Claire Hoffert

Professor Jon Eastwood

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Divided Bias: Media Framing of Healthcare in the 2016 Presidential Campaign

Heartrending, personal stories have the power to turn the world around. But when news articles based on fact are twisted even without bad intent, the ideal of an informed public is lost. In fact, what ensues is a jumbled, confused group of people that vote and enact policy through misinformation. When it comes to healthcare, news organizations have the ability to influence the American public based on framing of the issues which can then affect policy. After first reviewing the background of the issues, this paper analyzes how news media interact with political party affiliation and calls for journalists to adopt an ethic of care in reporting.

As this synthetic paper deals with an analysis of literature instead of data collection, the methodology is quite simple. I looked at content analyses that other authors have done and at trends in public opinion through polling. The articles are found through the Washington and Lee library database, as well as Google Scholar and Google searches for articles from esteemed organizations that are not considered scholarly. I limited my searches to articles in the 1990s and later. I mainly focused on articles after the 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA). The articles used consist of scholarly journal articles and articles from the *Shorenstein Center* at the Harvard Kennedy School, the *Columbia Journalism Review* and the *Kaiser Family Foundation*. I am using this data to find a correlating trend with polling data from *Gallup* and the *Pew Research Center* to follow trends in public opinion on healthcare.

I will look at framing through tone and responsibility for healthcare to see if a trend in framing is correlated with a trend in public opinion of healthcare. I will look at a connection between that correlation and a link between how public opinion on the ACA can affect people in poverty.

Finally, I will examine the ethical issues in media bias and the responsibility of journalists. I will create a guideline for how journalists should approach their duties to the public, and I will use scholarly articles on an ethic of care and agape to formulate the guideline.

Literature Review

To establish the background of media bias in framing of the coverage of healthcare in the 2016 presidential election, a literature review was conducted to further explain the key issues and publics that will be examined in the analysis. First, framing is the word choice, placement of the article, headline, tone and other ways to give an article a slant. While unnecessary framing can be done with malicious intentions, this paper takes the aim of framing done carelessly or subconsciously; this paper assumes that journalists are not intending to mislead the public through framing. To set the scene of framing in the election, one first needs to scrutinize the history of framing theory, framing in relation to poverty, media bias in healthcare, the effect of media bias in healthcare on the poor and, finally, the debate on the responsibility of journalists to the public.

History of Framing Theory

Examining the effects of media on the public has been a popular subject throughout history. Framing, in particular, began through sociology and was developed by Erving Goffman in 1974 (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015, p. 428). Goffman introduced the idea that individuals employ primary frameworks, or frames of understanding similar to social and natural frameworks, in

order to make sense of a situation or to make "what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful" (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). Framing is a part of the person's experience that is inescapable instead of something a person only employs in certain situations. Gaye Tuchman took the idea of framing further when analyzing the role of news organizations. In *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality,* she relates the news to a frame that the public uses to see the world and explores how news organizations have the power to "create, impose and reproduce social meanings – to construct social reality" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 208). Reporters can reproduce the status quo through reporting on dominant institutions and favoring political elites. Tuchman writes that news is "a social resource whose construction limits an analytic understanding of contemporary life" (1978, p. 215). When related to poverty, Tuchman's idea of framing shows that newsmakers have the power to give their voices to those in power or those who do not regularly have the possibility of making their voices heard. Through using sources and reporting on particular stories and institutions, newsmakers are showing the public which frame to use when looking at real-life situations.

Another spot in the history of framing belongs to Todd Gitlin, who found that frames, "largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports" (1980, p. 7). Not only can journalists affect the public through frames, but they exacerbate the problem through their own reliance on frames. William Gamson took this to another level in an article he wrote on framing: "All senders – whether journalists or sources – should be regarded as sponsors of frames. In some cases, this may be unconscious, and there may be no motive other than a conscientious effort to frame events in a way that the sponsor considers more meaningful" (Gamson, 1989, p. 158). This relates to an argument of this paper that journalists aren't necessarily using frames

with a malicious intent but either because it is a subconscious use or because they believe it is the best way to write a story. Taking this route, it may be inevitable that journalists use frames. However, they need to look at the way they are using frames to ensure they are keeping their responsibility to the public.

Robert Entman included his own definition of framing in a 1993 article: "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (p. 52). He found that frames "define problems," "diagnose causes," "make moral judgments," and "suggest remedies" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). If journalists are able to provide ways for the public to make value judgments, they must be especially careful with the process in which they write. Even one short article has the possibility to define problems and diagnose a cause for an issue that may not be correct. In terms of healthcare, journalists may use frames that suggest remedies. If the public uses an article as a frame in voting and support for healthcare bills, the framing could have an impact on healthcare for millions of Americans.

When looking at media framing, it is helpful to evaluate specific frames. Examples of media framing are whether the reporter uses a positive or negative tone, episodic and thematic framing, where the story is reported either based on one person's story or the issue as a whole and the game frame, which journalists use in reporting on the horserace during an election. For the first frame, tone, a study on the economy found that positive and negative tone had a huge difference on the public's view of the economy. "Specifically, there were three factors that influenced future expectations of the economy: evaluation of current economic conditions in the current month, the current monthly change in the Consumer Price Index, and the amount of

negatively framed news coverage of the economy from the previous month (Hester and Gibson, 2003, p. 85). Since an increase of negative news was linked to an increase in unfavorable opinions of the future economy, tone has been proven to be a large factor in the opinions of the public. The second example, episodic and thematic framing, applies to healthcare through ACA beneficiaries and those who are affected by healthcare. According to a study on agenda-setting, priming and framing, "the episodic frame depicts public issues in terms of concrete instances or specific events – a homeless person, an unemployed worker, a victim of racial discrimination, the bombing of an airliner, an attempted murder, and so on…the thematic news frame, in contrast, places public issues in some general or abstract context" (Iyengar and Simon, 1993, p. 369). Finally, the game frame has been employed across political campaign races to portray a contest between the candidates, focusing on the individual wins and losses of each part of the campaign. A study on the game frame found that "from a knowledge perspective, the game frame may crowd out substantial information on policy in the news, meaning that the low levels of internal efficacy could be interpreted as the result of low levels of actual knowledge on policy issues" (Pedersen, 2012, p. 236). These frames all affect the issue of healthcare through the tone of the news on healthcare, the episodic and thematic framing of the ACA beneficiaries, and the game frame of the candidates through the campaign leaving little room for coverage of healthcare policy.

Dennis Chong and James Druckman added an analysis of the effects of moderators to create an effective frame. They explained the effects on the public, "other moderators influence the perceived applicability or strength of a frame – for example, frames delivered by credible sources are more likely to shift…as are frames that invoke longstanding cultural values" (Chong and Druckman, 2007, p. 112). This agrees with Gamson's idea of the effects of sponsors in a

frame and shows that each element used by a journalist in a story can be the frame. Chong and Druckman also explored subjects that include the sides that the reader agrees and disagrees with: "the strength of the opposition frame determines the distance one is pulled away from his or her values even when the frame that is congruent with those values is represented in the debate" (2007, p. 113). While the strength of the opposition frame may be important in swaying the views of readers, it may not be strong enough to change the opinion of a reader who already has frames in place from previous experiences and exposure. The reader wouldn't be able to cast those frames off and reach wholeheartedly for this new frame that contradicts his or her past assumptions.

Finally, in examining a more recent study, Robert Entman analyzed media framing in the 2008 election. He approached the study by assuming that mainstream outlets were dedicated to "neutral, fair, balanced or objective coverage," finding that the outlets applied heuristics arising either from media "catering to audiences as consumers in the marketplace" or media attempting to "serve audiences as citizens" and using "watchdog biases" (Entman, 2010, p. 394). This relates to this paper's future analysis, as journalists may be using these frames in a misguided attempt to find objective coverage.

Framing in Relation to Poverty

When looking at how the media have historically framed poverty, it is essential to look at how the media framed the responsibility for poverty. One early key piece of literature was created by Shanto Iyengar. "In the case of television news coverage, the thematic frame engenders a stronger sense of societal responsibility, whereas the episodic frame engenders a stronger sense of individual responsibility. In the case of survey questions, inclusion or exclusion of particular individuating information produces significant changes in the amount of

governmental assistance respondents are willing to award to poor people" (Iyengar, 1990, p. 35).

Iyengar determined a link between episodic and thematic framing and responsibility, as well as a

connection between episodic framing and public opinion on how policy should be enacted. A

study by Sei-Hill Kim, John Carvalho and Andrew Davis found that "the most frequently

mentioned causal attribution was broken family, with teen pregnancy or being promiscuous cast

as the major cause of poverty" (Kim, Carvalho and Davis, 2010, p. 575-576). This isn't only

found in this particular study – the authors cited previous research that the media generally

portray the poor as lazy and sexually irresponsible. One such article examined a series by *The*

Washington Post. The series, titled "Rosa Lee's Story: Poverty and Survival in Washington,"

earned a Pulitzer Prize, but "proved to be in the service of social conceptions that linked the poor

to criminality and depravity and failed to challenge racist stereotypes" (Parisi, 1998, p. 199).

Parisi claims that the series embodied "modern racism," where the author presumes he

understands the subject but still engages in stereotypes. A further finding about journalists'

misunderstandings of poverty is found in the earlier study in that "there is little evidence to

support a close connection" between the poverty and the media's idea of the cause of poverty

(Kim, Carvalho and Davis, 2010, p. 576). The authors of this study also suggested that the

media's emphasis on using episodic framing, which looks at personal stories instead of societal

problems at large, creates a reliance on finding responsibility in individuals instead of problems.

Eric Klinenberg, who wrote a book on Chicago's heat wave in 1995, found that the media have

difficulty in covering structural sources of poverty. His book detailed how few reporters write

about heat waves because they aren't as visually devastating and because the victims of heat

waves tend to be social outcasts who are turned away by society. Klinenberg wrote that the "heat

wave offered editors and reporters opportunities to provide a blend of spectacular coverage and

serious, street-level reports...but several of most probing and insightful accounts were overshadowed by prominent and sensational photographs, dramatic but misleading headlines, and false political debates that obscured the social aspects of the disaster" (2002). Journalists, through episodic framing and other factors, fail to report fully and completely on structural poverty.

In addition, Martin Gilens studied the subjects that made up the majority of articles about people in poverty. "Given, the public's greater willingness to help the elderly poor, and, to a lesser degree poor children, public perceptions of the age distribution of the poor are likely to have an impact on overall levels of support for government antipoverty efforts" (Gilens, 1996, p 522). However, Gilens found that the elderly account for 11 percent of those in poverty but are only found in two percent of articles on poverty (Gilens, 1996, p. 522). This shows that media organizations have misrepresented the people who are actually in poverty, leading Americans to believe that most in poverty are of a working age. This can potentially affect how much Americans care about policies affecting the poor.

Rosalee Clawson and Rakuya Trice expanded on the research done by Gilens. They found additional research that showed that articles focused on the "undeserving" poor instead of the "deserving" poor. They also analyzed the articles beyond the words, finding that "the photographic images of poor people in these five news magazines do not capture the reality of poverty; instead, they provide a stereotypical and inaccurate picture of poverty which results in negative beliefs about the poor, antipathy toward blacks, and a lack of support for welfare programs" (Clawson and Trice, 2000, p. 62-63). Overall, these studies provide strong evidence for showing that the media do not accurately represent poverty as they frame the issue through responsibility and episodic framing, thereby misleading the public.

Media Bias in Healthcare

In order to provide some background on media bias in healthcare, I looked at separate studies. When specifically examining how media have affected healthcare policy, a study by Kiousis, Park, Kim and Go analyzed how the media gathered its news on healthcare reform during the first year of the Obama presidential administration. In relation to framing, they found that, "in particular, regarding the tone of messages, presidential press briefings and Senate committee releases showed most similarities with media and policymaking activities among the eleven different types of information subsidies" (Kiousis, Park, Kim and Go, 2013, p. 665). This shows that media organizations are allowing politicians to be the main source for the news, providing a frame for the information. Gamson wrote that all sources are sponsors of frames and Chong and Druckman's research found that moderators affect the strength of a frame. If the news organizations are gathering their information mainly from these sources, they are affecting the framing of the news.

In a study by Patricia Collins and her colleagues analyzing newspaper coverage of the Canadian healthcare reform debate, they found that newspapers were more likely to cover issues episodically, or based on situational stories, instead of thematically, or the issue as a whole. They also found that thematic articles were shorter in length and ranged in tone while episodic articles were much longer and positive. While they looked at this information across newspapers in general, they also discovered that media organizations used a number of different ways to frame issues. For example, it ranged based on "coverage type, newspaper, reporting source, article length and type of articles" (Collins, Abelson, Pyman and Lavis, 2006, p. 89). This shows that the media usually framed issues episodically but that news organizations utilize different techniques to frame issues.

An article examining the representation of healthcare in the media looked first at how reporters framed the issue. The authors found that reporters used "authoritative sources to give weight to specific claims; emotive language to engage the audience and underline the significance of issues; dramatic language to induce anxiety and fear in patients; judicious use of statistics to support particular claims careful placement of powerful actors ahead of the least powerful in order to give the appearance of a balanced story" and many more uses of slant and a lack of information in specific sections of the story that would have provided a much-needed context (Lewis, Collyer, Willis, Harley, Marcus, Calnan and Gabe, 2017, p. 13). The authors found that the articles were generally negative in tone but that key players, which include private companies, were favored in media coverage. Subsequently, the authors discovered that "although negative messages about the public healthcare system are common, there is a systematic absence of negative messages about the private system, even though many such events could be reported" (Lewis, Collyer, Willis, Harley, Marcus, Calnan and Gabe, 2017, p. 13). These examples of news framing give the public the wrong idea of the state of the healthcare system and the publics affected by it.

Finally, Jennifer Hopper analyzed healthcare framing in the news across time, starting with the 1960s and ending with the Obama administration. She looked at how false framings of healthcare proposals were accepted in the news. In one example, she looked at Sarah Palin's statement that Barack Obama's healthcare system was a "death panel," a statement that was found to be incorrect by Factcheck.org and PolitiFact.com (Hopper, 2017, p. 129). Hopper found that, contrary to what some politicians have said, the media rejected the "death panels" frame and avoided wording articles with the false statement (Hopper, 2017, p. 130). Instead of using Palin's terminology, Hopper discovered that journalists strived for accuracy and didn't report on

a story that would misconstrue the facts for the public. An article by Lawrence and Schafer went even further on the issue. While many journalists did report that the claim was false, they didn't provide any sources or information for determining it incorrect (Lawrence and Schafer, 2011, p. 776). In contrast to these journalists, other news organizations mentioned the quote but failed to add any additional information or commentary on its accuracy. Lawrence and Schafer believe that one reason for this style of reporting could be "the fear of appearing biased" (2011, p. 776). Instead of helping avoid bias, the journalistic focus on objectivity can misrepresent the accuracy of statements to the public. While I will delve further into this, this example shows how objectivity as an ethical guide on its own has potential drawbacks and shouldn't be considered such a high journalistic standard.

Moving back in time, Hopper looked at the issue of healthcare with other politicians. When looking back to the socialized medicine frame during John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson's terms as president, they "had a much more difficult time getting news content to echo their challenges to the Medicare as socialized medicine frame" (Hopper, 2017, p. 115). Surprisingly, this shows a positive trend in the media organizations of conducting independent reporting apart from the source. Hopper found that most of the articles in the papers analyzed focused on the view of one side of the debate instead of providing a balanced perspective of the whole issue. In her analysis, she found that "this chapter's comparison of how the news treated what presidents sought to debunk as false framings of their health-care proposals over time indicates that, at least in some cases, the 'traditional role' of the media might be better fulfilled today than it was decades ago" (Hopper, 2017, p. 135). While media bias on healthcare is still around today, reporting on healthcare proposals has improved and become more balanced than it used to be.

Effect of Media Bias in Healthcare on the Poor

Through Entman, we've found that "it is through framing that political actors shape the texts that influence or prime the agendas and considerations that people think about" (2007, p. 165). When it comes to policy, politicians can use frames from news organizations to persuade the public on the effectiveness of their policies. The effect of media coverage on policy has been outlined in an article by Pieter de Wilde and a book by Philip Seib. While de Wilde's study looked at a contained example of EU policy formation, he found through a claims-making analysis of newspaper articles and parliamentary debates that "there is clear evidence that media provide a weapon of the weak in that it empowers opposition in parliament" but "news value logics reinforce executive dominance" (2011, p. 140-141). In essence, media coverage has shortcomings when there is both too much and too little. It fails to easily explain parliamentary news when it becomes more intensely focused because, at that point, certain leaders benefit from a larger voice in parliament. On the other hand, limited coverage reinforces the power of leaders in creating their own narrative and keeping the public from being duly informed. De Wilde's study was not able to confidently conclude the link between media bias and policy, but it was able to add to a hypothesis of media coverage affecting policies. Philip Seib, on the other hand, wrote a book on how news media affect foreign policy, looking at a plethora of examples. Seib's book analyzes many events through the 20th century and shows the relationship between politicians, the public and the media. He demonstrates how news coverage aggravates American citizens who then pressure presidents, and how presidents make decisions based on the news coverage they anticipate. He concluded that news media do influence foreign policy through influencing the public on which issues are important. "Superficial coverage is likely to be met with superficial policy: a one-day emergency airdrop instead of a plan for long-term assistance or

agricultural reform" (Seib, 1997, p. 143). By mining through case studies, he found a common thread that lends credibility to media affecting policy. However, the impact is indirect. "Journalists shine their searchlight on events. Sometimes this captures the attention of the public and politicians; sometimes it is ignored" (Seib, 1997, p. 1). Finally, in Iyengar's 1990 study, he found a connection between episodic and thematic framing and public opinion. "To the degree that individuals hold society responsible for poverty, they favor active governmental efforts to assist the poor… the results reported here suggest that framing welfare policy in terms of particular beneficiary groups will weaken rather than strengthen public support for welfare" (Iyengar, 1990, p. 36). Through episodic framing, media have a connection to public opinion on healthcare. Through these scholarly works, it can be understood that news media framing is correlated with public opinion, which in turn suggests an effect on policy.

While this example focuses on a particular aspect of healthcare, Yuan Zhang, Yan Jin, Sean Stewart and Jeannette Porter found relevant results in a study on the effect of the media on mental health. They found that the media "may directly address issue responsibilities through a framing process of defining problems, identifying causes, and suggesting remedies, thereby shaping public opinions about who should be held accountable for causing and solving problems" (Zhang, Jin, Stewart and Porter, 2016, p. 119). They further found that the media were assigning the cause of the problem to individuals instead of society. "The number-one causal factor presented by the media was genetics, personality, and individual health outcomes" (Zhang, Jin, Stewart and Porter, 2016, p. 128). This is important because, through Entman's idea of frames diagnosing problems, news organizations are showing readers what the solution might be: individual responsibility. News organizations are allowing their articles to prescribe a solution

for healthcare costs – this solution makes a suggestion to the public of how they should vote on the next healthcare bill politicians introduce.

After looking at the connection between media bias and policy, which will be explored further in the analysis section, the link between policy and the poor is much easier to find. The implementation of the ACA increased access to healthcare, impacting millions of Americans. However, Gaffney and McCormick found that it hasn't solved the problem: "Although the ACA improved coverage and access – particularly for poorer Americans, women and minorities – its overall impact was modest in comparison with the gaps present before the law's implementation. Today, 29 million people in the USA remain uninsured, and substantial inequalities in access along economic, gender, and racial lines persist. Although most Americans agree that further reform is needed, the proper direction for reform – especially following the 2016 presidential election – is highly contentious" (2017, p. 1442). The future of the ACA is hazy, and a reform bill could adversely affect many Americans. Secondly, access to healthcare particularly isolates the poor. "In 2010, for instance, 48.6 million people were uninsured. The uninsured were mostly of low or middle income, and disproportionately black or Hispanic; the ACA was expected to particularly benefit these groups. (Gaffney and McCormick, 2017, p. 1444). Access to healthcare is not only important because of the threat of financial ruin from an accident or unforeseen health problem but also because health coverage is linked to better health outcomes. "Uninsurance is associated with increased mortality, poor overall health, and an increase in depressive symptoms and adverse cardiovascular outcomes" (Gaffney and McCormick, 2017, p. 1444). A lack of access to healthcare disproportionately disadvantages those in poverty by affecting their financial stability and health outcomes.

Finally, a study by Benjamin Sommers, Atul Gawande and Katherine Baicker furthers this research by focusing on the ACA. They discovered that several studies found that the ACA's expansion was associated with health outcomes. One particular study found that primary care benefits health through six mechanisms: "greater access to needed services," "better quality of care," "a greater focus on prevention," "early management of health problems," "the cumulative effect of the main primary care delivery characteristics," and "the role of primary care in reducing unnecessary and potentially harmful specialist care" (Starfield, Shi and Macinko, 2005, p. 474). While these studies are only observational, they still add to other evidence. Recent studies of the 2014 coverage expansion have found "improved self-reported health" among participants (Sommers, Gawande and Baicker, 2017, p. 589). While self-reported health may not be the best measure, "people who describe their health as poor have mortality rates two to 10 times as high as those who report being in the healthiest category" (Sommers, Gawande and Baicker, 2017, p. 589). This study cannot conclusively show the impact of a lack of access of healthcare on the poor, but it does provide strong evidence that it does adversely affect those who do not have access to healthcare.

Responsibility of Journalists

As Hopper brought up the issues of objectivity and balanced coverage, it is essential to discuss the responsibility of journalists to the public (2017). If it turns out the media are biased, is it necessary for journalists to change? In order to answer that question, it is crucial to look back at the history of journalistic values to see the path journalists took to where they are now. "Historically, the press was (and is) not expected to be politically balanced. Rather, many newspapers were overtly biased and closely linked to specific political parties to the extent that they were paralleling the political system (Hopmann, Aelst and Legnante, 2011, p. 242). While

media bias is not thought of favorably today, it used to be the norm. Politically biased articles were especially popular during the American Revolution as some of our Founding Fathers published biased and politically charged pamphlets. However, this has changed drastically. "Over time, reporting in a politically balanced manner has become a central norm for journalists across the (western) world" (Hopmann, Aelst and Legnante, 2011, p. 243). As biased journalism faded out, objectivity became the new ideal.

Objectivity, or reporting in a neutral, balanced way that separates facts from values, can be traced back to its beginning as a concept in the 1920s (Schudson, 2001, p. 150). It "seemed a natural and progressive ideology for an aspiring occupational group at a moment when science was good, efficiency was cherished, and increasingly prominent elites judged partisanship a vestige of the tribal 19th century" (Schudson, 2001, 162–163). Daniëlle Raeijmaekers and Pieter Maeseele analyzed the prevalence of objectivity: "As journalism has turned more professionalized over the last decades, the concept of 'objectivity' became significantly enshrined within media policies, newsroom routines, and journalism education" (2015, p. 648). Journalists believed that they could detach themselves from a story and create a more scientific process in order to create stories that are balanced and mimic society. The process was designed to keep values out of reporting and present the truth. However, this concept has not held up over time. This not only requires journalists to adopt a robotic quality that eliminates any passions or values they hold in life, but it expects a better society than we currently have. "By making balance a norm for objective journalistic coverage, the underlying assumption then is that society – as ultimate benchmark for a mimetic media representation – is balanced as well" (Raeijmaekers and Maeseele, 2015, p. 653). This assumption is incorrect as society is not balanced, and both sides do not present the truth based on fact. Going back to Sarah Palin's

comment on "death panels," simply reporting on what she said versus what her opponents said would not fulfill journalists' obligation to society as it would misrepresent the truth through her inaccurate comment. "Some observers argue objectivity in the news today entails 'he said, she said' style reporting, in which journalists relay both sides of a political debate as though they are equally valid, even when one side has far more evidence in support of it than the other." (Hopper, 2017, p. 131). Objectivity leads journalists to reporting equally on different sides of a story even if one of the sides has a much more fully researched argument than the other. This can misrepresent the validity of one of the arguments and lead readers to more easily accept the weaker argument. While objectivity has seemed ideal in many newsrooms, it doesn't show that way in practice. Objectivity as an ideal should be challenged because of ideology. "Rules of objectivity reflect and shape an assumed social consensus about a hegemonic ideological project, while simultaneously disguising or camouflaging its ideological character. This is most problematic since ideology is at its strongest when it is no longer defined and perceived as such, when its assumptions and preferences appear evident and logical, that is, hegemonic or depoliticized" (Raeijmaekers and Maeseele, 2015, p. 656-657). Objectivity isn't helping to mimic society in easily mirroring the ideologies in society, but it is helping them to hide and appear equal as each other. The ideal of objectivity began to crumble because it simply isn't possible for journalists to leave behind all trace of their bias through the personal experiences in their life. The rules of objectivity also pretend that an ideological character of work isn't there. Not only do they threaten the interesting aspects of the article but the rules of objectivity also take the human being out of the writer – one of the reasons journalists are needed in society.

Recently, the scholarship focusing on the responsibility of journalists has taken a different turn. David Craig and John Ferré published an article that called for journalists to adopt

agape as an ethic of care. However, the idea of agape in media ethics started with Clifford

Christians and his colleagues. They published a book that included agape in its normative

approaches to media ethics in 1983. In a more recent article by Post, Underwood, Schloss, and

Hurlburt, they described agape as "other-regarding, either with regard to actions or motivations"

(2002, p. 56). Agape is not self-interested, but it pays close attention to the other's perspective

and makes decisions based on that person. In application, a media ethics focused on agape would

include the needs and desires of sources, other organizations and the public in each product.

Craig and Ferré used the example of suicide coverage to show the effects of an ethic of agape in

reporting. When reporting, journalists would need to pay attention to the Center for Disease

Control's recommendations for suicide coverage and note the Werther effect that details the rise

in suicides that have happened after media coverage of a suicide along with the issues of

underreporting suicide. The "CDC's policy recommendations fit two primary characteristics of

agape – its concern for the most vulnerable members of society and its steadfast commitment to

health and wholeness. Agape thus shares features with various decision-making protocols"

(Craig and Ferré, 2006, p. 133). Agape differs from objectivity because it is a call for action.

While objectivity requires journalists to separate facts from values, agape calls for journalists to

pay attention to everyone surrounding the story and ensure that they are making a decision that

takes others into account. The responsibility of journalists to create an ethic of care needs to be

discussed further in order to implement it within news organizations across the country.

Analysis

Media coverage of healthcare

While media have the ability to frame articles in many different ways, this analysis

focuses on two in particular: positive or negative tone and responsibility. First, I will focus on the

latter. Whether the media frame articles on healthcare in the form of a need for government responsibility or individual responsibility is integral to the topic at hand. If the public is told that individuals should be responsible for their own health or that their own bad choices result in bad health, then Americans may be less likely to support government programs such as the ACA.

A study that looked at media framing of ACA beneficiaries from August of 2013 until January of 2014 found that a tag of being poor or very poor and uninsured/underinsured were two of the most portrayals. However, the author found that these portrayals were seen as more deserving, and that Medicaid recipients have historically been seen with sympathy: "an April 2005 survey that asked national adults if they thought 'a main reason why people have health insurance through the Medicaid program' is that 'they are poor and can't afford to purchase health insurance on their own,' found 87 percent saying 'yes' (Chattopadhyay, 2015, p. 22).

Another study found that focused even more on individuals produced different results. This study, which examined news framing of responsibility for rising health costs, found that the news media do frame these issues: "Results revealed that the media were more likely to blame patients for increasing costs than other society-level causes (i.e., health care providers, insurance companies, the government, and pharmaceutical companies). More specifically, patients were blamed for their unhealthy lifestyle, which, in turn, may result in increased health care expenditures. This can be a good example of the strong individualism ingrained into American life" (Kim, Tanner, Foster and Kim, 2015, p. 129-130). Secondly, the media increased its framing of these articles using individual responsibility. "The proportion of news reports mentioning patients as a cause indicate a rapid increase between 2001 and 2008. Across the 18 years examined, there was a statistically significant linear increase" (Kim, Tanner, Foster and

Kim, 2015, p. 128). The study, which analyzed articles from 1993 until 2010, found that there was an increasing trend of articles that attributed responsibility of healthcare to individuals.

Looking at the content of the coverage during the height of the healthcare reform debate in 2009 and 2010, the news coverage was lacking in substantial information. A study found that "healthcare reform received substantial coverage in U.S. newspapers, but the coverage was more frequently dedicated to the arguments, debates and thoughts of people concerning the issue (68.6%) rather than the substance of the reform bill (31.4%)" (Tetteh and King, 2011, p. 503). Furthermore, when reporters focused on less substantial aspects of healthcare reform, they negatively influenced public opinion on healthcare reform and Americans felt that journalists failed to sufficiently inform them on the specifics of the proposal (Tetteh and King, 2011, p. 504-505).

When it comes to tone, negativity has been on the rise for years. Even as early as 1994, the trend in negativity had begun: "News coverage of the health care reform debate was more negative and more adversarial than even the presidential campaign of 1992" (Cappella and Jamieson, 1996, p. 82). According to an article by the *Shorenstein Center* at the Harvard Kennedy School*,* "news reporting turned sour during the Vietnam and Watergate era and has grown increasingly bitter" (Patterson, 2016). The article found that in the six presidential elections after the mid-1990s, "negative coverage of the presidential nominees has increased by 19 percentage points from its average in the six preceding elections" (Patterson, 2016). In Patterson's book from the early 1990s, he elaborates on the beginning of negative news. While negative campaigns had been common at the time, negative news was just beginning. Once "Watergate and Vietnam turned the press against the politicians, negative reporting became the norm" (Patterson, 1993, p. 204).

Change in media coverage of healthcare during the 2016 campaign

During the presidential campaign of 2016, the tone of stories was negative. "News stories about health care policy, most of which centered on the 2010 Affordable Care Act, have been 2-to-1 negative" with stories about health policy during the election 71 percent negative and 29 percent positive (Patterson, 2016). While some may assume that this particular election created more negativity through the candidates, the article by the *Shorenstein Center* found differently: "to attribute the tone entirely to the opposing camps is to ignore the pattern of presidential election coverage during the past few decades...Not since 1984—eight elections ago—have the presidential nominees enjoyed positive press coverage. The 2016 campaign did not even top the record for negativity" (Patterson, 2016). The election might have featured unusual candidates, but the candidates alone did not account for the negativity in the press.

Furthermore, a *Tyndall* report found that journalists failed to even cover healthcare as it received little to no coverage on nightly newscasts (2016). According to a *Business Insider* article elaborating on the report, issues such as "drugs, healthcare, poverty, gun control, and climate change" were only "mentioned 'on the candidates' terms, not the networks' initiatives'" (Sheth, 2016).
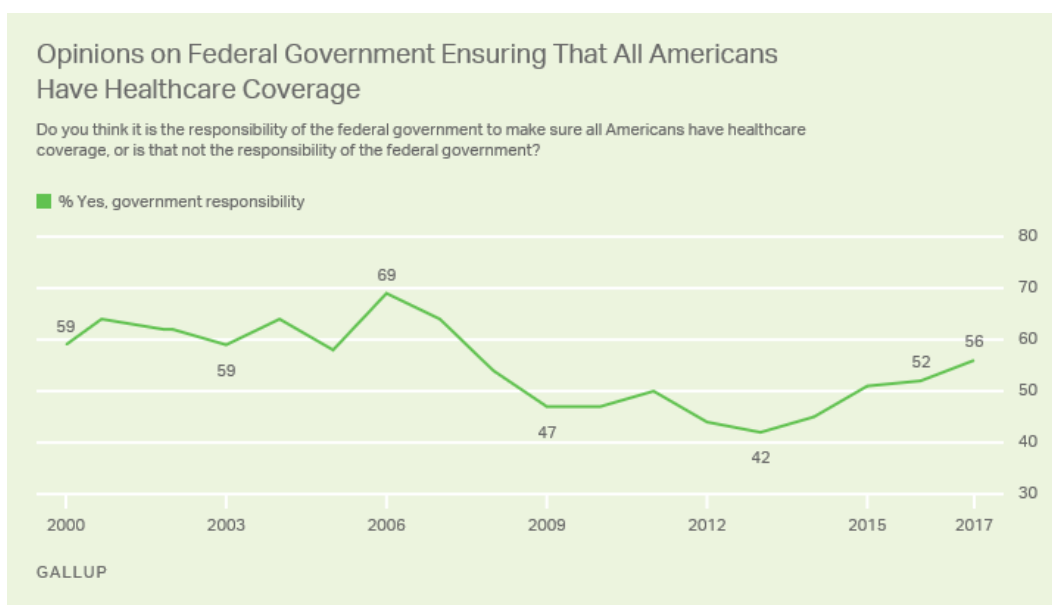
Public attitudes about healthcare

In order for the trends in media framing to make sense within the larger issue of public perception and poverty, it is necessary to examine the trend in the public's opinion of healthcare and the ACA.

According to a study done by the *Pew Research Center*, the public has gone up 5 percentage points from January of 2017 to June in its favorable opinion of a single payer approach to health insurance. This is up a total of 12 percentage points since 2014. When roping

in the time difference from the 2016 presidential election, there are other results: "While the new survey finds no change since January in opinions about the government's responsibility to provide health care coverage, the share viewing this as a government responsibility has increased 9 percentage points since 2016, from 51% to 60%" (Kiley, 2017). In 2013, this number was even lower, as only 42 percent of respondents said that the government should be responsible for providing healthcare coverage.
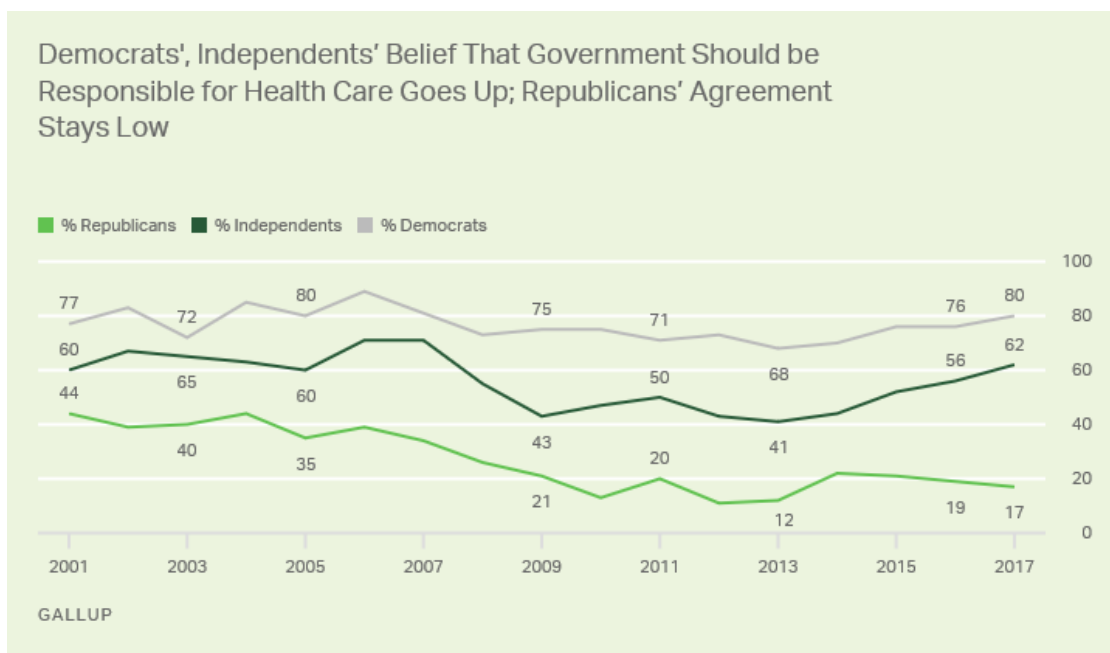
In another study, *Gallup*'s results were in line with those from the *Pew Research Center*: "Fifty-six percent of Americans say the federal government should be responsible for making sure all Americans have healthcare coverage, up slightly from 52% last year and the highest level in 10 years" (Majority Want Government to Ensure Healthcare Coverage, 2017). This study followed the opinion trends from 2000 to 2017, finding that 62 percent of Americans favored government responsibility for healthcare. Favorability reached a low of 42 percent in 2013, the year before health insurance coverage expansions through Medicaid took effect and the year that provisions for health plans, providers, employers and consumers began. Finally, favorability for government responsibility of healthcare has risen since 2014, as can be seen in Figure 1 below.

Opinions on Federal Government Ensuring That All Americans Have Healthcare Coverage

Do you think it is the responsibility of the federal government to make sure all Americans have healthcare coverage, or is that not the responsibility of the federal government?

% Yes, government responsibility

GALLUP

Credit: Gallup, 2017

Figure 1

Secondly, the *Gallup* poll examined the breakdown of opinions based on political affiliation. Figure 2, found below, shows that opinions of Democrats and Independents started steadily rising around 2014, while Republicans' favorable opinions of government responsibility for healthcare declined simultaneously. There is a fairly consistent partisan gap all the time, but it widens at this time.

Democrats', Independents' Belief That Government Should be Responsible for Health Care Goes Up; Republicans' Agreement Stays Low

■ % Republicans ■ % Independents ■ % Democrats
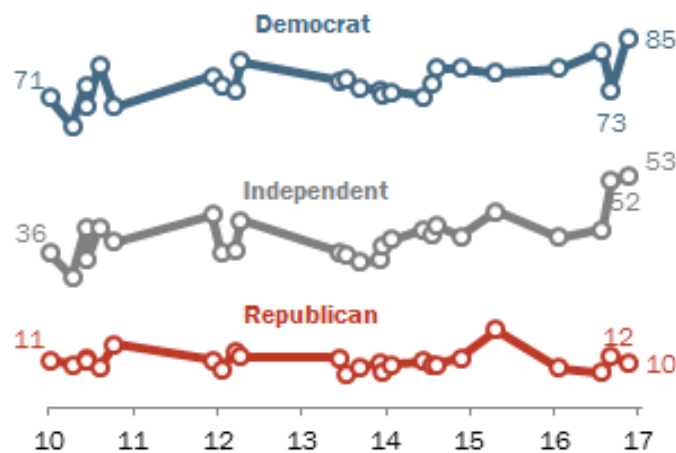
GALLUP

Credit: Gallup, 2017

Figure 2

In another *Gallup* poll, the organization found that 47 percent of respondents support a government-run system, the highest percentage found in seven years of the upward trend. The research in this study also looked at political affiliation, finding that "although the 22% of Republicans who support a government-run system is low on an absolute basis, it is the highest in Gallup's seven-year trend. Republicans' shift in attitudes accounts for most of the overall

increase in support for the government system in this year's update" (In U.S., Support for

Government-Run Health System Edges Up, 2017). However, when looking at the ACA, a *Pew*

Research Center study found a separate conclusion. When the researchers looked at political

affiliation, they found that "opinions among Republicans and Republican leaders have shown

less change. Currently 64% say the law has had a negative impact on the country. Over the past

four years, majorities of Republicans have consistently said the law is having a negative effect on

the country." (For the first time, more Americans say 2010 health care law has had a positive

than negative impact on U.S., 2017). In another *Pew Research Center* study, found in Figure 3

below, Democrats and Independents are shown to have the greatest rise in favorability while

Republicans have stayed fairly stagnant in their support over the years (Support for 2010 health

care law reaches new high, 2017).

Support for health care law among independents has risen since October

% who approve of the health care law passed by Barack Obama and Congress in 2010

Democrat
71
85
73

Independent
36
53
52

Republican
11
12
10

10   11   12   13   14   15   16   17

Credit: Pew Research Center, 2017

Figure 3

Gallup also discovered that the gap between Americans who support government-run systems of healthcare or private insurance has almost disappeared in 2017. Shown in Figure 4 below, the gap's decrease started in 2014 and hit another decrease in 2015.
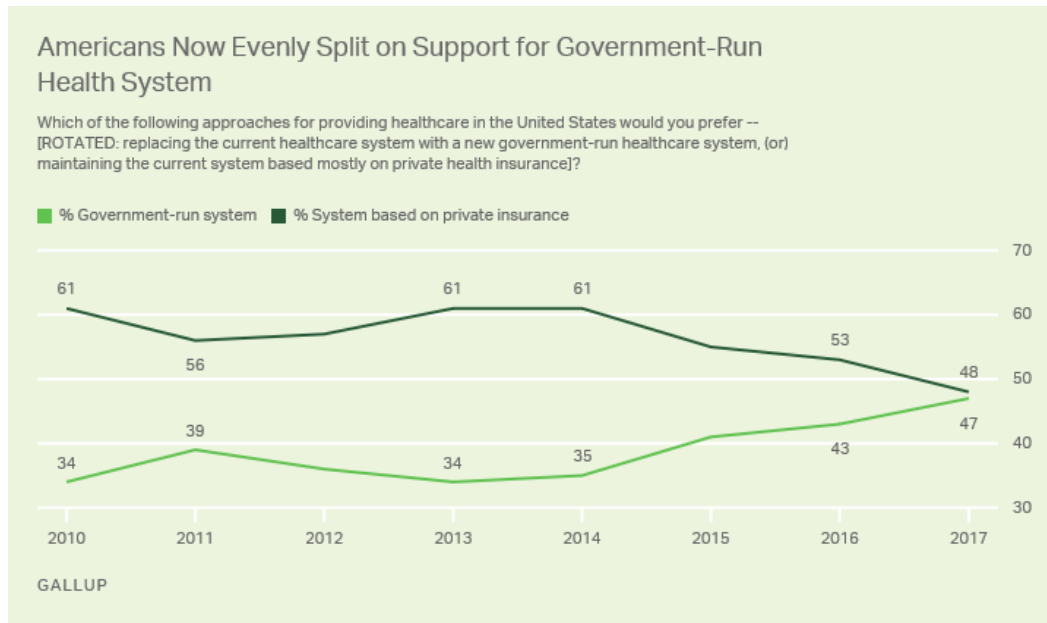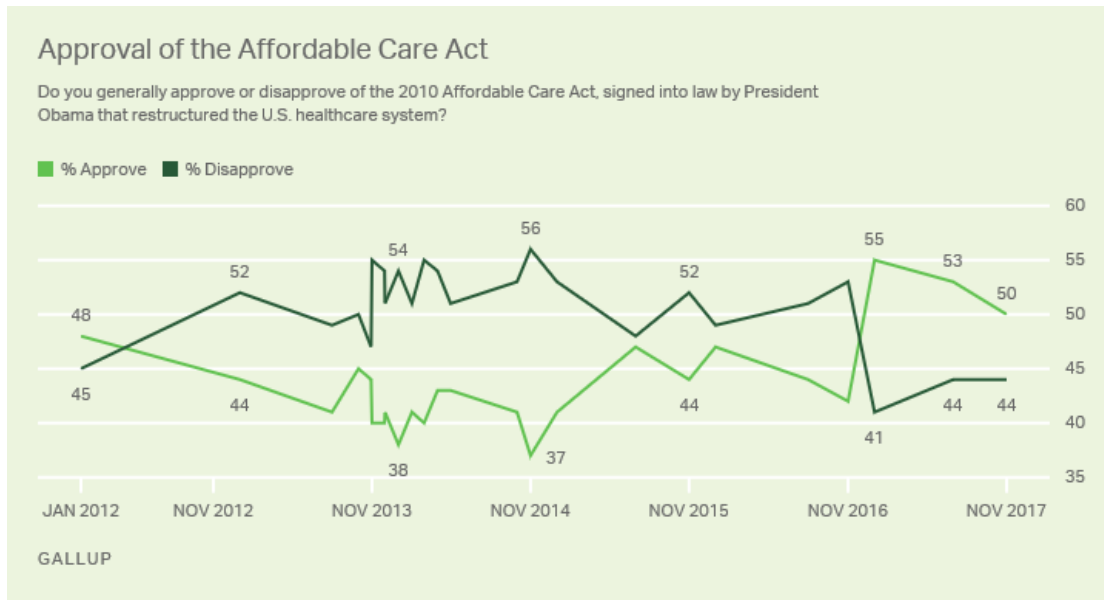

Credit: Gallup, 2017

Figure 4

When it comes to the ACA, the graph looks a bit different. As shown in Figure 4 below, unfavorable opinions had been leading the graph since 2012 until a clear change happened in 2016. The favorable opinions leaped up from around 42 percent to 55 percent just as the unfavorable opinions dropped from around 53 percent to 41 percent. Gallup brought up the 2016 presidential election when explaining the results: "One year ago, after the 2016 general election, 42% of Americans approved of the law and 53% disapproved. While campaigning, Donald Trump vowed to replace the law if elected, and with a Republican majority in Congress, such a move seemed likely" (Brenan, 2017). However, this didn't last long. "In April, after House Republicans' first attempt to repeal the law stalled before it could come up for a vote, Americans'

opinions shifted to viewing the law positively for the first time" (Brenan, 2017). Surprisingly, the author suggests that Republicans made the law more popular while they tried to get rid of it.

Credit: Gallup, 2017

Figure 5

In another study, *Gallup* compared the public's approval of the ACA and whether Americans wanted the bill to be kept the same, replaced or improved. The study found that "an overall total of 42% of U.S. adults -- a group that includes some who initially approve of it (28%) and some who disapprove (14%) -- want to change the ACA significantly. That is a larger percentage than the 29% who disapprove and want the law repealed and replaced or the 21% who approve and want the law kept as is" (Brenan, 2017). Even though more Americans approve of the law, there is still a significant portion, 71 percent in total, that want the law changed whether significantly or through a replacement.

Americans' Approval of Affordable Care Act and Preferred Next Steps

Based on national adults

	November 2016	November 2017
	%	%
Approve	42	50
(Keep in place as is)	(14)	(21)
(Keep but change significantly)	(28)	(28)
(Unspecified)	(1)	(1)
Disapprove	53	44
(Keep but change significantly)	(15)	(14)
(Repeal and replace)	(37)	(29)
(Unspecified)	(1)	(1)
No opinion	5	6

GALLUP

Credit: Gallup, 2017

Figure 6

The *Kaiser Family Foundation* found similar results. A study released in September of 2017 determined that 46 percent of respondents viewed the ACA favorably. However, "while overall favorability increased over the past year, this month finds a return to a divided public that characterizes most of the last seven years" (Kirzinger, DiJulio, Hamel, Wu and Brodie, 2017). A *Pew Research Center* study found that "as recently as April 2016, more Americans thought the law had had a negative impact on the country (44%) than said it had a positive effect (39%). Since 2013, the share of Americans saying the law has had a positive effect on the country has increased 20 percentage points, from 24% to 44%" (For the first time, more Americans say 2010 health care law has had a positive than negative impact on U.S., 2017).

In conclusion, public attitudes about government responsibility for healthcare and positive attitudes on the ACA have increased since at least 2014 but have risen especially after

2016. Secondly, the support has varied on political lines. Democrats and Independents have been more likely to favor government responsibility for healthcare and the ACA, while Republicans have stayed in a similar mindset.

Political party affiliation

Another factor in the issue of media framing in healthcare that needs to be discussed is political party affiliation. As found above, Democrats and Independents had an increase in favorable opinions of the ACA, while Republicans stayed the same.

> "Although there is no main effect of local news coverage on favorability toward the law, we do find evidence suggestive of a motivated response to news coverage, with higher exposure to news coverage associated with increasingly unfavorable views among Republicans (compared to Democrats). Reduced favorability among Republicans is not surprising in light of the tendency for partisans to perceive that media portrayals are biased against their point of view, which can further polarize opinions (Gunther and Schmitt 2004; Taber and Lodge 2006)" (Fowler, Baum, Barry, Niederdeppe and Gollust, 2017, p. 189)

Accordingly, an article from the *Shorenstein Center* found that the negative tone of the press fits within conservative ideals. "An irony of the press's critical tendency is that it helps the right wing. Although conservatives claim that the press has a liberal bias, the media's persistent criticism of government reinforces the right wing's anti-government message" (Patterson, 2016). For example, journalists typically write about the problems in society and cases of corrupt politicians or failures in government instead of success stories. Because of this, reporters have supported the conservative anti-government message.

A study that examined partisanship in the healthcare debate from 2008-2010 found that the percentage of Republicans who held their party position increased from 52 percent in 2008 to nearly 75 percent in 2010 (Henderson and Hillygus, 2011, p. 953). Democrats stayed nearly

constant at 76 percent and 72 percent during those respective years. The authors examined this curious revelation, "Although this finding challenges the expectations of the polarization literature, the asymmetric movement is quite consistent with previous political psychology research finding negative messages to be more effective" (Henderson and Hillygus, 2011, p. 953). Similar to the increasingly negative tone of journalists as discussed above, the negative messaging was found to be more effective in changing public opinion.

Partisanship is shown even further through the breakdown of public opinion on the ACA and the parts of the bill: "on the one hand, support for health care reform declined sharply after Barack Obama's inauguration even though majorities had previously backed it for several years; on the other hand, the public continued to strongly favor the major individual features of the ACA" (Jacobs and Mettler, 2011, p. 917). This divide of public opinion could be attributed to political polarization from the presidency. As the bill was tied to a Democratic presidency, the bill may have had less support from Republicans even though the parts of the bill were more favorable.

Media polarization is an issue that has been a hot topic of discussion in the past. A study examining media coverage framing public opinion of the healthcare debate found polarization to be an issue: "Many Americans read, listen to or watch similar media making the same arguments about issues over and over again. Whether they watch *Fox News* personalities repeating the 'death panel' claim about health care reform or *MSNBC* pundits arguing in favor of the public option, most people make the conscious choice to absorb media consistent with their view of politics" (Fein, 2011, p. 62). This goes back to the theory of selective exposure. The theory details how audiences decide which news outlets to expose themselves to, which can suggest that they are exposed to a smaller range of beliefs and news. After Lippmann introduced the idea of

selective processes in 1922, Klapper argued that selective exposure, in addition to two other processes, reinforces the beliefs of the viewer (1960, p. 64). A study by Patrick Meirick shows that not only a trend in "niche news" makes it easier for people to find news that appeals to them based on their political affiliation but also that "knowledgeable partisans engage in more selective exposure, and higher levels of knowledge may enable partisans and consumers of partisan news to better defend mistaken beliefs" (Meirick, 2012, p. 40). Through the theory of selective exposure, Fein believed that polarization is the reason why the percentage of Americans supporting healthcare reform didn't change from April 2010 to March of 2011.
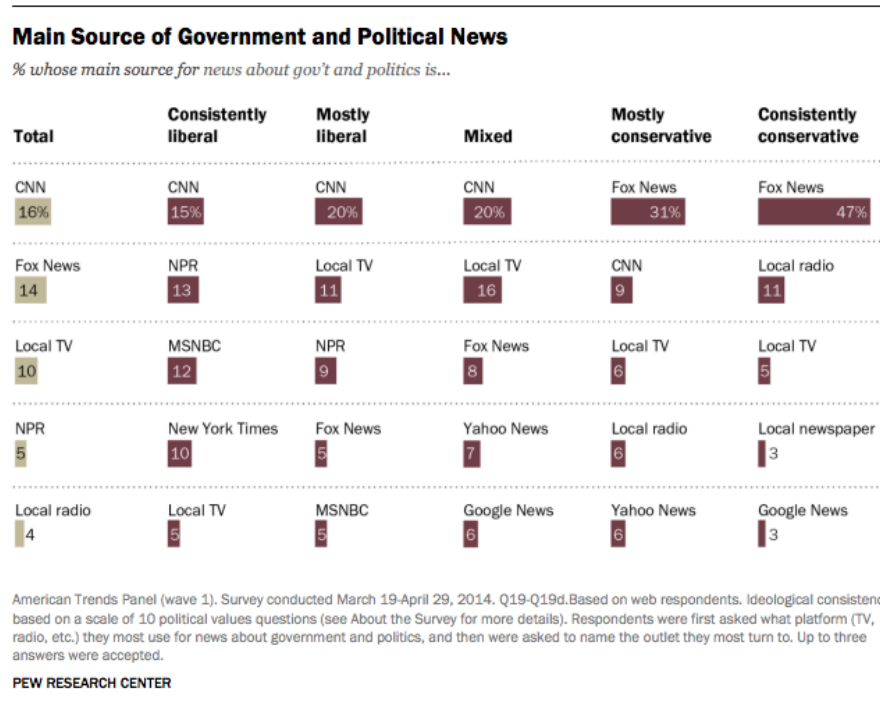
Another reason that media framing and political party are intertwined is shown through a study on framing in newspapers. Throughout 2009 and 2010, "analysis showed that liberal newspapers gave significantly more prominence to the issue of healthcare reform on the front page (39.5%) than did centrist (2.3%) or conservative (9.0%) newspapers" (Tetteh and King, 2011, p. 503). A second study examined Foxnews.com and MSNBC.com. The two websites differed when covering the issue as "MSNBC.com simply reported what President Obama and the Democrats said. This was in contrast to Foxnews.com, which many times challenged and provided follow-up countering explanations when referring to what the president said about the bill" (Potrykus, 2010, p. 77). However, both sites agreed in finding blame with the opposing party. This detracted from the democracy of the debate as a whole since "many times though, "treatment" responsibility was not mentioned, and the researcher feels that due to the political toxicity surrounding the bill, neither website was able to present "treatments" for any of the problems within the debate" (Potrykus, 2010, p. 80). The partisanship in news coverage placed itself in the way of the possibility of having well-informed citizens.

Next, a case study on diabetes found that Democrats and Republicans had different ways in responding to media messages in general. The authors found that even looking at social determinants of an issue created a divergence of opinion but that other framings of the issue did not provoke that same divergence. "This reaction suggests that the social determinants message contained embedded values-based cues to which political partisans responded" (Gollust, Lantz and Ubel, 2009, p. 2165). Media framings may not be intentionally partisan, but they do have the possibility of aggravating partisan divides based on the values inherent in these messages.

Another way people respond to messages based on their political party affiliation is through their perception and exaggeration of political polarization. A study found that when people hold extreme partisan attitudes and identify strongly with their partisan group, these factors "interacted such that people high in issue partisanship—that is, people whose attitudes correspond with their partisan identity—perceived the greatest levels of political attitude polarization" (Westfall, Van Boven, Chambers and Judd, 2015, p. 155). Media feed into this polarization by contrasting the images of conservatives and liberals in the news. For example, news articles describe conservatives as "more likely to be Evangelicals, gun owners, country music devotees, beer drinkers, and NASCAR fans, whereas blue-state residents are more likely to be agnostics or atheists, Volvo drivers, supporters of the fine arts, chardonnay sippers, and people who sail. Scores of such contrasts have been noted in one media outlet or another" (Fiorina and Abrams, 2008, p. 567). Media organizations impact the way that people in political parties see one another, therefore, feeding into the polarization.

Political party affiliation also impacts which news sources Americans use. A *Pew Research Center* study finds that conservatives are consistently using a single news source as 47 percent of conservatives listed *Fox News* as their main political news source while liberals rely

on a greater range of outlets including *NPR* and *The New York Times* (Mitchell, Gottfried, Kiley and Matsa, 2014, p. 2). Conservatives also distrusted 28 of the 34 news sources chosen in the study while liberals trusted 28 of 34 sources.

Main Source of Government and Political News

% whose main source for news about gov't and politics is...

Total	Consistently liberal	Mostly liberal	Mixed	Mostly conservative	Consistently conservative
CNN 16%	CNN 15%	CNN 20%	CNN 20%	Fox News 31%	Fox News 47%
Fox News 14	NPR 13	Local TV 11	Local TV 16	CNN 9	Local radio 11
Local TV 10	MSNBC 12	NPR 9	Fox News 8	Local TV 6	Local TV 5
NPR 5	New York Times 10	Fox News 5	Yahoo News 7	Local radio 6	Local newspaper 3
Local radio 4	Local TV 5	MSNBC 5	Google News 6	Yahoo News 6	Google News 3

American Trends Panel (wave 1). Survey conducted March 19-April 29, 2014. Q19-Q19d. Based on web respondents. Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see About the Survey for more details). Respondents were first asked what platform (TV, radio, etc.) they most use for news about government and politics, and then were asked to name the outlet they most turn to. Up to three answers were accepted.
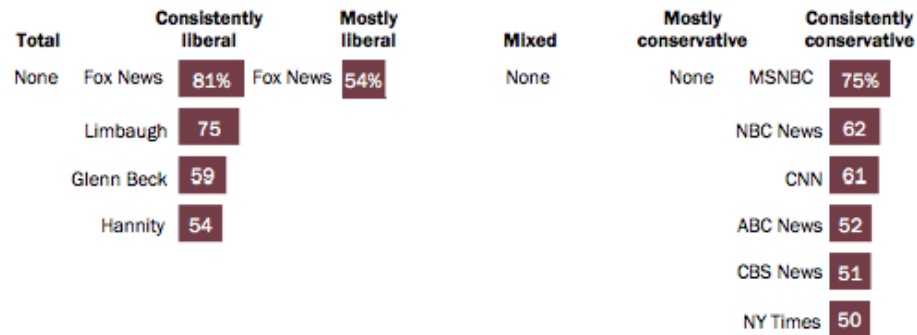
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Credit: Pew Research Center, 2014

Figure 7

However, even though liberals trusted many more outlets, the percentages of distrust among the few are high. "Fully 81 percent of consistent liberals distrust *Fox News*, and 75 percent distrust the *Rush Limbaugh Show*" (Mitchell, Gottfried, Kiley and Matsa, 2014, p. 5). The figure shown below presents the breakdown in percentages of distrust in shows based on political ideology.

Most Consistent Liberals Distrust Fox News; Consistent Conservatives MSNBC

% saying they distrust each source (sources distrusted by 50% or more shown)

Total	Consistently liberal	Mostly liberal	Mixed	Mostly conservative	Consistently conservative
None	Fox News 81%	Fox News 54%	None	None	MSNBC 75%
	Limbaugh 75				NBC News 62
	Glenn Beck 59				CNN 61
	Hannity 54				ABC News 52
					CBS News 51
					NY Times 50

American Trends Panel (wave 1). Survey conducted March 19-April 29, 2014. Q21a-Q21b. Based on web respondents. Respondents were first asked if they had heard of each outlet. For outlets they had heard of they were asked first to choose those they trusted, then to choose those they distrusted. Those not selected as either trusted or distrusted are considered neither trusted nor distrusted. See topline for full question wording. Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see about the survey).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Credit: Pew Research Center, 2014

Figure 8

When it turns to the other sources that conservatives use, they listen to local radio but after that no individual source is named by more than five percent of respondents. "Consistent conservatives, then, are both united around a single source in a way no other ideological group is, and when they turn to other sources, they opt for those not consumed by many others" (Mitchell, Gottfried, Kiley and Matsa, 2014, p. 21). Consistent liberals look at a wider variety of sources for political news. "Ten of the 37 sources (local television was included in this consumption measure) were used by at least a third of [consistent liberals] for news about government and politics in the past week; by comparison, only five sources were used by a third or more of consistent conservatives in the past week" (Mitchell, Gottfried, Kiley and Matsa, 2014, p. 21).

Another issue of political party affiliation can be shown through echo chambers and filter bubbles within the sources chosen. A study on ideological isolation through web searching found that "individuals generally read publications that are ideologically quite similar, and moreover,

users that regularly read partisan articles are almost exclusively exposed to only one side of the political spectrum. In this sense, many - indeed nearly all - users exist in so-called echo chambers" (Flaxman, Goel and Rao, 2016, p. 317). Flaxman, Goel and Rao went on to show that extreme ideological sites are not impacting news consumption and that mainstream news, such as *The New York Times* and *Fox News* are dominating partisan news coverage.

This section demonstrates how political party affiliation and media are interlaced and affect and are affected by each other. Political party affiliation is not only shaping public opinion on the issues but also about which news organizations to trust. As said in articles by Tetteh and King and Potrykus, *MSNBC* and *Fox News*, along with liberal and conservative newspapers, have different tones and frames. Political party affiliation runs throughout the entire argument as it affects who people trust, which affects how much they trust the information coming from certain sources. Because of this, journalists' frames work based on the political party they are intended to affect.

Limitations

Due to the focused nature of this paper, there is limited research to be found. The research available can be used to find connections, but it is not sufficient enough to create any causal claims. Secondly, the time frame looked at in the paper is too recent for significant scholarly work to have been produced. This makes the conclusion less concrete.

Conclusion

In essence, while media framing has become increasingly negative in the last few years, public opinion on government responsibility for healthcare and on the ACA has become increasingly positive. However, this may have less to do with media framing in general than with political party affiliation in relation to these frames. In an aforementioned *Pew Research Center*

study, Democrats and Independents were found to have the greatest increase in favorability of the ACA, while Republicans stayed the same. The negativity in journalistic writing fits with the Republican "anti-government message," giving them no reason to fluctuate in opinion (Patterson, 2016). When viewing this through a party lens, it appears that media framing has as much to do with the viewer or listener than with the messaging in the first place. As an outsider could easily predict the news organizations viewers watched based on their political parties, it is easy to see how selective exposure plays a part in society. Just as the media frame issues, viewers only allow themselves to see certain frames. If the media use frames that are attached to the values of a certain listener or viewer through negativity, then that person is more likely to accept or reject the frames. The interconnection of media and the public is affected by both framing and political party affiliation.

When looking at why favorable Democratic and Independent opinions on the ACA and government responsibility for healthcare have increased over the last few years, it may be primarily due to media polarization. MSNBC.com in the past reported exactly what President Obama and the Democrats said about the healthcare reform bill instead of adding commentary. Additionally, liberal newspapers have given healthcare reform more prominence in placement. Since Democrats are hearing about the issue almost directly from party leaders, they may be more likely to raise their opinions of the issue. However, a study previously mentioned did find an increasing trend of articles attributing the responsibility of healthcare to individuals instead of the government (Tim, Tanner, Foster and Kim, 2015). If these are written in the negative tone of recent years, a tone that is antithetical to the Democratic platform, Democrats may reject these articles and find government responsibility for healthcare and the ACA more favorable.

When looking at an ethical standard for journalists to follow, objectivity is not enough. After years of using objectivity as the ideal with no change, it is clear that objectivity has not been significant enough to fix the problem. An ethic of care is needed. "The ethics of care not only recalibrates these concepts [of objectivity], but also, as one may say, pursues them in the effort to understand human activity, the values which are news and the facts which are newsworthy" (Camponez, 2014, p. 133). By using human connection, objectivity can be incorporated to create an even better ethical standard that respects all who have a stake in the outcome of journalism.

As media framing is correlated with public opinion, it is necessary for journalists to be cautious about the ways they write articles. Media framing isn't only disadvantageous for public opinion, but it's a threat to the trust the public places in the media and public life in general. "The press has become more assertive and judgmental, and yet it has no real accountability…Politicians are not saints, but when the balance of coverage tilts so strongly in the negative direction, the election cannot serve as it should to raise the quality of public life" (Patterson, 1993, p. 202). Elections especially are a cornerstone of our democracy. If journalists are endangering the reception of policy issues in elections, they need to find a new ethical standard. Instead of striving for the impossible ideal of objectivity, journalists should incorporate an ethic of care into every word they write. Some may believe that objectivity should be the highest ideal, but objectivity is not going to rid us of this problem of polarization. We need to recognize our biases and strive to find a place beyond. For example, "given the centrality of solidarity to the role of journalism on this view, we cannot completely separate off the work of the journalist from the event being recorded. If it is true for instance that recording the suicide is a form of dehumanizing the individual, then that is part of the event that the news organization

should be interested in" (Pech and Leibel, 2006, p. 154). Journalists cannot completely become

unbiased or unaffected by anything they write, and they also need to be aware that any action

they take has the possibility to dehumanize the subjects.

Secondly, journalists need to use empathy in their decision-making. As Pech and Leibel

wrote:

> "Deliberations on matters of whether stories are newsworthy, of whether they violate or
> promote a sense of the sort of human connectedness the organization finds important,
> these deliberations are not merely a matter of applying certain cognitive standards, for
> example, a definition or characterization of 'human solidarity.' Rather, in many cases this
> understanding is the result of a certain sensibility, being able to experience on behalf of
> others whether a certain course of action will or will not promote solidarity, or whether it
> violates our sense of human connectedness" (Pech and Leibel, 2006, p. 152).

Journalists need to connect to their own empathy and emotions when writing. They need to put

themselves in the shoes of their subjects in order to understand the power they have in writing

the narrative of someone else's story. If they are able to do so, then they can affect public

opinion in the best way.

In this climate of fake news and President Trump continuously making statements against

the media, we need guidelines to ensure an ethic of care with a focus on truth. The ethic of care

and humility allows reporters to fight for the truth while realizing the innate flaws within each

human and, correspondingly, in journalism. "Today when journalism's economic fragility

sometimes leads it to prefer clicks to conscience, it may be particularly unlovable, but reporters

maintain a fierce allegiance to its highest ideals, and this is a force with which its critics must

reckon. Professional journalism…is a 'first rough draft' of history, not the last word. But it is the

enemy of pride and pomposity and ignorance, and thereby a good friend of the American people"

(Schudson, 2017). Journalists need to be the bigger person in society and understand that it isn't

realistic to expect that every article will communicate the absolute truth each time. "Research

and experience have shown us that the public's attention to politics is sporadic at best, and now we also need to recognize that the press's capacity to communicate reliable truths is limited. The media's usual effect is not to correct problems but to exacerbate them" (Patterson, 1993, p. 182). An ethic of care would give media a reason to stop and correct their problems instead of trying to capture reality in a narrative.

Finally, journalists need to pay attention to their inclination to report negatively. "Given its traditional watchdog role, the press has great difficulty in handling the positive side of election politics. The purpose of watchdog journalism is to expose flaws; it makes no provision for constructive commentary" (Patterson, 1993, p. 203). While watchdog journalism provides a crucial service for the public, journalists don't need to focus solely on negativity; positive stories about candidates and policy issues exist and should be as much a part of the election coverage.

After combing through a range of articles, I've created a list of guidelines for the journalist of today, the journalist who accepts his or her effect on society and understands how crucial it is to represent truth through an ethic of care.

- A journalist must retract, correct and apologize for mistakes made in a timely manner (Schudson, 2017). Not only does this provide the truth to the fullest extent a journalist can ever represent, but it also ensures that the journalist humbly recognizes the inability to find the complete story from all sides of the issue and corrects it when this is shown. This also corrects the pomposity of assuming every article is always correct the first time around. In healthcare coverage, mistakes made about bills and the individual responsibility for healthcare have the potential to influence public opinion on the particular bill and who should be responsible for paying the cost of healthcare.

- A journalist must use professional ethics (Schudson, 2017). These professional ethics include accuracy, reporting on evidence that counters the story and following the story regardless of the journalist's political beliefs and the story's implications. This presents journalists with a strong pull toward fact and a reminder that they must endeavor to fight against their own existing biases. When related to healthcare coverage, journalists employed at news organizations that are widely watched by a viewer of a certain political party affiliation should not cater their coverage to the viewers but allow for contrary sources and beliefs to be a part of the story.

- A journalist must not stop at objectivity. Instead of writing a story that is balanced and includes two sides of the story, reporters must look at the story from all sides and look into the validity of the material they are given by sources in order to provide the full context. For example, Sarah Palin's incorrect statement on "death panels" needed to be fact checked by news organizations. If her statement had been left unchecked through "he said, she said" reporting, more viewers may believe her misrepresentation of the facts to be true.

- A journalist must note the tendency for negativity in election coverage. Instead of focusing solely on watchdog journalism, reporters must note the possibilities for positive stories. They shouldn't take into account the possibility that candidates will not maintain positive coverage but report it as it comes.

- A journalist must strive to recognize the humanity in every story. Instead of fighting to earn the words of a source off a technicality, journalists should understand where the source is coming from and endeavor to step into their shoes before reporting on a story. In healthcare coverage, journalists should pay attention to episodic framing, and make

sure to match their coverage with thematic framing. By using an ethic of care, journalists

need to be aware of the effect that framing has on public opinion of ACA beneficiaries

and the bill in general. Recognizing humanity also gives journalists a guideline for how

to report on vulnerable populations without dehumanizing or misrepresenting them.

Only through the guidelines listed will journalists be able to fully grasp the context of the

story, understand their own biases and provide the facts and the depth needed to usher in an

informed public. By adopting an ethic of care, journalists will have a standard to follow that will

give them greater moral insight into all issues they face. The "concept of vulnerability provides

the best anchor point for a care-based approach to journalism. For example, when dealing with

children, crime victims or people who did not seek the media spotlight or in cases where a

journalist's decisions can have a dramatic impact on one's life, care-based concerns should play

a role in the ethical decision-making process" (Vanacker and Breslin, 2006, p. 204). Through

human connection and vulnerability to others, journalists will be able to attach themselves to

their sources and the public in order to create the best work they can that values and respects

others.

The ethic of care is best summed up through Craig and Ferré: "an initial examination of

agape alongside other notions of love and compassion might suggest that agape would simply

urge journalists to pursue the best of what they have historically done—that is, speak up for

people who are ill-treated" (2006, p. 127). The journalists we hold on a pedestal are ones who

cover the horrific treatment of asylum patients, uncover government scandals, break up oil

monopolies and portray the exploitation and harsh conditions of immigrants like Nellie Bly,

Woodward and Bernstein, Ida Tarbell and Upton Sinclair. Instead of harping on irrelevant

characteristics of the horserace in an election, journalists need to take the time to cover issues

that the public needs to hear and understand the effect their reporting has on vulnerable members of our society. Journalists need to remember an ethic of care to pull out the elements of humanity that make the stories worthy of reading in the first place.

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