

US Print Media  
Representations  
of Donald Trump  
and Hillary Clinton  
during the 2016 Election



# US Print Media Representations of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton during the 2016 Election

By

Boutheina Ben Ghazlen

**Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing**



US Print Media Representations of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton  
during the 2016 Election

By Boutheina Ben Ghazlen

This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2022 by Boutheina Ben Ghazlen

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-8748-7

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-8748-9

*I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO THE MEMORY  
OF MY FATHER, IBRAHIM*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables.....	xi
List of Figures.....	xiii
Synopsis.....	xiv
Acknowledgments .....	xv
List of Abbreviations .....	xvi
General Introduction.....	1
0.1 Background to the Study.....	1
0.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
0.3 Research Questions and Hypotheses.....	4
0.4 Book Structure .....	9
Chapter One.....	10
Media Effects Concepts	
1.1 Key Concepts Defined .....	10
1.2 Framing.....	12
1.2.1 A General Background.....	12
1.2.2 Framing Effects .....	13
1.2.3 Illustrations of News Frames.....	14
1.2.4 News Frames Identification.....	15
1.2.5 A Typology of News Frames .....	18
1.2.6 The Construction and Activation of Frames.....	19
1.2.7 Reported Problems .....	21
1.3 Agenda-Setting .....	21
1.3.1 An Overview .....	21
1.3.2 The Agenda-Building Process.....	23
1.3.3 Agenda-Setters in an Election Context.....	24
1.4 Priming .....	26
1.4.1 Priming Defined .....	26
1.4.2 Media Primes Illustrated .....	27
1.5 Comparing Framing, Agenda-Setting, and Priming.....	28
1.6 Framing Political Candidates .....	31

1.6.1 News Reporting on Presidential Elections: Major Trends....	31
1.6.2 Campaign News Frames.....	33
1.7 Conclusion .....	48
Chapter Two .....	50
Evaluation in News Discourse	
2.1 Evaluation Introduced.....	50
2.1.1 Scope.....	50
2.1.2 Raison d'être .....	52
2.1.3 Complexity: Context-Dependence and Lack of Systematicity ..	53
2.2 Stance.....	55
2.2.1 Stance Defined .....	55
2.2.2 Stance Adverbials.....	56
2.2.3 Stance Across Registers .....	57
2.3 Bednarek's Parameter-Based Approach .....	58
2.3.1 Major Rationale.....	59
2.3.2 Core Evaluative Parameters .....	59
2.3.3 Peripheral Evaluative Parameters.....	62
2.4 Appraisal.....	65
2.4.1 Defining Appraisal .....	65
2.4.2 Attitude: Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation.....	66
2.4.3 Engagement and Graduation .....	73
2.4.4 Inscribed vs. Invoked Appraisal .....	84
2.5 The Adopted News Actors' Evaluation Model.....	85
2.6 Conclusion .....	90
Chapter Three .....	92
A Corpus Linguistics Perspective: Collocations	
3.1 Linguistics in the Digital Age .....	92
3.2 The Concept of Collocation.....	94
Chapter Four.....	97
The 2016 U.S. Election	
4.1 A Brief Overview.....	97
4.2 U.S. Mainstream Media Coverage.....	98
4.2.1 Media and Manipulation: A Long History .....	98
4.2.2 A Changing Media Landscape in the U.S. ....	100
4.2.3 A Biased Coverage of Donald Trump.....	102
4.2.4 Clinton as the Prime Victim of Media Bias.....	104
4.2.5 Publications in Focus.....	107
4.3 An Unexpected Victory .....	109
4.4 Conclusion .....	111



Chapter Five .....	112
The Study .....	
5.1 The Corpus.....	112
5.1.1 Corpus Collection.....	112
5.1.2 Corpus Description.....	114
5.2 Content Analysis: A Methodological Framework .....	117
5.3 The Analytical Procedure.....	118
5.3.1 The Annotation Process.....	118
5.3.2 The Collocational Analysis .....	135
5.3.3 Candidate Salience .....	137
5.4 Conclusion .....	138
Chapter Six .....	139
Findings and Discussion .....	
6.1 Candidates' Representation Strategies .....	139
6.1.1 The News Framing of Trump and Clinton .....	139
6.1.2 Appraising Trump and Clinton: The Attitude Subsystem ..	171
6.1.3 The Collocational Analysis .....	201
6.1.4 Conclusion.....	209
6.2 Political Stance in Newspapers' Representations of the Candidates .....	210
6.2.1 The Valence of Candidates' Representations .....	210
6.2.2 The Explicitness of Candidate Evaluations .....	213
6.2.3 Engaging with Candidate Evaluations.....	215
6.2.4 Grading Candidate Evaluations.....	225
6.2.5 Candidate Salience .....	232
6.2.6 Conclusion.....	236
6.3 Conclusion .....	237
Chapter Seven.....	238
General Conclusion .....	
7.1 Major Findings.....	238
7.2 Implications .....	242
Bibliography .....	244
Appendix A: List of the Selected Editorials .....	275
Appendix B.1: The Frames Annotation Scheme .....	281
Appendix B.2: The Appraisal Annotation Scheme.....	282

Appendix C: The Validation Test.....	283
Appendix D.1: Illustrations of the Horse Race Frame.....	293
Appendix D.2: Illustrations of the Issue Frame .....	296
Appendix D.3: The Issue Frame Realized Through a ‘Dominant Lexical Field’ .....	300
Appendix D.4: Illustrations of the Scandal Frame.....	302
Appendix E.1: Illustrations of the Linguistic Realizations of Affect Evaluations .....	305
Appendix E.2: Illustrations of the Linguistic Realizations of Judgment Evaluations .....	309
Appendix E.3: Illustrations of the Linguistic Realizations of Appreciation Evaluations .....	315
Appendix F.1: T-Score Ordered Collocates of DONALD TRUMP .....	319
Appendix F.2: T-Score Ordered Collocates of HILLARY CLINTON ..	336
Appendix F.3: T-Score Ordered Collocates of CLINTON.....	352
Appendix G.1: KWIC Concordances for a Sample of DONALD TRUMP Collocates .....	354
Appendix G.2: KWIC Concordances for a Sample of HILLARY CLINTON Collocates.....	362
Appendix H: Illustrations of Engagement Resources .....	371

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1</b> Affect Types .....	68
<b>Table 2</b> Judgment Subcategories.....	69
<b>Table 3</b> Appreciation Subcategories .....	71
<b>Table 4</b> Equivalence between Appraisal and Bednarek's Theory.....	87
<b>Table 5</b> Size of the Newspaper Corpus .....	114
<b>Table 6</b> A Random Sample of 160 Editorials through Systematic Sampling .....	115
<b>Table 7</b> Size of the Editorial Mini-Corpus.....	116
<b>Table 8</b> Selected Framing Devices: Types, Definitions, and Illustrations.....	124
<b>Table 9</b> Kappa Values and their Respective Strength of Agreement .....	133
<b>Table 10</b> Distribution of Frames in the Trump and Clinton ESCs .....	140
<b>Table 11</b> Distribution of Frame Realizations across the Selected Frames.....	144
<b>Table 12</b> Distribution of the Age Subframe in the Trump and Clinton ESCs .....	145
<b>Table 13</b> Distribution of the Gender Subframe in the Trump and Clinton ESCs .....	149
<b>Table 14</b> Distribution of the Horse Race Frame in the Trump and Clinton ESCs.....	154
<b>Table 15</b> Distribution of the Issue Frame in the Trump and Clinton ESCs .....	156
<b>Table 16</b> Distribution of the Image Frame in the Trump and Clinton ESCs .....	161
<b>Table 17</b> Distribution of the Scandal Frame in the Trump and Clinton ESCs .....	165
<b>Table 18</b> Distribution of Frames across Right- and Left-leaning Newspapers.....	168
<b>Table 19</b> Distribution of Attitude Evaluations in the Trump and Clinton ESCs .....	173
<b>Table 20</b> Distribution of Attitude Evaluations across Right- and Left- Leaning Newspapers.....	176
<b>Table 21</b> Distribution of Affect Evaluations in the Trump and Clinton ESCs .....	177
<b>Table 22</b> Distribution of Affect Evaluations across Right- and Left- Leaning Newspapers.....	181

<b>Table 23</b> Conceptual Realizations of Affect Evaluations in the Editorial mini-corpus .....	182
<b>Table 24</b> Distribution of Judgment Evaluations in the Trump and Clinton ESCs .....	185
<b>Table 25</b> Distribution of Judgment Evaluations across Right- and Left-Leaning Newspapers.....	189
<b>Table 26</b> Conceptual Realizations of Judgment Evaluations in the Editorial mini-corpus .....	190
<b>Table 27</b> Distribution of Appreciation Evaluations in the Trump and Clinton ESCs.....	192
<b>Table 28</b> Distribution of Appreciation Evaluations across Right- and Left-Leaning Newspapers .....	197
<b>Table 29</b> Conceptual Realizations of Appreciation Evaluations in the Editorial mini-corpus .....	198
<b>Table 30</b> Valence of Candidates' Representations in Right-Leaning Newspapers .....	211
<b>Table 31</b> Valence of Candidates' Representations in Left-Leaning Newspapers.....	212
<b>Table 32</b> Explicitness of Candidate Evaluations in Right-Leaning Newspapers.....	214
<b>Table 33</b> Explicitness of Candidate Evaluations in Left-Leaning Newspapers.....	214
<b>Table 34</b> Engagement Resources Used with Candidate Evaluations in Right-wing Newspapers.....	218
<b>Table 35</b> Engagement Resources Used with Candidate Evaluations in Left-wing Newspapers.....	220
<b>Table 36</b> Journalistic Engagement with the Candidate Voice in Right- and Left-Leaning Newspapers .....	223
<b>Table 37</b> Grading Positive Candidate Evaluations in Left- and Right-Leaning Newspapers.....	229
<b>Table 38</b> Grading Negative Candidate Evaluations in Left- and Right-Leaning Newspapers.....	230
<b>Table 39</b> Amount of Candidate Coverage in Right- and Left-Leaning Newspapers.....	234
<b>Table 40</b> Candidate Mention in Headline in Right- and Left-Leaning Newspapers.....	234

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 1</b> Modes of Attribution.....	80
<b>Figure 2</b> The Subsystem of Graduation .....	83
<b>Figure 3</b> Collected Data and Analysis Methods .....	117
<b>Figure 4</b> Annotation Layers of the Editorial Mini-Corpus.....	120
<b>Figure 5</b> Intercoder Reliability Results by <i>ReCal2</i> .....	134
<b>Figure 6</b> Collocation Extraction Using <i>AntConc 3.4.4</i> .....	136
<b>Figure 7</b> Frequencies of Frame Realizations in the Editorial Mini-Corpus.....	142
<b>Figure 8</b> Coverage Tone of the Four Most Frequent Policy Issues in the Trump ESC .....	158
<b>Figure 9</b> Coverage Tone of the Four Most Frequent Policy Issues in the Clinton ESC .....	159
<b>Figure 10</b> Distribution of Frames in the Trump and Clinton ESCs .....	169
<b>Figure 11</b> Coverage Tone of Frames in the Trump ESC .....	170
<b>Figure 12</b> Coverage Tone of Frames in the Clinton ESC .....	171
<b>Figure 13</b> Polarity of Attitude Evaluations in the Trump ESC .....	174
<b>Figure 14</b> Polarity of Attitude Evaluations in the Clinton ESC .....	174
<b>Figure 15</b> Polarity of Affect Evaluations in the Trump ESC .....	180
<b>Figure 16</b> Polarity of Affect Evaluations in the Clinton ESC.....	180
<b>Figure 17</b> Polarity of Judgment Evaluations in the Trump ESC.....	187
<b>Figure 18</b> Polarity of Judgment Evaluations in the Clinton ESC.....	187
<b>Figure 19</b> Polarity of Appreciation Evaluations in the Trump ESC .....	194
<b>Figure 20</b> Polarity of Appreciation Evaluations in the Clinton ESC .....	195
<b>Figure 21</b> Framing- and Appraisal-Related Collocates of ‘Donald Trump’ and ‘Hillary Clinton’ .....	208

## SYNOPSIS

Against a backdrop of a heated debate over the purportedly biased media coverage of the 2016 U.S. election and an unprecedented collective editorial rebuke of a presidential front-runner, this book investigates U.S. print media representations of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in this race. This exploration has been undertaken through (i) annotating news frames and appraisal resources used to report on the candidates in a mini-corpus of 160 editorials, (ii) mapping all word combinations that include their names in a 32-million-word newspaper corpus, and (iii) measuring the degree of their salience in the print news media coverage of the race. This research thus rests on a theoretical synergy between the frameworks of appraisal, framing, and agenda-setting. Equally important, the integration of qualitative and quantitative research methods in this study allowed the automatic processing of a sizeable newspaper corpus, thereby boosting the generalizability of a number of results yielded by the manual annotation of the editorial mini-corpus. The data was compiled from left-leaning (*The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*) and right-leaning (*The Las Vegas Review-Journal* and *The Florida Times-Union*) newspapers, with a view to representing the entire political spectrum in the United States. The findings revealed that (a) the constructions of Trump and Clinton in the selected publications displayed substantial differences in terms of both the framing and appraisal strategies used, (b) most of these depiction patterns emerged—via collocates—across a larger corpus, and (c) the most salient manifestation of political stance in the collected data related to the valence of candidates' representations. This book concludes that discrepancies in the American press portrayals of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election are essentially motivated by partisanship, journalistic norms, candidate-related attributes, and the unfolding global changes.

**Keywords:** 2016 U.S. election, Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, media representations, political stance, appraisal, framing, agenda-setting, collocations

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I am deeply indebted to Professor Mounir Triki (Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Sfax) whose relentless support and constructive feedback made the completion of this research project possible.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Akila Sellami Baklouti (Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Sfax) for her invaluable advice and guidance in the early stages of this research.

I would like to warmly thank Dr. Rita Stephan (The University of Texas at Austin), Ms. Asma Hichri (High Institute of Human Sciences of Tunis), Mr. John Daniels, and Mr. Tim Shriver (U.S. diplomats) for proofreading different parts of this book and for their insightful comments and suggestions.

Heartfelt thanks are also due to Dr. Dorra Maalej (High Institute of Human Sciences of Tunis) and Ms. Rim Ben Ali (Northern Borders University) who kindly accepted to validate corpus annotation and were very cooperative throughout the process.

This book would not have been possible without the encouragement, patience, and unconditional love of my husband, Wajih, and daughters, Rawen and Ranim, to whom I am immensely grateful.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

*The Florida Times-Union* (**FTU**)

*The Las Vegas Review-Journal* (**LVRJ**)

*The New York Times* (**NYT**)

*The Washington Post* (**WP**)

Clinton Editorial Sub-Corpus (**Clinton ESC**)

Trump Editorial Sub-Corpus (**Trump ESC**)

Editorial Sub-Corpus (**ESCs**)

Donald Trump (**DT**)

Hillary Clinton (**HC**)

Research Question (**RQ**)

Research Hypothesis (**RH**)



# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## 0.1 Background to the Study

The mass media have become so pervasive in modern societies that their impact on people's lives is almost unavoidable. This social institution is, in this respect, considered a form of "contemporary communicative manipulation" (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 361). The effects of propaganda on public opinion formation, for instance, have been widely acknowledged (e.g., Herman & Chomsky, 1988). The power of the mass media resides in the fact that they "do not present reality; they 're-present' it" (Stewart et al., 2001, p. 35). Viewed from this perspective, media representations tend to be inherently subjective and potentially manipulative in that the "meaning in a representation is selected and constructed, containing value judgements already in-built" (p. 38). Equally noteworthy is that media coverage is governed by not only the values and ideologies of the dominant bloc (Fairclough, 1989), but also a set of news values that, in the words of Bell (1991) "drive the way in which news is presented" (p. 115).

News values refer to "the values by which events or facts are judged more newsworthy than others" (Bednarek, 2006a, p. 16) and their importance lies in "deciding *what* gets covered and *how* it gets covered" (p. 18, emphasis in original). Bell (1991) categorizes news values into three separate classes, namely values in news actors and events, values in the news process, and values in the news text. The first category is of high relevance to this book that sheds light on media coverage of presidential candidates and the events associated with them. The 12 news values pertaining to news actors and events are briefly outlined below:

- ❖ **Negativity:** best captured in the 'bad news is good news' axiom.
- ❖ **Recency:** reflecting 'the more recent, the better' principle.
- ❖ **Proximity:** the geographical proximity of the reported event makes it more appealing.
- ❖ **Consonance:** the more an event is compatible with journalists' preconceptions and pre-existing scripts, the more it is expected to be newsworthy.
- ❖ **Unambiguity:** the audience prefer a clear-cut news story.

- ❖ **Unexpectedness:** the novel and the rare equal the newsworthy.
- ❖ **Superlativeness:** the bigger in scale and gravity the covered event is, the more interesting it becomes.
- ❖ **Relevance:** the more impactful on people's daily lives the event is, the more they pay attention to it.
- ❖ **Personalization:** receivers are attracted by the real, something they can identify with and relate to.
- ❖ **Eliteness:** the higher in status and power the depicted news actors are, the more attention they get.
- ❖ **Attribution:** the more reliable the story's sources are, the more newsworthy the reported event is considered to be.
- ❖ **Facticity:** the more factual the story content is, the more it is likely to appeal to audiences.

Apart from dealing with a highly engaging institution like the mass media, this research addresses an equally impactful political event, the U.S. quadrennial presidential elections. With the rising trend of misinformation and political polarization in the current media environment (Hameleers & van der Meer, 2020), particularly in the United States (Faris et al., 2017), the influence that the media can exert on election campaigns has become ever more troubling.

The American presidential elections are considered to be “huge events not only for the public, news media, and polling organizations, but also for political scientists and communication scholars” (Xie et al., 2010, p. 3), given that the implications of their outcome reach far beyond the United States. In this respect, the political scientist Cas Mudde maintains that the “U.S. presidential elections are not just national elections; they are global elections, too” (Mudde, 2020, para. 1). Specifically, the 2016 election was exceptional and unprecedented. To borrow Faris et al.'s (2017) description, it was “one of the most acrimonious and unconventional races in recent history” (p. 84). Most critically, the rise of Donald Trump in this electoral race gave birth to a whole ideology known as ‘Trumpism’, founded principally on populism, anti-establishment politics, and nativism (Caulk, 2016). Hence, the uniqueness, scale, and gravity of this political event make it worthy of scholarly attention.

The U.S. media coverage of the 2016 presidential election, in particular, has been a highly debated issue. The tremendous gap between the alleged media bias against Donald Trump and the collective editorialists' rebuke of his candidacy, on the one hand, and the unexpected outcome of the election, on the other hand, unveiled some intriguingly changing realities about the role

that traditional media play in the political process during elections. Other views, however, contend that the mass media substantially contributed to Donald Trump's rise to the office of president and that he is essentially a 'media creation'. Against this highly controversial backdrop, this book undertakes a corpus-based investigation of the American print news media constructions of these two candidates, with a view to contributing to the ongoing debate.

## **0.2 Statement of the Problem**

It is worth noting, at the outset, that this research tackles the content of the American press reporting on the two front-runners in the 2016 race rather than the potential effects of this coverage on the election's outcome. Underpinning such an exploration is, nonetheless, an acknowledgment of the influence that media portrayals of political candidates can have on voters' decisions. Admittedly, this is what makes this investigation worth undertaking.

The issue of the 2016 U.S. election's media coverage has so far spurred considerable research (e.g., Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Bhatia et al., 2018; Faris et al., 2017; Lilleker et al., 2016; Patterson, 2016; Rodriguez, 2016, to name but a few). As far as the current work is concerned, it seeks originality in a number of respects. This study focuses exclusively on the American press (cf. Faris et al., 2017; Patterson, 2016), a medium that deserves more scholarly attention due to the unprecedented collective rebuke that the candidacy of a presidential nominee, Donald Trump, drew from the U.S. mainstream print media in the 2016 race. This research also intends to address this print media coverage in its totality by selecting newspapers that represent the two poles of the political spectrum in the United States. In particular, the corpus under investigation is compiled from two left-leaning publications and two right-leaning ones.

Equally important, the present work seeks to make a modest contribution to political communication research, both at the level of the theoretical approach embraced and the methodology used. Theoretically, the exploration of political actors' representations in the mass media, in this study, has been conducted through a synergy between media effects concepts (framing and agenda-setting) and a model grounded in systemic functional linguistics (appraisal). By virtue of its complementary nature, the proposed combination aims to give a fuller and richer account of the topic under consideration than would result from the application of only one of the frameworks. Methodologically, by integrating the qualitative methodology

predominant in framing and appraisal research with the quantitative methods used in corpus linguistics, this research attempts to address the challenge faced by the field of linguistics in the digital era. The incorporation of computational tools into the study of language has indeed become more pressing than ever.

This book, in this light, is situated at the intersection of a myriad of research areas, most notably political communication research, corpus linguistics, systemic functional linguistics, semantics, and pragmatics. Regarding the last two disciplines, it is worthy of note that the evaluative categories of the appraisal theory represent semantic-pragmatic dimensions in that while the classification of evaluators heavily draws on semantics, the interpretation of the evaluation act itself is chiefly rooted in pragmatics (Bednarek, 2009). The interdisciplinarity of this research is intended to provide broader and novel insights into the issue under examination. The research questions and hypotheses that will form the basis for this exploration are outlined in the subsequent section.

### **0.3 Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The major research objective of the present work is to examine the ways in which the American press constructed the images of the two front-runners, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, in the 2016 election. Specifically, based on a mini-corpus of 160 editorials, this research investigates the extent to which the selected publications represented the two candidates differently (**RQ1**), with respect to the framing (**RQ1.1**) and appraisal (**RQ1.2**) strategies used. By means of collocation extraction, the current study subsequently explores whether the representation trends yielded by the analysis of the editorial mini-corpus will emerge across a larger corpus comprising 28,428 newspaper articles (**RQ2**). The third research question addresses politically motivated variations in the publications' portrayals of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton (**RQ3**). Partisan-driven variations are investigated along five main dimensions, notably the valence (**RQ3.1**) and explicitness (**RQ3.2**) of candidate evaluations, the engagement (**RQ3.3**) and graduation (**RQ3.4**) patterns used, and candidate salience (**RQ3.5**).

Although the existence of differences in media constructions of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in the U.S. election of 2016 may seem evident, owing to the obvious divergence between these candidates in terms of personality traits, political background, policy positions, etc., this research rather aims to uncover the intensity and nature of this discrepancy in media coverage. On this account, the first research question (**RQ1**) will unveil the

frames and attitude resources along which the American press reporting on the two contenders mostly diverged. This investigation can additionally reveal that, contrary to expectations, media depictions of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton were similar on a number of grounds.

Regarding the second research question (**RQ2**), it seeks to provide more empirical evidence for the frames and attitude evaluations detected in the investigated editorials or, alternatively, highlight other emerging patterns. A collocational analysis, capable of automatically processing massive amounts of data, will thus either further validate or revisit the framing and appraisal-related findings elicited by the manual analysis of the editorial mini-corpus. The exploration, in this respect, draws on previous studies in linguistics (e.g., Baker, 2006; Gabrielatos, 2008; Gabrielatos & Baker 2008; Taylor, 2009) which integrated quantitative and qualitative approaches to text analysis in order to boost the generalizability of their findings.

Interest in examining the degree to which political stance underpinned the selected newspapers' representations of the two presidential nominees (**RQ3**) has been triggered by Faris et al. (2017) and Patterson's (2016) research, unexpectedly revealing that Clinton rather than Trump was the primary target of negative coverage by the U.S. mainstream media. The two studies investigated a variety of media sources, namely TV networks, newspapers—including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*—, and online platforms. With regard to print media, these findings are relatively surprising, given that they imply the existence of a discrepancy between U.S. newspapers' publicly announced endorsements<sup>1</sup> and their actual portrayals of the candidates. Therefore, the question naturally arises as to whether similar results would emerge if the focus of the investigation is limited to the American press.

In order to answer the research questions restated earlier, a number of research hypotheses have been generated. The research questions addressed by this book and their respective research hypotheses are as follows:

**RQ1:** To what extent did U.S. newspapers represent the two front-runners in the 2016 presidential election differently?

Two research sub-questions have been derived from RQ1:

---

<sup>1</sup> The 2016 election was characterized by a striking weight of newspaper endorsements against the Republican nominee Donald Trump.

- ❖ **RQ1.1:** Did U.S. newspapers use different **frame** types and/or coverage tones to report on the two candidates?

Given their different political profiles, policy positions, traits, and gender, it is hypothesized that Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton would be framed differently by the selected publications (**RHa**):

- ✓ **Ha0:** There is no association between the candidate in question and the type and/or coverage tone of frames used.
  - ✓ **Ha1:** There is an association between the candidate in question and the type and/or coverage tone of frames used.
- ❖ **RQ1.2:** Did U.S. newspapers use different types and/or polarity patterns of attitude categories and subcategories to **appraise** the two candidates?

Given their different political profiles, policy positions, and personalities, it is hypothesized that the two presidential front-runners in the 2016 election would be appraised differently by the selected publications. Four research hypotheses, targeting different hierarchical levels of the attitude subsystem, are generated to answer RQ1.2, namely **RHb** (attitude: affect, judgment, and appreciation), **RHc** (affect: un/happiness, in/security, dis/satisfaction, and dis/inclination), **RHd** (judgment: normality, capacity, tenacity, veracity, and propriety), and **RHe** (appreciation: reaction, composition, and social valuation):

- ✓ **Hb0:** There is no association between the appraised candidate and the type and/or polarity of the **attitude** evaluations used.
- ✓ **Hb1:** There is an association between the appraised candidate and the type and/or polarity of the attitude evaluations used.
- ✓ **Hc0:** There is no association between the appraised candidate and the type and/or polarity of the **affect** evaluations used.
- ✓ **Hc1:** There is an association between the appraised candidate and the type and/or polarity of the affect evaluations used.
- ✓ **Hd0:** There is no association between the appraised candidate and the type and/or polarity of the **judgment** evaluations used.
- ✓ **Hd1:** There is an association between the appraised candidate and the type and/or polarity of the judgment evaluations used.
- ✓ **He0:** There is no association between the appraised candidate and the type and/or polarity of the **appreciation** evaluations used.
- ✓ **He1:** There is an association between the appraised candidate and the type and/or polarity of the appreciation evaluations used.

**R.Q2:** Do the common collocates of ‘Donald Trump’ and ‘Hillary Clinton’ in a large corpus of newspaper articles reflect the representation strategies of these candidates detected in a mini-corpus of editorials?

**RQ3:** To what extent are the selected newspapers’ constructions of the candidates politically motivated?

Five research sub-questions have been derived from RQ3:

- ❖ **RQ3.1:** Does the **valence** of the attitude resources and frames deployed in the coverage of the two candidates vary according to newspapers’ political biases?

It is hypothesized that the publications under consideration would allocate their endorsed candidate a significantly more **favorable** portrayal than his/her contender, while casting the latter in an overwhelmingly **unfavorable** light (**RHf**):

- ✓ **Hf0:** There is no association between the valence of the attitude resources and frames used and the ideological orientations of the respective newspapers.
- ✓ **Hf1:** There is an association between the valence of the attitude resources and frames used and the ideological orientations of the respective newspapers.
- ❖ **RQ3.2:** Does the **explicitness** type of the attitude resources used to appraise the two candidates vary according to the selected newspapers’ political dispositions?

It is hypothesized that inscribed negative attitude and positive invocations would characterize the coverage of a non-endorsed candidate more than an endorsed one. The latter is, however, expected to be associated with more **inscribed** (explicit) positivity and **invoked** (implicit) negativity than the former (**RHg**):

- ✓ **Hg0:** There is no association between the explicitness type of the evaluations made by the selected publications regarding the candidates and their respective ideological biases.
- ✓ **Hg1:** There is an association between the explicitness type of the evaluations made by the selected publications regarding the candidates and their respective ideological biases.

- ❖ **RQ3.3:** Does the way the journalistic voice **engages** with candidate evaluations vary according to newspapers' political orientations?

It is hypothesized that the selected newspapers would **align** with the positive value positions expressed about their supported candidate as well as the negative ones targeting his/her rival. Endorsing and non-endorsing publications are also expected to show attitudinal **disalignment** with negative candidate evaluations and positive ones respectively (**RHh**):

- ✓ **Hh<sub>0</sub>:** There is no association between the way journalists engaged with candidate evaluations and the political orientations of their respective newspapers.
- ✓ **Hh<sub>1</sub>:** There is an association between the way journalists engaged with candidate evaluations and the political orientations of their respective newspapers.

- ❖ **RQ3.4:** Does newspapers' **grading** of candidate evaluations reflect their partisan biases?

It is hypothesized that endorsing newspapers would **amplify** positive candidate evaluations and **tone down** negative ones more frequently than non-endorsing publications. Up-scaled negativity and down-scaled positivity, by contrast, are expected to be more characteristic of the appraisal of an unsupported candidate than a supported one (**RHi**):

- ✓ **Hi<sub>0</sub>:** there is no association between the way in which the selected newspapers graded candidate evaluations and their partisan biases.
- ✓ **Hi<sub>1</sub>:** there is an association between the way in which the selected newspapers graded candidate evaluations and their partisan biases.

- ❖ **RQ3.5:** Does the degree of **candidate salience** in the selected U.S. newspapers' coverage vary according to party preferences?

The theoretical background underlying the above-mentioned research questions, the methodology employed to address them and the results yielded by their exploration are delineated throughout different parts of the work.



## **0.4 Book Structure**

This book consists of a General Introduction and seven chapters. The introductory part provides a general background on the theme tackled, introduces the approach adopted in dealing with it, and identifies the research questions and hypotheses to be addressed. The first four chapters are predominantly theoretical; they (i) shed light on the media effects concepts of framing and agenda-setting, with a special emphasis on the frames used in election coverage, (ii) review three prominent parameter-based frameworks of evaluation in linguistics, (iii) discuss the corpus linguistics concept of collocation, and (iv) introduce the U.S. presidential election of 2016. Chapter five is devoted to reporting the methodology pursued in the empirical investigation undertaken in the present work. It describes the collected corpus, offers an overview of the content analysis method used, and outlines the procedure followed in the qualitative and quantitative analyses conducted in this research. The following chapter reports the findings reached by this study. They encompass the differences existing in American press representations of Trump and Clinton, both as framed and appraised entities (RQ1), the possibility to boost the generalizability of these results by means of collocations (RQ2), and the presence of politically motivated variations in the selected newspapers' coverage of the candidates (RQ3). This book concludes with chapter seven that spells out the major findings and implications of the present study.

# CHAPTER ONE

## MEDIA EFFECTS CONCEPTS

Framing and the related concepts of agenda-setting and priming constitute the first theoretical framework adopted in this book to tackle the American print media portrayals of the two front-runners in the 2016 election, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. In this view, part one of the current chapter starts with defining some key concepts. Next, it proceeds to outline three media effects concepts—framing, agenda-setting, and priming—deemed crucial to the discussion of the topic under investigation. Finally, the section gives a brief account of the recurrent trends in campaign news coverage, yielding five frames that will be deployed to explore the ways in which the two candidates were framed across the collected data.

### 1.1 Key Concepts Defined

Discourse and related concepts as well as the basic trajectories in media and communication research are concisely highlighted in what follows.

**Discourse**, according to Fairclough (2003), refers to “ways of representing aspects of the world” (p. 176). Viewed from this perspective, **media discourse** is identified by media researchers (e.g., Gamson et al., 1992) as a tool representing and constructing reality rather than merely reflecting it. This construction and mediation process is believed to be the chief reason behind triggering overwhelming interest in the study of different discourse types, including **political discourse in the media**.

The intricacy of the study of political discourse in the media stems from the fact that, apart from being constructed, it is a hybrid discourse that encompasses institutional discourse, media discourse, and mediated political discourse (Fetzer & Lauerbach, 2007). By being institutional discourse, it fits into a specific institutional framework; as media discourse, it represents a special type of institutional discourse in that it addresses mass media audiences. Being a mediated political discourse, it stands at the intersection of both political and media discourses (Fetzer & Lauerbach, 2007). The study of political discourse in the media is therefore an

interdisciplinary enterprise par excellence and falls particularly within **media and communication research**.

In a broad sense, media and communication studies rest on two major pillars, media processes and media effects (Demers, 2005). As far as the current work is concerned, light is shed on the latter, given that the identification of bias in media products implies the existence of some sort of effects on public opinion. However, this study is not situated within the framework of **audience research**—also commonly referred to as **reception research**—(e.g., Entman, 2004; Liebes & Katz, 1990; Pearl et al., 1982; Shah et al., 2002) in that it does not aim to measure the potential impact of news media content on receivers. Rather, it is part of **media output studies** (e.g., Allen et al., 1997; Entman, 1991; Furnham et al., 1997; Nelson et al., 1997a) whose major objective is to analyze media content (Jensen, 2002).<sup>2</sup> Considering that the study at hand addresses a political issue, the 2016 U.S. presidential election, the focus principally falls on **political communication effects research**.

Political communication effects studies are essentially grounded in the search for how mass communication affects the public's opinions about political issues (Chong & Druckman, 2012). In this respect, the literature on political communication research chiefly consists of works that either “establish or refute the existence of effects” (Hayes et al., 2011, p. 434), echoing the maximal (e.g., Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) versus minimal (e.g., Nelson et al., 1997a) effects paradigm.

Most studies in this field explore “the extent to which certain communication-related variables (eg., exposure to political debates, the tone of news coverage about politicians ...) have effects on various outcomes (eg., evaluation of candidates running for office ... or participation in the political process)” (Hayes et al., 2011, p. 434). One notable work that stimulated a whole research array on political communication effects is McCombs and Shaw's (1972) *The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media*, introducing the concept of **agenda-setting** to the field of mass communication effects. Admittedly, the incorporation of experimentation in this domain can be traced back to Iyengar & Kinder's (1987) impactful study in which they demonstrated that, in the words of Hetherington (1996), “[b]y stressing certain issues, the media **prime** the public to evaluate office holders on the basis of that criteria” (p. 375, emphasis added). Another prominent

---

<sup>2</sup> This taxonomy of media and communication studies draws on Mallouli's (2014, p. 124) research.

contribution to the field is attributed to Iyengar (1991) who, drawing on Iyengar & Kinder (1987), “import[ed] the concept of ‘**framing**’ to mass communication research” (Chong & Druckman, 2012, p. 308, emphasis added).

It is pertinent, at this stage, to provide an overview of framing, agenda-setting, and its related concept of priming as three prominent models of cognitive media effects.

## 1.2 Framing

This section addresses framing, a media effects model, by providing a general overview of this concept, delineating its potential effects on audiences, illustrating some common news frames, and unveiling how media frames are identified, classified, produced, and activated. This part of the work ends with highlighting the problematic areas in the literature on framing.

### 1.2.1 A General Background

Framing is, according to Nelson & Oxley (1999), one of the new and unique concepts in the realm of political communication research. Evidently, much of the knowledge that the public shares about current public affairs is not being accessed directly, but rather mediated by elites (politicians, officials, journalists, etc.). Throughout this mediation process, information is being shaped, hence framed (Nelson et al., 1997b). In this line of research, framing is more precisely definable as “the process by which a communication source, such as a news organization, defines and constructs a political issue or public controversy” (Nelson et al., 1997a, p. 567). The main argument that underpins framing as a conceptual model is that “how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences” (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p.11).

There are overlapping approaches to the concept of framing across various disciplines (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). The sociological account chiefly pioneered by Erving Goffman conceives of frames as schemes of interpretation enabling individuals to “locate, perceive, and label” (Goffman, 1974, p. 21) information, in their constant struggle to “interpret their life experiences and to make sense of the world around them”, as Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007, p. 11) put it. The psychological conception of framing advanced by Minsky (1975) perceives a frame, to borrow Pan & Kosicki’s (1993) terms, as “a template or a data structure that both organizes various bits and pieces of

information and is indicated by more concrete cognitive elements” (p. 56). Both accounts discernibly stress the individual cognitive processes that come into play in the framing process (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). This cognitive perspective has spurred huge interest in framing effects research.

### **1.2.2 Framing Effects**

The concept of framing has gained heightened interest across a number of disciplines such as political science, psychology, and communication research (Nelson et al., 1997b). In a broad sense, studies on media frames have focused either on the content of framing, such as the identification of the frames utilized in news reports and stories, or on the effects of framing on audiences (De Vreese, 2005). In view of this, De Vreese (2005) puts forth that framing is a useful tool to study media content. The current work intends to take advantage of the merits of this conceptual model to content-analyze the collected data. However, the investigation of framing effects is not part of the research objectives of this book, though it can be a promising follow-up research project.

A growing body of research has focused on unveiling the dynamics of framing effects on mass audiences (Chong, 1993; Druckman, 2001; Gamson, 1992; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Entman, 1993, 2004; Iyengar, 1991; Nelson et al., 1997a, 1997b). As Chong (1993) succinctly puts it, “the essence of public opinion formation in general lies in the distillation or sorting out of frames of reference” (p. 870). In a similar vein, within the framework of framing public opinion, individuals are conceived of as puppets who are not capable of sound political interpretation (Sniderman & Theriault, 1999). This view is, however, contested by Druckman (2001) who calls into question the “evidence of unilateral elite manipulation” (p. 1045) of the public embraced by an array of research (e.g., Entman, 1993; Riker, 1986; Sniderman, 2000). He postulates that people do rather seek the guidance of elites, but critically filter frames to believe only the ones that originate from credible sources. In Druckman’s (2001) words, “source credibility appears to be a prerequisite for successful framing” (p. 1061). His work, which examined the limits of framing effects, echoes a general move in the literature on framing from a maximal-effects approach (e.g., Miller & Krosnick, 1996) to a minimal-effects perspective (e.g., Miller & Krosnick, 2000).

Framing effects lay bare the inner mechanism of the interaction between framing and news discourse. This interaction is delineated by Pan & Kosicki (1993) who contend that “the news discourse process is normally initiated

when a source stages an event .... The three players in the process (i.e. Sources, journalists, and audience members ...) all engage in the process based on their socially defined roles” (p. 57). In framing a given issue, journalists heavily rely on shared beliefs that are considered common sense by the public. These beliefs constitute fertile ground for the construction, transmission, and development of news discourse (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). In fact, audiences’ decodings of news texts operate through an interpretive activity consisting in processing these texts by filtering them according to their shared beliefs and prior knowledge, that is to say, their existing frames. Inferences are being derived and semantic meanings generated (Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983), based on these audience frames that can be broadly defined as “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals’ processing of information (Entman, 1993, p. 53). The ways in which audience frames can be influenced by media frames will be illustrated in the subsequent section.

### **1.2.3 Illustrations of News Frames**

News framing is, as defined by Entman (2004), “the process of selecting and highlighting some aspects of a perceived reality, and enhancing the salience of an interpretation and evaluation of that reality” (p. 26). By shaping a news story in an intended way, a newspaper article thus presents the kind of information that is tailored to the newspaper editorial line’s agenda (Nelson et al., 1997a). In this view, “[t]he way stories are framed can give a clue to the editorial policy and the ideology of the news writer or media outlet” (Yusha’u, 2011, p. 282). To borrow Iyengar’s (1991) example, the issue of poverty can be framed in two different ways; the first frame stresses the responsibility of the poor for their own misery, while the second puts the blame on social, economic, and political actors. Activating different frames of interpretation would evidently trigger a variety of responses from the newspaper readership.

A prominent illustrative example is the study of Nelson et al. (1997a) in which they explored how a number of American news outlets framed a public controversy, namely a rally by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in Ohio. The news networks under investigation were found to activate two dominant contrasting frames—free speech vs. disruption of public order—in their coverage of this issue. Results confirmed that participants who were exposed to news stories depicted through the lens of the free speech frame exhibited a greater degree of tolerance to the Klan group than the ones who watched the public safety stories. Nelson et al. (1997a) maintain that media frames exert influence on people’s opinions by “stressing specific values, facts, or other considerations, endowing them with greater apparent