

Framing in Political News: Presentation of Trump during the Presidential Elections of 2016



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Abstract

This study has aimed to assess the variations in the usage of negative versus positive framing devices to present Trump in states that either voted for or against him during the presidential elections of 2016. It aspired to find support for the assumption that news articles positively reflect the viewpoints of the electorate in a state and the ideas of the favoured presidential candidate, and negatively reflect the opposing party within U.S. politics. A corpus analysis of sixty articles from online newspapers from states that either voted for or against Trump has shown that overall there are only few variations between the usage of positive or negative framing between the two groups of states. No significant difference was found between negative and positive framing in the states that voted for and those that voted against him. Yet, the framing device ‘negative characteristics and traits’ appeared to be used significantly more in newspapers from states that voted against Trump than in newspapers from states that voted for Trump. Based on these results, it can thus not be concluded that the vote of the electorate in a state is related to the usage of positive or negative framing in news articles in that state, except for the negative framing device ‘negative characteristics and traits’.

Key words: ideological polarization, Republican, Democrat, liberal, conservative, negative framing, positive framing.

1. Introduction

1.1. Polarization in U.S. Politics

The United States of America has had democracy as political system since its early years. The contemporary political system of the U.S. is a two-party system, dominated by the Democratic and Republican Parties. In recent years, the parties have begun to grow more contradictory, with the Democratic Party moving in a more liberal direction whereas the Republican Party now leans towards a more conservative attitude (Layman, Carsey, & Horowitz, 2006). Moreover, the division in support for either party among the electorate has become more clear as well (DiMaggio et al. 1996), since the votes show that people take more polarized stands during and previous to elections.

The nature of this development towards more polarized political stands, both by politicians and the electorate, could be explained by three processes (Layman, Carsey, & Horowitz, 2006). Firstly, ‘conflict displacement’, as reported by Schattschneider (1960), in which a problematic

area arises resulting in an increasingly polarized stand of the parties. A second process is 'conflict extension', which is the process in which the parties grow more polarized on all important policy areas (Layman & Carsey, 2002a,b). Since about four decades, the Republican and Democratic Parties took increasingly segregated stands, leading to a more polarized public that votes based on self-developed viewpoints rather than on parental influence (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998). The last possibility is 'ideological realignment', which assumes that the polarization is based on ideology, that this division is the same liberal-conservative division as is present in the elite-level politics, and that ideological realignment is actually happening since individuals are choosing their preferred parties to a greater extent based on their personal ideological orientations (Carmines & Stanley 1990, 1992). While some researchers remain sceptical towards an existing segregation in political preference in the U.S., research done by Jost (2006) found that most people can and do use ideological streams that lead their behaviours and attitudes. This means that ideology does reflect and reinforce individual differences considering needs, motives, and beliefs about the world (Carney, Jost, Gosling & Potter, 2008).

Nowadays, the political polarization in the U.S. has extended to the degree that it has not only resulted in political preferences, it has led to an increase in Democrats' and Republicans' negative evaluations of a president of the other party (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2006). Research hence has proven an increasing ideological segregation between Republicans and Democrats. Of which one of its various causes can be found in the involvement in and influence of media on the political process.

1.2. Media and Politics

It is not a coincidence that the trend towards a more obvious division based on political ideology in the electorate took place simultaneously with the evolution of technology (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009). As the internet consists of a large body of diversified information, it can result in selective exposure, which is related to the theory of cognitive dissonance. This implies that "as a means of minimizing dissonance, people would seek out information they expected to agree with" (Festinger, 1957). The accuracy of the theory in U.S. politics was recognized by Iyengar and Hahn (2009), who found that liberals preferred a 'liberal biased' newspaper and avoided a 'conservative biased' newspaper and vice versa, reinforcing the reader's existing beliefs and attitudes. Subsequently, for citizens, the Internet offers a great variety of sources to find others with similar political stands (Gibbs, Bacon & Cooper, 2004). In contrast, for campaigners, the Internet provides platforms to spread information directly and shape public opinion and polarization (Scharl & Weichselbraun, 2008).

By looking for information that is similar to their personal stands, voters are creating a one-sided view on politics, resulting in a misleading perception of, for instance, the elections, candidates, politics, etcetera. Since the image that one has of a candidate partially drives the outcome, meaning rejection or acceptance of a political candidate (Nimmo, 1970), successful image-manufacturing is of great importance during presidential elections. Whether a candidate can present him- or herself positively in the eyes of the electorate could have a large influence on presidential elections (Newman, 2001), but a candidate's success is also influenced by the manner in which they are presented by media. McCombs and Shaw (1972) namely found that "media appear to have exerted a considerable impact on voters' judgments of what they considered the major issue of the campaign". Druckman and Parkin (2005) also found that reading biased information in newspapers influences image perceptions, which consequently influence evaluations of candidates. Hence, it could be concluded that similar to the fact that ideological polarization is a two-way process in which politicians influence the electorate and vice versa, the influence of news on politics and on the stands the electorate should be noted as well.

1.3. Framing

One way of affecting the political stands of the audience is by framing (Huang, 1995). Framing has been defined as "the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation" (Entman, 2007). Framing is thus highlighting one side of a story and using connections that one might have to shape the audience's preferred point of view. This can be done both consciously and unconsciously, such as the gatekeeping bias of journalism. Which is defined as the process in which "writers and editors select from a body of potential stories those that will be presented to the public, and also 'deselect' those stories of which the mass audience will hear nothing" (D'Alessio & Allen, 2000). Consequently, this bias creates a limited view on events and influences the stands that citizens take.

According to Entman (1993), framing involves "selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described". Salience in this context can thus be defined as "making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences" (Entman, 1993). Framing, therefore, is the way in which a message is presented, considering that other perspectives are possible too, and hence holds that the presentation is not objective.

As introduced in its definition by Entman (2007), framing uses mental connections to evoke certain interpretations. This happens via activation tags, which are concepts that can be retrieved easily from one's memory and influence the manner in which information is processed (Salancik, 1974). Considering the effect of media on politics, as established earlier, activation tags related to U.S. politics might thus be triggered and result in certain behaviour or a particular attitude towards the subject. Similarly, Iyengar and Kinder (1987) stated that "the standards by which governments, policies and candidates for public office are judged" can be affected by mass media. And one way to do so is through framing.

Framing hence is highlighting one angle of a story in such a manner that it influences the receiver's perceptions. Consequently, one-sided framing can be seen as a bias, namely 'content bias', which involves "consistent patterns in the framing of mediated communication that promote the influence of one side in conflicts over the use of government power" (Entman, 2007). One particular type of one-sided framing considers negative versus positive framing, in which information, people, or situations are framed in a non-neutral manner. Positive or negative editorial slant is then used to influence the reader's perception of the topic. In the political arena, editorial slant can be defined as "the quantity and tone of a newspaper's candidate coverage as influenced by its editorial position" and adds to citizens' evaluations of candidates and vote choice (Druckman & Parkin, 2005). In relation to the theory of cognitive dissonance, as discussed above, it is therefore likely that citizens prefer news sources that positively frame their preferred party and negatively frame the opposing party, leading to an even more increased polarization among the electorate.

In conclusion, framing is always an indication of a particular point of view being highlighted over another. Although much research has been done on the influence of media on politics and political preference in experimental form, this research will add to the existing body of studies that has aimed to assess whether negative or positive frames are used to represent a particular political ideology. The expectation is that as states have their own newspapers, the states that voted either for or against Trump reflect this vote in news articles since these are read by the electorate of that particular state. Subsequently, newspapers from states that voted for Trump are expected to frame Trump positively in their news articles, whereas it is assumed that newspapers that voted against Trump framed him negatively in their news articles. In the light of the presidential elections of 2016, the following research question is therefore aimed to be answered:

RQ: Are there variations in presence of positive versus negative framing devices in articles in online newspapers that either voted for or against Trump during the presidential elections of 2016?

2. Method

In order to answer the research question a corpus analysis of articles related to Trump and the presidential elections of 2016 was done.

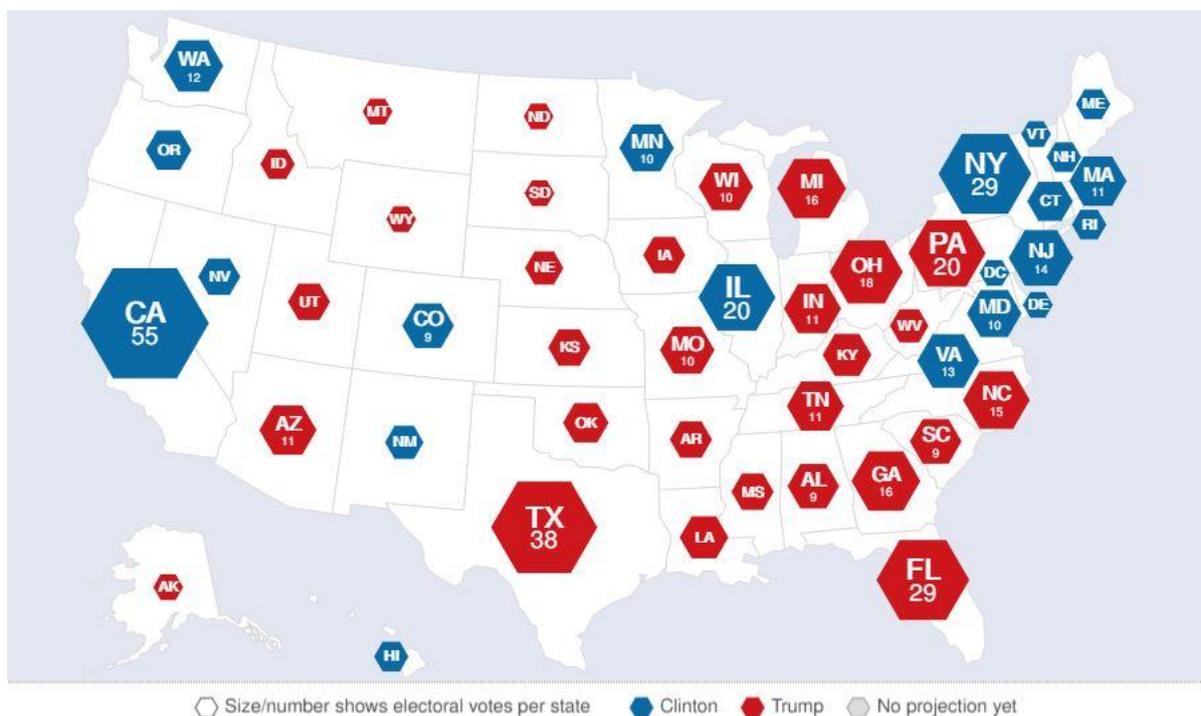
2.1. Materials

The corpus consisted of online news articles of the largest newspapers of five states that voted for Trump and five states that voted against Trump during the presidential elections in 2016. Based on the theory of cognitive dissonance, it was expected that the largest newspaper per state represents the readers' ideological viewpoints, as people tend to look for information with which they agree. Considering this and the fact that the party that gets the majority of the votes in a state gets all the elective votes of that state during the elections, this selection method seemed likely to be valid and representative. Furthermore, online news articles were selected since geographically it was not possible to access enough printed news articles from the U.S. since the research was executed from Europe.

The articles were selected based on date, namely from June 1st 2016 till December 31st 2016. As the elections took place on the 8th of November 2016, the last few months prior to the elections, as well as the immediate response to the outcome of the elections in the period after the elections were covered. Furthermore, per newspaper an amount of six articles were analysed. This implies that the total corpus existed of sixty articles, of which thirty were from the states that voted for Trump and thirty were from the states that voted against him.

The selection of articles was done according to the following steps. Firstly, five states that voted for and five that voted against Trump were selected of which the largest newspaper per state was included. The five states per outcome, thus they either voted for or against Trump, were based on the amount of electoral votes (EV) that a state has, as can be found in figure 1. The five states that voted for Trump and were selected are therefore Texas (38 EV), Florida (29 EV), Pennsylvania (20 EV), Ohio (18 EV), and Michigan (16 EV). The newspapers included are the Houston Chronicle, Miami Herald, Philadelphia Inquirer, The Plain Dealer, and Grand Rapids Press (Agilitypr, 2019f-j). The five states that voted against Trump and were selected are California (55 EV), New York (29 EV), Illinois (20 EV), New Jersey (14 EV), and Massachusetts (11 EV). Although the state of Virginia has more electoral votes (13 EV) than the state of Massachusetts, Virginia was excluded as no newspaper was accessible online from Europe. Consequently, the newspapers included are the San Francisco Examiner, New York Times, Daily Herald, Star-Ledger, and Boston Herald (Agilitypr, 2019a-e). Though not all newspapers were the largest of their state, all were at least in the top five.

Figure 1. Results of the presidential elections in 2016, including electoral votes per state (BBC, z.d.).



Secondly, per newspaper the dates of appearance were limited to the period between June 1st, 2016 and December 31st, 2016. Following, a search was done on the words “Trump”, “Elections”, “President”, “Republican”, and “Campaign”. An article qualified if at least two of

these words were mentioned in either the title or the introduction, and if it was clear that it covered the U.S. presidential elections of 2016. From all qualified articles per newspaper, a random selection was made of six articles covering Trump.

2.2. Model of Analysis

The coding scheme that was used was based on the Protest Paradigm as used by Xu (2013). Since this paradigm is normally used for protests, few adjustments had to be made to fit the paradigm into the context of this study, being the U.S. presidential elections of 2016. These adaptations were based on examples found in the sample of articles. Since this model of analysis solely covers negative framing, a coding scheme for positive framing was created. Below, a brief explanation of the negative and positive framing devices is provided.

The Protest Paradigm originally included six negative framing devices, namely 'lawlessness', 'show', 'ineffective goals', 'public disapproval', 'official sources', 'negative impact'. For this research, 'show' is adjusted to 'negative characteristics and traits', 'official sources' is changed to 'negative quote of Democrat', and 'positive mention of opposing Party' is added. Additionally, some of the descriptions of the criteria were adjusted to fit the context of the U.S. presidential elections of 2016. As the Protest Paradigm does not cover positive framing, opposing framing devices have been created, namely 'order', 'positive characteristics and traits', 'effective goals', 'public approval', 'positive quote of Republican', 'positive impact', and 'negative mention of opposing Party'.

The model of analysis in the current study thus included seven negative framing devices, namely lawlessness, negative characteristics and traits, ineffective goals, public disapproval, negative quote of Democrat, negative impact, and positive mention of opposing party. Additionally, it included seven positive framing devices: order, positive characteristics and traits, effective goals, public approval, positive quote of Republican, positive impact, and negative mention of opposing party. Below, the Model of Analysis as used by the coders, including examples, can be found.

Negative framing of Trump

Lawlessness

An article will be coded as 'yes', if the text mentions a potential threat to social order or violence as a result of Trump's strategies or plans. An example of 'lawlessness' is,

"A number of hate crimes have been reported across the country since the election. A group of students from the University of Pennsylvania reported receiving racist messages through a group messaging app. Racially charged messages have also been found, according to CNN." – The Star-Ledger (November 13th, 2016).

An article will be coded as 'no', if it does not include such negative outings considering the social order.

Negative Characteristics and Traits

An article will be coded as 'yes', if the text includes a negative description of either physical, mental, or social characteristics and traits of Trump, or if specific characteristics or traits are ridiculed. An example of 'negative characteristics and traits' is,

"Their new leader is a man who had never previously run for public office, who fired people in a reality television boardroom, who boasted of forcing himself upon women, who promises to jail his main political opponent and who will soon have the keys to America's nuclear arsenal." – San Francisco Examiner (November 9th, 2016).

An article will be coded as 'no', if its content does not mention personal characteristics or traits in a rather negative or ridiculed manner.

Ineffective Goals

An article will be coded as 'yes', if the text emphasizes that Trump's strategies are insufficient to win the elections, or to lead the U.S. properly, or that his plans are unrealistic. An example of 'ineffective goals' is,

"Trump, a real estate mogul, said his tax plan would be "a rocket ship for the economy." His proposal would cut taxes across the board, though critics say the wealthiest Americans would see the most benefit and the plan would add trillions and trillions of dollars to the national debt. But Trump said that would be offset by economic growth as much as 4 percent per year -- something America hasn't seen since the 1990s." – The Star-Ledger (November 9th, 2016).

An article will be coded as 'no', if the text does not mention negative outcomes for Trump's election as a result of his strategies, if it does not report insufficient leading skills, and if plans are not posed as unrealistic.

Public Disapproval

An article will be coded as 'yes', if the text support that media, the public (e.g., opinion polls), or other large social groups (e.g., the Church) take a negative stand considering Trump. An example of 'public disapproval' is,

"Hundreds gathered at the Newark Avenue Pedestrian Plaza Sunday afternoon calling for unity less than a week after the 2016 presidential election." – The Star-Ledger (November 13th, 2016).

An article will be coded as 'no', if the texts does not mention media, the public, or other large social groups taking a negative stand towards Trump.

Negative Quote of Democrat

An article will be coded as 'yes', if its content contains a negative quote by a government official from the opposing Party, the Democrats, provided that that the quote considers Trump himself, his actions, or his plans. An example of 'quote of Democrat' is,

"Where does this stop?" Obama said. "Are we going to start treating all Muslim-Americans differently? Are we going to start subjecting them to special surveillance? Are we going to start discriminating against them because of their faith? ... Do Republican officials actually agree with this?" – Daily Herald (June 15th, 2016).

An article will be coded as 'no', if it does not include any quotes from Democrats.

Negative Impact

An article will be coded as 'yes', if it emphasizes potential negative outcomes for the U.S of Trump's (possible) presidency (e.g., financial, social, international). An example of 'negative impact' is,

"Since then, the two have traded blows, with Weld comparing Trump's anti-immigration plan to Kristallnacht — the violent 1938 Nazi attacks on Jewish homes, businesses, schools and synagogues" – The Boston Herald (July 27, 2016).

An article will be coded as 'no', if it does not report potential negative outcomes of Trump's (possible) presidency for the U.S..

Positive Mention of Opposing Party

An article will be coded as 'yes', if it includes a positive statement about the opposing presidential candidate Clinton or previous president Obama, and if the statement is not meant in a sarcastic or ironic manner.

"They believe that Mr. Trump, guided by a Republican-controlled Congress, will break their way more than Mrs. Clinton ever would." – The New York Times (August 3rd, 2016).

An article will be coded as 'no', if it does not mention Clinton nor Obama, or if the statement has a sarcastic or ironic tone.

Positive Framing

Order

An article will be coded as 'yes', if the text mentions a manner in which Trump's strategies and plans add to social order. An example of 'order' is,

"He's a little bit of a crazy talker, but he's against disorder, not against Latinos," said María Suárez, a 71-year-old originally from the Dominican Republic who cast her ballot at E.W.F. Stirrup Elementary School in Little Havana." – The Miami Herald (November 9th, 2016).

An article will be coded as 'no', if it does not report any such contributions.

Positive Characteristics and Traits

An article will be coded as 'yes', if the text includes a positive description of either physical, mental, or social characteristics and traits of Trump, or if specific characteristics or traits are glorified. An example of 'positive characteristics and traits' is,

“In fairness, Donald Trump is also a published author, and a very prolific one. Among Trump's many publications is a 2007 book tastefully titled "Think Big and Kick A-- in Business and Life," which Trump and Bill Zanker co-authored.” – The Plain Dealer (June 12th, 2016).

An article will be coded as ‘no’, if its content does not mention personal characteristics or traits in a rather positive or glorified manner.

Effective Goals

An article will be coded as ‘yes’, if the text emphasizes that Trump’s strategies will lead to his victory in the presidential elections, or will lead to good leadership of the U.S. An example of ‘effective goals’ is,

“But in Florida, one of the states most traumatized by the 2008 economic recession, voters said they saw Trump as a refreshing truth-teller. “He is honest,” said Florin Bucutea, a 57-year-old Republican and financial adviser who emigrated from Romania 37 years ago. He cast his ballot for Trump on Tuesday morning at the Coral Ridge Mall in Fort Lauderdale: “He will change this country.”” – The Miami Herald (November 9th, 2016).

An article will be coded as ‘no’, if the text does not mention Trump’s victory and proficient leadership as a result of his plans.

Public Approval

An article will be coded as ‘yes’, if the text supports that media, the public (e.g., opinion polls), or other large social groups (e.g., the Church) take a positive stand considering Trump. An example of ‘public approval’ is,

“Hundreds of Trump supporters, who called themselves the “silent majority,” wore the candidate’s signature “Make America Great Again” baseball caps as they jumped up and down, exchanged high-fives and hugged.” – The Miami Herald (November 9th, 2016).

An article will be coded as ‘no’, if the texts does not mention media, the public, or other large social groups taking a positive stand towards Trump.

Positive quote of Republican

An article will be coded as 'yes', if its content contains a positive quote by another government official from the Republicans, provided that the quote considers Trump himself, his actions, or his plans. An example of 'quote of Republican' is,

"Doug Ratliff, a 67-year-old businessman from Richlands, Virginia, said Trump's election was one of the happiest days of his life. "This county has had no hope," said Ratliff, who owns strip malls in an area badly beaten by the collapse of the coal industry. "Things will change. I know he's not going to be perfect. But he's got a heart. And he gives people hope." – Grand Rapids Press (November 9th, 2016).

An article will be coded as 'no', if it does not include any quotes from other Republicans.

Positive Impact

An article will be coded as 'yes', if it emphasizes possible positive outcomes for the U.S of Trump's (potential) presidency (e.g., financial, social, international). An example of 'positive impact' is,

"Trump had promised Michigan voters in appearances throughout his campaign that he would rewrite the electoral map, hammering hard on the North American Free Trade Agreement and the proposed Trans Pacific Partnership and promising to bring jobs back to Michigan." – Grand Rapids Press (November 9th, 2016).

An article will be coded as 'no', if it does not report any possible positive outcomes of Trump's (potential) presidency for the U.S..

Negative Mention of Opposing Party

An article will be coded as 'yes', if it includes a negative statement about the opposing presidential candidate Clinton or previous president Obama, or if the statement is meant in a sarcastic or ironic manner.

"Clinton, like Trump a deeply flawed and disliked nominee, brought most of Obama's voters together. But she struggled among young people and never ignited the same sort of excitement as Obama or as her primary opponent, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders." – The Miami Herald (November 9th, 2016).

An article will be coded as 'no', if it does not mention Clinton nor Obama, or if the statement does not have a sarcastic or ironic tone.

2.3.Procedure

All sections of the articles were analysed, thus including the title, introduction, and the remaining text. Since attracting attention is one of the functions of titles and introductions, these might not always be representable for the whole text, yet do give an interesting view of the tone of the article. Furthermore, only news articles were included in the corpus. The articles were analysed on the absence and presence of the framing devices included by treating the framing devices as binary items. This manner of coding takes into account framing devices that are used multiple times in one article, or sentences that contain more than one framing device. Therefore, per article the inclusion per framing device was analysed, rather than the frequency of the usage of a framing device.

The articles were coded by two coders of which the first coder created the Model of Analysis and extensively explained it to the second coder. However, the actual coding happened independently. Eventually, the first coder coded all sixty articles, whereas the second coder coded twenty articles in order to test intercoder reliability.

The interrater reliability of the variable 'lawlessness' was sufficient: $\kappa = .58$, $p = .005$, and the agreement percentage was 84,2%. For 'negative characteristics and traits', the intercoder reliability was sufficient as well: $\kappa = .49$, $p = .013$, with an agreement of 79%. For 'ineffective goals', it was fairly unreliable: $\kappa = .11$, $p = .599$, with an agreement percentage of 52,7%. 'Public disapproval' had an intercoder reliability that was fairly unreliable as well: $\kappa = .17$, $p = .405$, and the agreement was 57,9%. The interrater reliability of the variable 'negative quote of Democrat' was acceptable: $\kappa = .771$, $p = .001$, with an agreement of 94,7%. Furthermore, the variable 'negative impact' had an intercoder reliability that was sufficient: $\kappa = .43$, $p = .046$, and the agreement was 73,7%. Lastly, for the negative framing devices, the interrater reliability of the variable 'positive mention of opposing party' was sufficient: $\kappa = .30$, $p = .127$, with an agreement percentage of 63,1%.

For the variables 'order' and 'positive characteristics', the intercoder reliability could not be calculated as either one of the coders coded all frames as solely 'yes' or solely 'no'. However, for 'order', the agreement percentage was 94,7%, and for 'positive characteristics', it was 89,5%. Further, the interrater reliability for the variable 'effective goals' was sufficient: $\kappa = .54$, $p = .008$, with an agreement of 79%. For the variable 'public approval', its intercoder reliability was fairly insufficient: $\kappa = .23$, $p = .216$, with 57,9% agreement. 'Positive quote of Republican' was also fairly unreliable: $\kappa = .22$, $p = .130$, and had an agreement of 73,7%. The variable 'positive impact' as well had a fairly unreliable interrater reliability: $\kappa = .22$, $p = .288$, with 79%

agreement. Lastly, the interrater reliability for the variable 'negative mention of opposing party' was sufficient: $\kappa = .35$, $p = .125$, and its agreement percentage was 68,4%. The relatively low agreement on these variables could be the result of an unclear Model of Analysis or insufficient explanation of the Model to the second coder. The definition of the framing device possibly should have been more explicit to decrease the subjective interpretation of the articles by the coders, or the second coder should have been trained more thoroughly by the first coder.

2.4. Statistical Treatment

As the data did not appear to be normally distributed, two Mann-Whitney test with independent variable 'vote' and dependent variables 'positive framing' and 'negative framing' was used to answer the research question. Furthermore, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to check the significance of the findings of the Mann-Whitney tests. Additionally, a Fisher's exact test with independent variable 'vote' and dependent variable 'framing device' was used, since a majority of the cells did not meet the assumptions of expected frequencies due to the relatively small sample size.

3. Results

This study aimed to answer the following research question: Are there variations in presence of positive and negative framing devices in articles in online newspapers that either voted for or against Trump during the presidential elections of 2016? Below, the findings are presented.

Since the data was not normally distributed, a Mann-Whitney test with dependent variable 'negative framing' and independent variable 'vote' with the levels 'voted for Trump' ($Mdn = 33,43$) and 'voted against Trump' ($Mdn = 27,58$) found that the two levels did not differ significantly, $U = 362.00$, $z = -1.35$, $p = .177$. A Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that this result was significant ($T = 251$, $p = .049$, $r = .25$). Additionally, another Mann-Whitney test with dependent variable 'positive framing' and independent variable 'vote' with the levels 'voted for Trump' ($Mdn = 28,93$) and 'voted against Trump' ($Mdn = 32,07$) found that again the two levels did not differ significantly, $U = 403.00$, $z = -.72$, $p = .470$. However, in the corpus overall, positive framing devices ($M = .81$, $SD = .15$) were used more often than negative framing devices ($M = .67$, $SD = .18$). A Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that this result was significant ($T = 299$, $p = .002$, $r = .41$).

Fisher's exact tests per negative framing device showed that for the negative framing devices there was a significant relation between the independent variable 'vote' and dependent variable 'negative characteristics and traits' ($p = .006$). As can be found in table 1, the articles from newspapers from the states that voted for Trump less often contained negative characteristics and traits of Trump (16,67%) than the articles from newspapers from the states that voted against Trump (53,33%). An amount as little as five out of thirty articles from states that voted for Trump included this framing device. For the other negative framing devices no significant relations were found.

Table 1. Percentage of presence per negative framing device in news articles of newspapers from states that voted for or against Trump during the presidential elections of 2016.

Framing Device		Vote		
		For	Against	Total
Lawlessness	Yes	11 (36,67%)	10 (33,33%)	21 (35%)
	No	19 (63,33%)	20 (66,67%)	39 (65%)
	<i>Total</i>	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)
Negative Characteristics and Traits	Yes	5 (16,67%)	16 (53,33%)	21 (35%)
	No	25 (83,33%)	14 (46,67%)	39 (65%)
	<i>Total</i>	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)
Ineffective Goals	Yes	12 (40%)	17 (56,67%)	29 (48,33%)
	No	18 (60%)	13 (43,33%)	31 (51,67%)
	<i>Total</i>	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)
Public Disapproval	Yes	14 (46,67%)	12 (40%)	26 (43,33%)
	No	16 (43,33%)	18 (60%)	34 (56,67%)
	<i>Total</i>	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)
Negative Quote of Democrat	Yes	5 (16,67%)	8 (26,67%)	13 (21,67%)
	No	25 (83,33%)	22 (73,33%)	47 (78,33%)
	<i>Total</i>	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)
Negative Impact	Yes	7 (23,33%)	8 (26,67%)	15 (25%)
	No	23 (76,67%)	22 (73,33%)	45 (75%)
	<i>Total</i>	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)
Positive Mention of Opposing Party	Yes	7 (23,33%)	6 (20%)	13 (21,67%)
	No	23 (76,67%)	24 (80%)	47 (78,33%)
	<i>Total</i>	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)

Furthermore, Fisher's exact tests per positive framing device found that for the positive framing devices there were no significant relationships. In table 2, an overview of the percentage of presence per positive framing device can be found. For the framing device 'positive characteristics and traits', a frequency of only two was found (3,33%), once by a newspaper from a state that voted for Trump and once by a state that voted against Trump. Therefore, a Fisher's exact test was not able to calculate the significance of this framing device ($p = 1.000$).

Table 2. Percentage of presence per positive framing device in news articles of newspapers from states that voted for or against Trump during the presidential elections of 2016.

Framing Device		Vote		
		For	Against	Total
Order	Yes	0 (0%)	1 (3,33%)	1 (1,67%)
	No	30 (100%)	29 (96,67%)	59 (98,33%)
	<i>Total</i>	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)
Positive Characteristics and Traits	Yes	1 (3,33%)	1 (3,33%)	2 (3,33%)
	No	29 (96,67%)	29 (96,67%)	58 (96,67%)
	<i>Total</i>	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)
Effective Goals	Yes	10 (33,33%)	11 (36,67%)	21 (35%)
	No	20 (66,67%)	19 (63,33%)	39 (65%)
	<i>Total</i>	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)
Public Approval	Yes	13 (43,33%)	8 (26,67%)	21 (35%)
	No	17 (56,67%)	22 (73,33%)	39 (65%)
	<i>Total</i>	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)
Positive Quote of Republican	Yes	4 (13,33%)	2 (6,67%)	6 (10%)
	No	26 (86,67%)	28 (93,33%)	54 (90%)
	<i>Total</i>	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)
Positive Impact	Yes	8 (26,67%)	3 (10%)	11 (18,33%)
	No	22 (73,33%)	27 (90%)	49 (81,67%)
	<i>Total</i>	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)
Negative Mention of Opposing Party	Yes	7 (23,33%)	10 (33,33%)	17 (28,33%)
	No	23 (76,67%)	20 (66,67%)	43 (71,67%)
	<i>Total</i>	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)

4. Conclusion and Discussion

This research will add to the existing body of studies that has aimed to assess whether negative or positive frames are used to represent a particular political ideology. This research has attempted to assess the usage of negative versus positive framing devices to present Trump in states that either voted for or against him during the presidential elections of 2016. This was done by answering the following research question:

Are there variations in presence of positive and negative framing devices in articles in online newspapers that either voted for or against Trump during the presidential elections of 2016?

Overall, it appeared that more positive than negative framing devices were used to cover Trump in the media. However, there was no difference in usage of either negative or positive framing based on the vote of the state that the newspaper was from. It was namely found that newspapers from the states that voted for Trump did not use more positive framing devices than those that voted against Trump, and that newspapers from the states that voted against Trump did not use more negative framing devices than those that voted for Trump. It can thus be concluded that the factor 'vote', meaning that the state either voted for or against Trump, did not influence the amount of usage of positive or negative frames. Furthermore, for the negative framing devices, only 'negative characteristics and traits' differed between the states that voted for and those that voted against Trump. The states that voted against Trump used this framing device significantly more often than states that voted for Trump. For all positive and the remaining negative framing devices, no significant relationships were found between the device and the vote of the state.

The results indicate that only few differences exist in positive versus negative framing of Trump between newspapers from states that either voted for or against Trump during the presidential elections of 2016. The expectation that the type of framing is related to the vote of the state that the newspaper was from was consequently not supported by the outcomes of this research. Yet, the usage of framing device 'negative characteristics and traits' was found to be related to the vote of the state.

As the results imply that there are only little variations between the states that voted either for or against Trump during the presidential elections of 2016, this research does not comply with the expectation that as a result of the polarization in politics and among the electorate, news articles reflect the electorate's preferred stand and negatively frame the opposing party and its viewpoints. The findings therefore do contradict the outcomes of the study done by

Iyengar and Hahn (2009), who found that the theory of cognitive dissonance can be recognized in U.S. politics, since their outcomes suggested that liberals were more inclined to read 'liberal biased' newspapers and to avoid 'conservative biased' newspapers and vice versa. As the vote of the state and the type of framing used appeared not to be related, it cannot be concluded that the electorate per state looked for information that was similar to their political stands prior to, during, and after the presidential elections of 2016.

Consequently, this would indicate that the political ideological realignment among the electorate as DiMaggio et al. (1996) described, could not be stated to be a result of coverage of the presidential candidates in the media. On the contrary, as Druckman and Parkin (2005) and McCombs and Shaw (1972) highlighted the influence of media on the vote of the electorate, the gatekeeping bias of journalism should be taken into account. As D'Alessio and Allen (2000) described this bias as "writers and editors selecting from a body of potential stories those that will be presented to the public, and also 'deselect' those stories of which the mass audience will hear nothing", the presidential elections of 2016 were a very interesting body of potential stories. Since many stories covered the careless handling of emails by Clinton while being U.S. Secretary of State (BBC, 2016a), and the contradiction of Trump being accused of sexual intimidation (BBC, 2016b) versus Clinton running to be the first female president of the U.S. (BBC, 2019), the presidential elections of 2016 focused much on gender, inequality, and personal characteristics and personal traits of both candidates. The finding of this research that the negative framing device 'negative characteristics and traits' is related to the vote of the state that the newspaper is from, therefore supports the finding of Abromowitz and Saunders (2006) that the electorate increasingly evaluates the president, or in this case the presidential candidate of the other party, negatively. This finding is at least applicable in the negative evaluation of Trump in newspapers that voted against Trump during the presidential elections.

Besides the gatekeeping bias of journalism and the dramatic coverage of both presidential candidates during the elections of 2016, other explanations for the findings can be recognized. Firstly, recent data made clear that beside the Republican base that voted for Trump, non-voters handed Trump the presidency (The Washington Post, 2018). This indicates that ideological realignment as explained by DiMaggio et al. (1996) was not entirely the base for the outcome of the elections. Consequently, the vote per state was not fully representative and the influence of the media on the electorate cannot be completely assessed. Lastly, in all articles at least one of the positive framing devices and one of the negative framing devices was used. Hence, the

theory of one-sided framing and content bias (Entman, 2007) cannot be applied to this research since not one article used solely one type of framing.

However, this study also has various limitations. Firstly, multiple variables had an insignificant Kappa. This might be the result of different disadvantages or difficulties in the coding process. It could namely be that the Model of Analysis contained too little information to code the corpus adequately and regularly, or that the second coder was trained insufficiently. Consequently, the differences between the coders were relatively large and thus the findings could possibly be the result of chance rather than strategy. Future research should therefore make a more explicit and extensive Model of Analysis and should train the second coder more thoroughly in order to have a higher intercoder reliability per variable that is significant. Additionally, fairly broad search words were used to find the corpus. This means that a large body of possible articles was found that did not necessarily focus on one topic related to the presidential elections of 2016, but rather on a large variety of topics. Therefore, the articles included in this research might not have been similar enough to draw conclusions that were completely correct. A solution would be that in future research, the search words are chosen more specifically and focus on one topic in order to have higher similarity of the corpus. Thirdly, the variables were all treated as binary items. An advantage of this strategy is that it takes into account framing devices that are used multiple times per articles, or sentences that contain various framing devices. On the contrary, this also indicates that no conclusions can be drawn about the exact frequency of negative or positive framing devices in an article, but rather on whether the framing device is actually used in an article. Therefore, the finding that the positive framing devices are used more often in the corpus overall than the negative framing devices, should be treated with caution, since, for instance, each negative framing device could have been used multiple times in one article but is counted as used only once. Hence, it is recommended that future studies also count the exact times a specific framing device is used per article. Then, more conclusions about the overall usage of the framing devices can be drawn. Lastly, the corpus consisted of relatively few articles. Therefore, the data was affected more by outliers, leading to non-normally distributed data. A larger corpus could be the solution to this limitation and is therefore recommended for future research. Additionally, the amount of significant results might increase then and the assumption of expected frequencies of the Chi-square analysis will probably not be violated. Concluding, there is still much more research to be done on the influence of negative versus positive framing on the vote of the electorate and vice versa.

Yet, despite the limitations, the findings of the study still offer some practical applications. Firstly, presidential candidates should take into account the influence of framing on the electorate and vice versa, since covering negative characteristics and traits of candidates is found to be related to the vote of the state. This means that a candidate should aim to present him- or herself appropriately and positively in the media in order to increase the amount of votes they receive. On the contrary, candidates should try to avoid being framed negatively on characteristics and traits by media platforms as this could negatively affect their campaign. Secondly, the theory of dissonance should be treated with caution by online newspapers, as apparently per state this theory does not apply. An explanation could be that the articles that were included in this corpus, can be accessed by a worldwide public and thus have a larger audience and target group than solely the habitants of the state in the U.S. in which they are located.

Overall, this research has found some unexpected results that do not comply with previous findings. Yet, it has contributed to earlier studies on the theory of social dissonance on a national level and has found various preliminary applications of the findings for media outlets and presidential candidates. However, more research should be done to draw generalizable conclusions about the effect of negative and positive framing on the electoral vote and vice versa.

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Appendix A. Statement of own work

Print and sign this *Statement of own work* form and add it as the last appendix in the final version of the Bachelor's thesis that is submitted as a hard copy to the first supervisor.

Student name: Ellen Tine Marieke Frissen

Student number: 4804996

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