reporters as a board group, I separate them as well. Finally, all other targets of criticism (including ambiguous targets) are the last category. Because attacks are mainly quoted and not paraphrased, I am only including a model for quotations for the sake of parsimony.

Table C.1: Negative Binomial Regression Model of <u>Quotations</u> in Presidential Press Conferences, Including Third Model for Specific Targets of Attacks (N = 1743 statements)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Topic of Statement			
Military / Armed conflict	0.344	0.363	0.340
	(0.318)	(0.312)	(0.315)
Other Foreign	-0.340	-0.301	-0.339
	(0.365)	(0.350)	(0.348)
Economy	-0.452$^+$	-0.445$^+$	-0.381
	(0.242)	(0.240)	(0.241)
Other Domestic	0.120	0.117	0.104
	(0.262)	(0.255)	(0.258)
Security	0.438$^+$	0.350	0.378
	(0.226)	(0.226)	(0.226)
Substantive Actions			
Attack: All Targets	0.789***	0.718***	
	(0.133)	(0.131)	
Attack: Opposing Party			0.890***
			(0.259)
Attack: Own Party			0.167
			(0.887)
Attack: Foreigners			1.021***
			(0.197)
Attack: Journalists			-0.574
			(0.454)
Attack: Other Targets			0.692***
			(0.211)
Praise	-0.049	-0.078	-0.055
	(0.171)	(0.131)	(0.170)
Policy	0.410***	0.472***	0.449***
	(0.118)	(0.120)	(0.121)
Good / Bad News	0.055	0.128	0.078
	(0.124)	(0.125)	(0.126)
Rhetorical Devices			
Oratory Devices	0.241$^+$	0.282*	0.281*
	(0.129)	(0.128)	(0.129)
Facts	-0.552$^+$	-0.497$^+$	-0.523$^+$
	(0.304)	(0.300)	(0.299)
Paraphrases	-0.046	-0.046	-0.112
	(0.124)	(0.124)	(0.125)
References to America	0.332	0.420*	0.427*
	(0.203)	(0.205)	(0.204)

Markers of Subjectivity	0.381**	0.344**	0.339*
	(0.134)	(0.134)	(0.133)
Declarations of Importance	0.006	0.078	0.085
	(0.195)	(0.193)	(0.193)
Micro Interaction			
Refusals to Answer		-0.115	-0.023
		(0.351)	(0.351)
Reference to Prior Question		0.434*	0.582**
		(0.198)	(0.203)
Repeated Question		0.170	0.218
		(0.319)	(0.325)
Topic Shifts		-0.978***	-0.919***
		(0.229)	(0.230)
Repeat Q x Topic Shift		1.120**	1.082**
		(0.379)	(0.380)
Constant	0.499	0.913	1.092
	(0.555)	(0.750)	(0.851)
Dispersion Term	2.484	2.484	3.084
	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.740)
Log Likelihood	-999.285	-999.285	-977.404

* Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, + $p < .1$

The additional regression model from Table C.1 suggests all criticisms were not treated equally. Statements that criticized foreign actors were 2.775 quoted times as often as statements without a criticism, net of other variables. One explanation is that with foreign policy, public criticism is often a way that leaders conduct policy changes. In the 2002 conference, Bush said "Frankly, it's not helpful what the Israelis have recently done in order to create the conditions for peace" The next morning, all four newspapers had a front page story on US-Israeli relations. Three of the stories explicitly focused on Bush's criticism, with headlines like "Rebuke of Israel a Change for Bush" in *USA Today* and "Israeli Offensive is 'Not Helpful,' President Warns" in the *New York Times*. Clinton threatening Haitian generals after a coup in 1994 and Bush threatening Saddam Hussein in 2002 were also ways of publicizing new aspects of foreign policy from the press conference podium. Reporters recognized and quoted these statements.

Criticisms of the opposing party were also highly quotable. While these statements may not be particularly surprising or newsworthy (Groeling 2010), they are easy to extract and place in to a traditional journalistic back-and-forth narrative. Remember that press conferences may be unusual events. They are not necessarily tied to a specific exogenous occurrence. As I argued in the last chapter, reporters often decide how much coverage to give a press conference *and then* decide how much to quote various sources. With a limited number of options to choose from – and a requirement to fill space – reporters may be more likely to quote criticisms that fit in to conventional narratives.

Contrary to what we would expect from Groeling (2010), statements where a president criticizes members of his own party were not significantly more likely to be quoted than statements lacking an attack. Remember that one conference from each president was chosen as a specific example of a press conference where the president was on the ropes after being criticized by members of his own party. Members of Congress "punching up" at a president from their own party received considerable attention, but presidents "punching down" were not highly quotable. Criticisms of any other target were quoted 99.7 percent more often than statements lacking a criticism. In these press conferences, presidents "punching down" at members of their own party were an exception to the rule of criticisms being more quotable.

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