

Generation “Undecided”: Millennial Discourses and
Media Reactions to Changing Political Behaviors

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-Copyright Page-

-Dedication-

To my parents, who fought to get me into the high-honors civics course in 9th grade.

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Abstract

Generation undecided: Millennial discourses and
media reactions to changing political behaviors

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When a generation comes of age in America, their journey to political adulthood is narrated by the media. This study explores the how the millennial generation's civic and political engagement is described by digital and televised political news. Further, through a journal analysis, a study of millennials reactions to these media discourses expands academic understanding of the relationship between the group and the news system.

A discourse analysis of 199 episodes of popular cable news programs from the 2012 Presidential Election including *Hardball*, *The Rachel Maddow Show*, *The O'Reilly Factor*, *Hannity*, *The Daily Show*, and *The Colbert Report* produced four discourses. These include: Connecting millennials to minority groups, reflecting on youth turnout and demographic shifts, describing youth and entitlements, and interviewing youth for humor.

A discourse analysis of the 2,097 most popular articles from the 2012 Presidential Election produced three discourses. These include: Referencing millennials as technologically driven, connecting millennials to minority groups through polls, and the use of humor to convey information to millennials. The digital and televised news analyses suggest that there are many perspectives used to describe the role of the millennial generation in the election and the media is divided in its approach to the group.

A discourse analysis of 1,122 journal entries collected from millennials reacting to the same digital and televised news coverage produced three discourses describing the

millennial relationship to political news. These include: Recognition of bias and framing, a challenge to the descriptions of millennial identity, and a variety of perspectives on the usefulness of humor in political news coverage. Similarly, this analysis suggests there are a variety of ways millennials describe and relate to political coverage.

Presented in this study is an expansion on Hall and Jefferson's (2007) representation model, proposing a secondary model that takes place as a generation comes of age and replaces a previous control culture. This study details the relationship between the changing contemporary American media system and the country's largest and most politically and civically engaged generation in its history, with implications for future work in political communication, media studies, and communication and technology.

Introduction

The 2008 United States Presidential election was a landmark moment in America, as the first African American President was elected to the highest office. In the days, weeks, months, and years that followed, a myriad of narratives were told about how this achievement became realized, particularly emphasizing the political, demographic, and media groups responsible. Among the groups identified as playing a role in the 2008 election, America's newest adult generation, the Millennial Generation surfaced. In a 2008 article in the *Huffington Post* written just days after President Obama's victory, Hais and Winograd offered this overview of the millennial generation and the future of American politics.

The 2008 election not only marked the election of America's first African-American president, it also saw the strong and clear political emergence of a new, large and dynamic generation and the realignment of American politics for the next 40 years. (Hais & Winograd, November 17, 2008)

While there are many names and possible birthdays of the millennial generation, it is widely accepted that members were born between 1982 and 2001. Alternatively, they have been called "Generation Y," "Generation Next," or "Generation Me" and often characterized as being digitally savvy, over-protected, and self-absorbed. Although the generation began their political and civic enthusiasm long before 2008, it wasn't until that landmark election that their potential was recognized in American culture. This was a result of the large voter turnout of the millennial generation in the 2008 Presidential election. Nearly 53% of the generation voted, making them the largest number and highest percentage voting generation in the nation's history (CIRCLE, 2010).

Despite such a strong appearance in 2008, millennial voter turnout in the 2010 midterm elections reflected a very different side of the group. Turnout dropped to just 24%, cut in half from the 2008 election (CIRCLE, 2010). As a result, the media began to view the impact of millennials on the 2008 election as a fluke, a random spike in the electorate (Fournier, April 29, 2014).

Questions about political participation then turned to 2012, where President Obama faced a re-election battle against former Republican Governor of Massachusetts, Mitt Romney. Although millennials were a large part of the 2008 campaign media coverage, prior to the 2012 election, conversations surrounding millennials were kept at a minimum. This later would be explained by some members of the media resulting from misleading polling data that ignored millennials altogether. Further, basing their predictions and coverage on the outcome of the 2010 election, media personalities reflected that following or covering the millennial generation in 2012, would be a waste of airtime and space.

However, almost instantly, these discourses about low-turnout by millennials in the 2012 election changed when it became clear that the group was once again partially responsible for the President's victory. The millennial voter turnout in 2012 reached 50%, once again demonstrating the political engagement and enthusiasm of the group. Additionally, because more millennials reached voting age in 2012, the actual number of millennials voting topped the 2008 turnout, making the 2012 millennial voters the largest voting generational group in history.

The media's reaction and coverage of the millennial generation has encompassed a metaphorical roller-coaster of emotions. Following 2008, the media deemed the group a

positive force in American politics, only to take back this evaluation in 2010, instead arguing the possible negative effects of the generation (Fournier, April 29, 2014).. This dissertation is about what happened in 2012, an examination of media coverage about millennial participation in politics and millennial reactions to this coverage.

What is proposed here is not the presence of a singular discourse surrounding the political and civic engagement of the millennial generation, but rather the presence of several different discourses. Even in the aftermath of the 2012 election with record-shattering voting numbers, the media failed to singularly recognize the group as politically engaged. Rather, the media found many ways to interpret this political participation. While some recognized this group's political engagement as a fundamental shift in the direction of America, others described the group as lazy, apathetic, and brainwashed.

It is from these many views on the millennial generation, expressed throughout the media's coverage of the 2012 election that it becomes clear the media has not yet made up its mind about the future of America's largest generational group, and for this reason they are better titled, "Generation Undecided."

Generation Undecided fits the group further when considering the way millennials reacted to the media's conceptualization of their own engagement in the 2012 election. This dissertation identifies many discourses used by millennials to explain the media's purpose, use, and accuracy in its coverage. Again, rather than invoking one view of the media, millennials in this study offer many assessments, suggesting that they too are undecided about the media. For example, millennials call the media system both

“corrupt” and “the backbone of American Society.” The variety in these terms of reference will also be explored in this study.

The way cultural groups are identified and represented in the media is critically important to the potential of these groups in the political process. The discourses in the media have effects, often on the very structure of who is able to politically participate and who is not. While these effects are not the primary concern of this dissertation, they do materialize through the investigation of the media’s discourses. For example, consider Maricopa County, Arizona.

A group of high school students in Maricopa County, Arizona began a campaign to register new voters for the upcoming 2012 election. The students’ goal was to register enough new voters to out Sheriff Joe Arpaio, the county Sheriff responsible for lowering quality of life standards at the county prisons. In the months before the election, the “Adios Arpaio” campaign registered over 30,000 new voters, specifically focused on young people. Despite this success, on Election Day, the 30,000 new voters faced significant problems and barriers to vote. Governor Jan Brewer and Arizona Secretary of State Ken Bennett used polling data to justify re-distributing voting centers around the county, significantly lengthening the lines in voting locations where the 30,000 new voters were registered. Further, the registered voting logs were not updated with many of the 30,000 new voter’s information, thus causing these individuals to have to cast a provisional ballot. This provisional ballot required the voter to return within ten days of the election to prove that they rightfully voted, otherwise the ballot would be thrown out. Because of the assumptions regarding low millennial voter turnout in the 2012 election, the 30,000 new voters faced an uphill battle to participate in the election and as many as

10,000 were turned away. In the end, Sheriff Arpaio was re-elected, despite massive protests from the “Adios Arpaio” campaign.

Investigating the discourses surrounding the millennial generation is critically important because they materialize in places like Maricopa County. They become the basis for assumptions that dictate estimated voter turnout, polling locations, and get out the vote efforts. These discourses turn into something very real, something that can greatly influence the outcome of an election.

Understanding the undecided discourses of the media and millennials is important to understanding the future of the generation and American politics. The 2012 election offers an opportunity to look at what happens when a generational group comes of age in the American political system, and how the media and American culture react to such a change.

Overview and Rationale

This dissertation looks at media coverage of the millennial generation's participation and engagement in the 2012 Presidential election. This is an important and timely topic, because millennial voter turnout in the 2012 election neared 50%, having a much larger impact than predicted by the news media (CIRCLE, 2012; Rainey, 2012). To address this discrepancy in between the predictive description of the millennial generation by the news media and the actions and political participation of the group, this dissertation looks at the relationship between the media and millennials. In an effort to understand the process by which the media's perception of millennial identity and millennial actual identity are constructed, this work analyzes discourses present in the media and the reactions of the millennial generation. The generation's use of new modes of civic engagement, citizenship, and media active-disengagement reflect the social change that the millennials bring to traditional political and civic orientations. Older generations react to these changes and the political news media amplify these reactions by creating discourses regarding the millennials based on this potential social change. Previous research has identified that there is much debate and disagreement about the positive or negative effects that social change might bring to contemporary democracy. These issues manifest themselves in questions such as: are the new forms of political, civic, and media engagement harmful or helpful to the country? These undecided questions produces social anxiety by the dominant social group (or older generations) which is likely reflected in mass media discourses. Supported by the works of Stuart Hall (1980), it is the author's belief that these media discourses surrounding the millennials' engagement in politics has influenced the relationship between the millennial generation

and the mass media. A discourse analysis identifies the views and narratives used by the media to describe the millennial generation (Hall, 1980). Then, weekly journal entries containing media reactions are collected from members of the millennial generation and analyzed to look for the ways members analyze, react, and relate. This inclusion of the millennials is an effort to understand the effects of the media discourse, as well as a means to study the rationalization and response of millennials to news coverage.

The millennial generation is one of the largest generational groups in history encompassing members born between 1982 and 2001 (Strauss & Howe, 1997). As many scholars note, the civic, political, and media engagement patterns of this generation dramatically differ from previous generational groups, especially those alive today (Zukin et al., 2006). The changes displayed by youth early in their lifespan often become dominant cultural forms in the future. As a result, it is important to look at how these changes are received by the political news media, as the media often reflect the controlling or dominant culture's views (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). Rather than waiting for the changes to occur, by studying them now we can begin to understand how social change is addressed by the media and how the media's reaction is understood by those causing the change.

In an effort to investigate this complex relationship between the media and the millennial generation, this study will have multiple parts: First, a discourse analysis of television news, second, a discourse analysis of online news, and third, an analysis of millennial journal entries. The findings of this study provide a contemporary examination of the media's construction of a generational group as well as the produced relationship between the group and said media.

Cycles of representation are known as the way the media listens to and depicts one group as being more important or more in control than others. We know that these cycles change over time, they must account for new or growing demographic groups, changes in the political and legal structure, and deviant events. However, what we do not know is how they change. The 2012 election offers us an opportunity to study how the media changes its discourses to account for a seemingly deviant event (in this case, the millennial generation voting). Traditionally, the control culture, or the group the media turns to for interpretation of events and issues has been comprised of white, older, wealthy men. However, the events of the 2012 election challenged the control this group had over the future of American politics, when it was widely accepted that African Americans, Latinos, women, and young people formed a coalition of voters to re-elect President Obama.

Because changes in control culture often take years, decades, and even centuries, it is nearly impossible to study how changes of race and gender effect the relationship between the media and control culture. However, generational dominance happens more frequently, and it would appear, much more quickly. Previous research (described in the following chapter) suggests that the millennial generation would come of age in the political system during a crisis of national and international scale. The 2012 election occurred at the center of an economic, political, and international-relations crisis (Lichtman, 2012). Therefore, studying the media and the millennial generation during the election is an important part of investigating the cycle of representation as a political group comes of age in America.

The economic crisis was detailed by Lichtman (2012) in his book *Predicting the Next President*. The Obama administration began in 2009 in a deep economic recession, with several of America's largest economic sectors struggling. These sectors included automotive, banking, and housing industries. Despite sector-saving interventions by the US Government, the President's first term was plagued with economic issues. During the 2012 campaign season, the national job growth numbers were critiqued and the center of controversy, adding to the focus the media placed on slow economic growth.

The political crisis was also described by Lichtman (2012) focusing on the legitimacy of the Obama's 2008 victory. While there was no massive re-count or Supreme Court case that challenged the numerical results from the election, questions about the President's birth certificate, nationality, and even age plagued the new President throughout the 2012 election cycle. A group of activists known as "The Birthers" advocated that the President was not being truthful about his past, and called him "the least transparent president in US history." These comments and critiques lasted through the 2012 Election Day, including a very vocal effort by Donald Trump that asked the President to release his college transcripts in return for a donation to the charity of his choice.

Finally, the international crisis, emphasized on the Fox News Network revolved around the September 11, 2012 attack of a US consulate in Benghazi, Libya. Despite high foreign policy approval ratings up until the fall before the election (resulting from the location of Osama Bin Laden and negotiation efforts with North Korea, Iran, and Afghanistan), this foreign policy issue rapidly took center stage towards the end of the election cycle. Questions following a series of press interviews, Rose Garden Address,

and debate gaffs (by Romney) followed the Obama campaign even after the election, resulting in lowered foreign policy ratings and confidence in the President.

This was the series of crises that the millennial generation came of age during. Despite massive voting turnout in the 2008 election, 2012 was the first election that more than half the generational group was old enough to vote. Thus, the 2012 election was an important moment for the participation of the group.

This study examines what happened during this election as a way to investigate the representation cycle during a moment of demographic change. As repeated throughout the media's discourses, for better or worse, millennials mattered in the 2012 election. Because of their large voting turnout and their effect on the victory of President Obama, it is important to look not only at the millennials themselves, but also the way the media interpreted this effort. In doing so, conclusions regarding who the media view as dominant and in control can be gained. It can also help to describe how the cycle of representation changes when the control culture is in flux.

To do this, several analyses will be conducted. First, television and online news will be collected to look at the discourses found within each. Particular attention will be paid to the ways discourses changed before and after the election, and how the media refer to young people or millennials. Second, journal entries will be collected from millennials asking them to respond to the same media collected from television and digital news. This will inform a series of questions posed and a critique and investigation of how traditional representation cycles fit the 2012 election. First, a review of relevant literature about media, millennials, political and civic behavior, and cycles of representation will be introduced.

Background, Research Questions, and Content Collection

Before looking at the relationship between the media and the millennials in regard to political participation and engagement, it is important to define the areas of social change that the millennials bring, as identified by previous scholarship. First, the millennial generation is explored as they relate to social change and members of other historical generational groups. Following, political and civic engagement, citizenship models, active disengagement, and extreme views on political engagement are defined. Finally, a background of discourse and language with specific attention placed on the relationship between the media's discourse and reader identity is explained.

Media Studies and Defining "Media"

In an effort to understand the complicated relationship between media representation and the millennial generation, this study is oriented within the field of media studies. Ouellette (2013) contends that media studies is less of a singular perspective and more of an "interdisciplinary field" because of the collective view that media is "dynamic and shaped through specific historical, economic and geographical contexts" (p. 1). Ultimately, these various approaches to studying the media's role and possible influence are concerned with the conditions and power relations of any given society.

Media studies developed in the 1940s when scholars placed increased attention on the historical context of the media's daily presence in everyday life (Ouellette, 2013). As the field developed, it integrated social theorists like "Foucault, Debord, McLuhan, and Postman" (p. 2). While these theorists differed in their epistemological, ontological, and methodological approaches, they were connected through a concern for media's

discourses and their presence in contemporary society. Later, the emergence of British cultural studies and the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies addressed rising concerns regarding “the contradictory meanings, pleasures, desires and uses of dominant and subcultural media culture” (p. 3). Specifically, the works of Stuart Hall (1980) described the additional focus placed on the role of audience in discursive meaning and political economy. This dissertation will draw on the works of scholars from media studies, particularly Stuart Hall’s (1980) conceptualization of the active audience.

Media studies approaches mass media as an integral part of society. Hall (1980) suggests that media are concerned with representation. “Representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully to other people” (Hall, 1980, p. 171). Media and society work together to build systems of representation which depict events, narratives, people, groups, culture, and commodified entities (Hall, 1980). These systems involve media organizations and industry practices, as well as the audience. Hall (1980) writes, “meaning depends on the relationship between things in the world – people, objects and events, real or fictional – and the conceptual system, which can operate as mental representations of them” (p. 173). Therefore, mass media is less of a commercial enterprise and more of a set of relations between representation and society (Hall, 1980). To study the media we must look at the content of the representation, as well as the system of representation as it is understood by the audience (Hall, 1980). British media educator, Buckingham (2005), poses that media studies’ importance comes from its ability to focus on “the context of social, historical, and cultural forces; seeing this in terms of simple notions of cause and effect often leads us to ignore the complexity of what we are concerned about” (p. 18). Rather

than study effects, the integration of media and audience together through representation is the focus of media studies (Buckingham, 2005).

For this project, media are explored through the systems of representation and audience first introduced by Hall. Ouellette (2013) reports that “the term mass media has lost some of its resonance in the era of 500 channels, iPods, and Facebook” (p. 9). Attempts at exploring the contemporary nature of media are plagued with concerns of scope, new technological developments, and perhaps even more importantly, the perception of obsolescence of older media technologies (Ouellette, 2013). In this study of 2012 electoral political news, the media in consideration is limited to television and online news content. While far from a study of all news media, it is limited to the two media that the millennial generation get the most political news from. This will be fully described in coming chapters.

Defining the Millennial Generation

Defining and conceptualizing the millennial generation is also challenging. While it is given many names, the millennial generation is one of the largest U.S. generational groups in history. Members are born between 1982 and 2001, the children of Baby Boomers and Generation Xer’s (Nowak et al., 2006). Conceptualized by political strategists, Strauss and Howe (1991, 1997) in several of their books, the millennial generation has the archetype of a hero who is born during a time of unraveling and before a crisis of global scale. Strauss and Howe (1997) conceptualize the archetype of a hero as group that displays high amounts of self-confidence and views technology as a force of good, but was raised during a time period of increasing protection of the “innocence of youth” (p. 19). For the millennial generation, the crisis event of millennial youth was the

terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Moreover, individuals born between 1982 and 2001 were born during a period of heavy technological development and increasing attention placed upon the proper development of the child (Broido, 2004). These technological developments include the Internet, Global Positioning Satellites, and video games (Steward & Bernhardt, 2010). Legislation on children's exposure to violence in video games, standardized testing, and helicopter parenting are all indicative of the period when the millennials were growing up (McGlynn, 2005). Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) study the helicopter parenting style exhibited by parents of millennials and found "helicopter parenting appears to be inappropriately intrusive and managing, but done out of strong parental concern for the well-being and success of the child" (p. 1186). Expanding on the concept of the helicopter parent, Hara (2004) proposes that this is a form of overprotection will result in a "generation of wimps" (p. 58).

Also during the adolescence of the millennial generation, adults started viewing children as being smarter than previous generations, although they still felt that children were far too young to protect themselves, and thus exposure to technology and media needed to be regulated (Lum, 2006). It is this period of time where concerns for the development and "final product" of the millennial generation first became a concern (Lum, 2006). Since these initial trepidations more questions emerged, such as: what will be the effect of helicopter parents and massive quantities of new technology? And as Strauss and Howe (1997) suggest, everyone has an answer, including the mass media.

Twenge (2009) examines other names for the millennial generation which include Generation Y, Generation Me, and Generation Next. As the multitude of names suggest, there is far from a consensus on how this generation will turn out (Lum, 2006). Will they

be the saviors, whose technological and parental guidance will lead the nation out of political and international troubles? Or, will they be a failure, whose reliance on technology and their parents means that as they lose sight of traditional values, roles, and priorities, they take the whole country down with them? Millennials are discussed as either totally politically engaged thus making the world a better place, or totally removed and apathetic, hurting everyone's future. One aspect of this dissertation will look at the media's take on this ongoing debate, specifically addressing the media's acceptance, rejection, or challenge of the social changes in millennial generation.

Mannheim (1952) suggests that generations are located within a prevailing "historical configuration" that requires all members have the same "basic sets of ideas" established by their experience and unique position within historical events (p. 307). Generations are social groups who are connected based on a set of unique experiences lived by an age cohort, the larger information environment, and similar perceptions of events, issues or trends (Zukin et al. 2006). Generations are also types of cultures, which require all members to share the same basic outlook to be included in the social group (Mannheim, 1952). This outlook can develop out of actual events, technological innovations, class mobility, and social change (Mannheim, 1952). Mannheim (1952) proposes that the unique configuration of these occurrences during the lifespan of the generation leads to generational identity and collective practices.

Numbering nearly 50 million young adults, the millennials are the first group born during the development of the Internet. Therefore, alternatively they are called Dot-Nets (Zukin et al., 2006). Studying the millennial generation is important due to their newness. Many researchers have noted that generations are best understood by looking at them

through a rear-view mirror; however, this is not a philosophy that guides all forms of identity production in our society. The news is one arena that conceptualizes the millennial generation almost instantaneously and sometimes even before their action on an issue. As a result, scholars cannot hesitate to study a generation out of fear that something might change during their development. Studying the news sources that conceptualize this group can lend insight into this generation as well as help to understand the relationship between the news media and the group.

According to Zukin et al. (2006), studying the millennial generation is critically important to understanding the future of political and civic engagement. The authors argue that most news sources blame the decay of political and civic engagement in contemporary society on “the replacement of older, more engaged cohorts with younger, less engaged ones” (Zukin et al., 2006, p.10). By studying the political engagement of the millennial generations, a greater understanding of new forms of engagement can be understood and recognized. This informs conversations on civic education, political perceptions, and of course, voting.

Generations and social change. Hall and Jefferson (2006) write that youth are “metaphors for social change” due to the novelty of their behaviors, their historical/cultural/social orientations, and their deviation from traditional customs (p. 10). As a result, with every new generation of youth comes social anxiety described by older generations who fear the changes reflect in the youth’s behaviors are indicative of new social norms. These new social norms replace the behaviors of the older generation, thus causing concern and social anxiety in those who favor the older practices. “Some aspects of Youth Culture were seen, portentously, as representing the worst effects of the new

‘mass culture’ –its tendency to ‘unbend the springs’ of working class action and resistance” (Hall & Jefferson, 2006, p. 12). Later, Hall and Jefferson (2006) call this social anxiety the “origins of moral panic” that swept British adults throughout the 1950s and 1960s in their reaction to youth resistance movements such as Mod, the Skinheads, and the Do-Nothings (p. 56).

However, what complicates this relationship further is the presence of the mass media, who through discourse and language, project the social anxieties of the older generations and further alienate, critique, and belittle the practices and behaviors of the youth. Hall and Jefferson (2006) reflect that in 1960s Britain, “‘youth’ was cast, not simply as the conscious agents of change, but as deliberately pushing society into anarchy: youth as the subversive minority” (p. 57). Youth became a symptom of the evils of social change and a scapegoat for the declining reverence paid to traditional political structures.

Hall and Jefferson (2006) argue that these discourses of youth, social change, and the scapegoat are still widely present in the media. However, today, it is not just youth resistance movements which are characterized in this way, it is all social change brought by new and younger generations. Today, reflecting the social anxieties of the older generations, the media projects and reflects that the millennial generation’s forms of political engagement and citizenship are dangerous to the traditional structures of democracy. Hall and Jefferson (2006) contend that these discourses and languages have specific effects on both the older and younger generations’ perceptions, which is fully explored in the coming sections.

Forms of Social Change

Political engagement. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) define political engagement as “activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action” (p. 38). Different than civic engagement, political engagement includes voting, working for a candidate or party, trying to convince someone to vote, or working to influence public policies. Alternatively, Verba and Nie (1972) define political participation as “those activities by private citizens more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take” (p. 2).

Zukin et al. (2006) conceptualize citizen engagement as made up of civic, political, public voice, and cognitive engagement indicators. In their reflection on the civic-political divide, Zukin et al. (2006) propose that an important distinction exists between political and civic engagement. While political participation refers to voting, campaigning, and working for policy change, civic engagement is “defined as organizing voluntary activity focused on problem solving and helping others” (Zukin et al., 2006, p. 7). Most importantly civic engagement is based on the effort to create a range of political and social changes, not a specific action such as voting (Bowman, 2011). The authors subscribe to a “fault line of distinction” between the two and propose that people’s engagement can be conceptualized within either side (Zukin et al., 2006, p. 7). Most people have both political and civic engagement practices, but the researchers used statistics, rather than interpretive work to place people into one of four categories: disengaged, civic specialist, dual activist, and political specialist (Zukin et al., 2006). Thus, their conclusions resulted in reinforcing the categorical approach to engagement, rather than a range. In their focus groups and survey research, participants were identified as being politically engaged based upon their answers to survey questions or

past activities. The answers to these questions provided a measurement of political engagement by which the authors could characterize both the nature of engagement and study the types of participation used by each generation.

Zukin et al. (2006) propose that the distinctions between civic and political engagement change our understanding of what it means to be involved in the democratic process. As new generations grow into young adulthood and become eligible to vote, there is a frenzy of attention paid to their political and civic practices (Wesner & Miller, 2008). This is particularly true of the millennial generation who are the first generational group to display high levels of civic engagement and low levels of political engagement (Zukin et al., 2006). Because of this change, social norms regarding the importance of voting and campaigning are challenged. Thus, the age group generates even more attention and criticism (Kahne et al., 2012). This potentially creates two sides of a debate regarding whether the new approaches to political and civic engagement will have a positive or negative effect on the nation's democratic process and success.

Citizenship models. Dalton (2009) suggests that citizenship is another form of political engagement. There are two forms of citizenship which are similarly opposed and debated: duty-based citizenship and engaged citizenship. Duty-based citizenship models are based on “what people think is expected of them as participants in the political system, along with their expectations of government and the political process” (p. 5). Dalton (2009) suggests that most political commentators, pundits, and candidates use duty-based citizenship definitions in an effort to understand the populace and political behaviors at various points in the election cycle. These behaviors include voting, campaigning, and political protest/unrest movements. However, Dalton (2009) argues

that these definitions are limited in their understanding of what it takes to be a good citizen. He instead proposes a model of engaged citizenship which reflect new norms of political performance. This new type of citizenship emphasizes the role of the citizen in social and welfare movements. Volunteerism, consumer protest, and issue-targeted reform are among the many indicators of the growing popularity of engaged citizenship. These popular forms of political participation following engaged citizenship models have influenced and created a new normal behavior pattern. The “good citizen” is no longer just someone who votes, but someone who takes a stance on various issues for ethical, moral, and cultural reasons. Dalton (2009) reflects that “duty-based norms are decreasing, especially among the young, but the norms of engaged citizenship are increasing,” suggesting that the change in generation and the activity of the country’s youngest generation may lead to a total reform in the nature and demands of citizenship (p. 5).

Further, Dalton (2009) proposes that a tension exists between the two definitions of citizenship because of the different set of norms each model suggests. Since Dalton’s (2009) research found that voting is on the decline, duty-based citizenship models and their champions suggest that “American democracy is at risk in large part because of the changing values and participation patterns of the young” (Dalton, 2009, p. 3). However, engaged citizenship models are based on the other forms of political participation, specifically volunteerism and social reform movements. Because these patterns are on the rise, engaged citizenship (and those that subscribe to the model) argue that America is flourishing with political participation, and the “state of the democracy is in good [young] hands” (p. 3, word in brackets added). Dalton (2009) concludes that these “opposing views have generated sharp debates about the vitality of our democracy” (p. 3). While

Dalton (2009) describes these debates through quantitative studies of volunteerism, protest, voting, and campaigning, he does not include a study of those actually doing the debating and generates unanswered questions such as, who supports each side of the movement? And what are their arguments for each form? Thus, he examines the two extremes of the view of the millennials in politics without actually looking at those promoting the views, such as the media. This dissertation seeks to explore the media's interpretation of the millennial generation in politics, using the concepts of duty-based citizenship and engaged citizenship. Do the media focus on one form over the other? What side of the debate do the media take? What do millennials think of this position?

Active disengagement. In her 2010 article, *Millennial encounters with mainstream television news*, Vidali argues for a range of political engagement and the form of active disengagement in the millennial generation. Her work represents a break in traditional political engagement literature because of its view of engagement as a continuum rather than a binary scale. Academics, such as Bland et al., (2012) and Little (2009) have previously studied the engagement of the millennial generation, but rather than identifying similar scales as Vidali, their findings represent a binary of total engagement or disengagement.

In addition to studying political engagement, Vidali (2010) asked millennial interviewees to characterize and describe their own engagement with political news. She found that respondents used five expressions to characterize their own engagement with this media. First, individuals who self-identify as apathetic do so by describing themselves as lazy and indifferent. Second, if they do have some news-seeking behavior, they couple it with statements regarding social pressures that "they should be more

involved” or care more. Next, happenstance consumption suggests that there are some members who do care about news and current events, but they do not actively seek it out. Fourth, some members rationalize limited news consumption by saying they do not have enough time to actively seek it out. And finally, there are some who blame the media’s bias, story overkill, manipulation, and misplaced priorities as a reason to avoid these outlets all together (p. 376). These five categories reveal that concepts of apathy and disengagement are far more segmented and diverse than previous research has identified. Foremost, these five expressions were prevalent among heavy news consumers as well as those who watched little or no news. This reinforced Vidali’s (2010) findings as millennial-centered rather than just related to the quantity of news consumption.

However, Vidali (2010) goes further to suggest that these perceptions held by millennials of their own media disengagement are actually forms of media “active disengagement,” a term borrowed from Eliasoph’s (1998) *Avoiding Politics*. Because Vidali’s (2010) interviewees explained and justified their media consumption and involvement through economic, mental labor, personal time commitments, and media expectations, she suggests that these rationalizations come from mainstream media narratives, media expectations, and constructions of audience involvement and participation.

Vidali (2010) then draws on the work of Stuart Hall (1973), implying the media projects preferred readings and points of possible engagement throughout its text. The audience then judges itself against these perfected and idealized constructions of what an audience member should be. Not only does this suggest the idealized aspects of what an

attentive audience member should be, it also implies the behaviors of a non-attentive audience member.

Millennials reject the attentive audience model suggested by the mainstream news and view their own deviance from this model (because of time, disinterest, or the media's bias) as a form of disengagement. Vidali (2010) found a number of reasons why millennials believe they deviate from the idealized media viewer. First, they completely reject the possibility of anyone being interested in all aspects of news. Second, they disapprove and dislike over-hyped news stories and the constant goal of media to "break the story first" (p. 380). Next, the 24-hour news cycle and sensationalist headlining prevent "rational, responsible, relevant and true information" from being presented in the news (p. 380). Finally, Vidali's interviewees suggested that the news put an unfair emotional burden on the listener and consumer. This is because the emotional extremes are overwhelming and prevent the audience from keeping up with the constant news cycle.

Vidali's (2010) findings importantly show that the concepts of millennial apathy and disengagement towards mainstream news media and politics are layered and multifaceted. She acknowledges that many scholars believe there is a "pervasive and perhaps even unprecedented, culture of political apathy among youth adults in the US" (p. 372). However, rather than accepting a binary model of disengagement and engagement, Vidali's (2010) research supports a range of involvement with various justifications. The self-identification of millennial engagement with the media is heavily arbitrated by the media's semiotic requirements and expectations of the ideal user and citizen (Vidali, 2010). Vidali (2010) concludes,

Significantly, many of the stances that people take as disengaged—or at least how this emerges in their discourse in the context of peer conversation groups and interviews—are articulated within a media and communication ideology frame that presupposes that genuine communication is taking place, or could take place, or should take place in the genre of newscasting (p. 385).

Through self-reflexivity, millennials state that they are disengaged, however their explanations at the root of this disengagement propose something very different. Instead, this act of self-reflexivity shows a generation that is involved through active disengagement.

Importantly, the recognition of bias by different age groups remains an inconclusive and relatively unstudied area of research. While there are many studies exploring and advocating that millennials struggle to recognize bias in news reporting (and other's like Vidali's who suggests otherwise), there remains little research on other age groups.

New forms of political engagement. Vidali's (2010) work stands alone in its interpretation of millennial engagement as pluralistic and multifaceted. Most of the scholarly work on the subject polarizes to two extremes. In her opening paragraphs, Vidali (2010) states that scholars adamantly find evidence to support models of total engagement and total disengagement, but rarely do they study the “space between the poles” (p. 372). Huntley (2006), Montgomery (2007), and Winograd and Hais (2011), all suggest that to understand youth political activity, we must look beyond statistical findings on voter turnout and instead focus on the context of new forms of political engagement. These researchers support Vidali's (2010) initial findings that millennial participation (in whatever form it takes) looks, sounds, and acts differently than traditional measures of voter turnout and party affiliation. Similar to Dalton's (2009)

findings, Winograd and Hais (2011) argue that political engagement in the millennial generation needs to be looked at contextually, not just statistically. As in the case of the 2004 and 2006 elections, millennials may not have showed up in the national polls to support all candidates, but they did participate in other ways. Volunteerism, online campaigning, and local policy advocacy reached all-time highs since the millennials entered young adulthood (Huntley, 2006). These facets of political participation are often overshadowed by the perception of a decline of voting, but authors such as Huntley (2006), Montgomery (2007), and Winograd and Hais (2011) suggest these forms instead represent a new type of engagement, one which is still developing.

However, these total engagement findings are countered by researchers who suggest the lack of national political participation and voting are reflective of a critical decline in overall engagement. Mindich (2005), Twenge (2006), and Bauerlein (2009) propose that the millennials are totally politically disengaged. Their studies provide a number of reasons for this disengagement, such as lack of education, low amounts of news consumption, and the desire to be different (Mindich, 2005; Twenge, 2006; Bauerlein, 2009). This results in a group that does not vote, not only because they are apathetic, but because they don't see the point (Twenge, 2006). This group of scholars shows the needed connection between news consumption and political activity (Mindich, 2005; Twenge, 2006; Bauerlein, 2009). As Mindich (2005) points out, when a group, like the millennials, do not watch the news, they do not know what to aim for politically. It is not just the content that they miss, but the purpose for political engagement, such as protecting the First Amendment. Differently, Marchi (2012) findings suggest that media exposure also influences perceptions of civic engagement practices. In her experiment,

millennials who watch above average amounts of television and digital news were more likely to feel like civic participation efforts were effective (Marchi, 2012). Vidali (2010) supports the idea that the millennials do not watch the news (and her findings indicate five reasons for this), but she differs from Mindich (2005), and agrees with Marchi (2012) in what effect she believes this has on the generation. Whereas Mindich (2005), Twenge (2006), and Bauerlein (2009) all suggest that this lack of news consumption leads to being uninformed and politically apathetic, Vidali (2010) says the group is reflexive enough to understand the negative implications. Vidali (2010) takes the studies of Mindich (2005), Twenge (2006), and Bauerlein (2009) further, and adds that the self-reflexive nature of the millennial generation makes the group actively disengaged, different than the disengagement defined by these three researchers. Barthel's (2013) work supports Vidali's (2010) argument, and adds that narrowly targeted media messages about the political process or election (like those that commonly appear in the news) encourage self-reflexivity, political education, and youth civic engagement.

This dissertation seeks to add to conversations on the nature of political engagement by looking at how the media conceptualizes the 2012 election and the involvement of millennials. While there are numerous studies, such as the ones above, investigating how the millennial generation is participating, this research will look at what the media says the generation is doing through the discourses and language present in online and television broadcasts.

Discourse, Language, and Positions

Discourse is defined by Philips and Hardy (2002) as “an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception that brings an object

into being” (p. 3). The stories and content of mass media can be seen as such an interrelated set of texts. Ouellette (2013) and media studies theorists contend that social reality is produced in part by these mass media discourses and constructed based on the perceptions gained by individuals, groups, and larger society. As a result, the discourses set forth by the media are critical in the public’s knowledge and understanding of an issue.

The goals of discourse analysis include an understanding of both the content and the context of a body of texts in an effort to look for a relationship between the discourse and larger society. Altheide (1996) suggests that “context, or the social situations surrounding the document in question, must be understood to grasp the significance of the document itself, even independently of the content in the document” (p. 4).

Studying discourse is important in our understanding of the millennial generation because discourses begin to create and project meaning of issues, events, and people. Anderson (2012) states that a poststructuralist critique of content and traditional textual analysis is that it lives within a vacuum and fails to relate the findings to the wider context “within which the text is created and received” (p. 343). The text has to be positioned within the wider historical, social, cultural, political, and economic patterns existing. This is how meaning is produced when receivers of a text read or interpret a discourse. Thus, as researchers, we too must look at the context to understand the way a group interprets a set of texts.

Hall et. al. (1980) suggest that the media are viewed as a type of text that is created by producers. These texts have preferred readings to them (the text and the audience), and when decoded by the audience, they prescribe what it means to be a

normal audience member (Hall et. al., 1980). These texts suggest that the normal audience member is constantly engaged with the media's content by watching and acting upon the information received during each telecast. The television media use phrases such as "we're glad you could join us today" that suggest a co-presence between the media and the viewer. This further reinforces the impression that a normal audience member is in a relationship with the program and its content.

Vidali's (2010) research suggests that the millennial generation understands what these texts imply are expected behaviors of the audience as defined for an older generation. Not only do her interviewees understand what the media expects them to do, they conclude that they cannot or will not live up to the standards or expectations of these media discourses. Vidali's (2010) finding that the millennial generation does interpret political news (if only to reject it) lends insight into the identity formation of a generation. Hall (1980) argues that through the process of making-meaning or consuming a media text, the content and context of that discourse is thus interpreted again and incorporated into practices (p. 52). Discourses have effects, and as Hall (1980) argues, quite strong ones. The media produces the discourse, and the public consumes it. Even when the audience later states that they have rejected the message of the discourse, it still has effects due to the decoding or meaning-making process.

The media constructs the discourses and messages of the news through a process of framing. Defined by Entman (1993), "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). McCombs (2004) declared frames a

part of second-level agenda setting, arguing that because the news media exert control and choice over the content and presentation of news, individual frames are a part of a larger institutionalized pattern of coverage. Any issue, event, or social group is subject to framing by the news media (McCombs, 2004). The discourses used to describe these topics result from the larger frames and agenda of the news organization.

Similarly, positioning theory of Davies and Harré (1990) allows researchers to ask, what is the position of a group as projected by the media? As opposed to role theories that imply a static and singular role of a group in a society, position theory allows for flexibility in an analysis of “what position does the media imply or place a social group” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 50). Luberda (2000) furthers the body of theory and relates the concepts to political engagement. “Extended into the social realm, the language is similarly applied; given an upcoming election, we inquire after candidates' positions on various issues; we discuss our own take on a particular position” (Luberda, 2000, para. 5). Similarly, media positions generalized social groups in what they perceive their take on a particular issue will be. Through its discourse, media project representations of a group like the millennial generation into positions relative to political topics, events, or issues. The representations of these positions presented by the media are interpreted by the millennial audience. Therefore, to study the relationship between the millennials and political news media, a consideration of the media's positioning on the generation is important.

Discourse and the Process of Identity

Based on Hall's (1980) work, the self-reflexive and media-defiant nature of the millennial generation perhaps is further entangled in a battle of meaning-making and

identity formation. According to Hall and Jefferson (2006), the media act as both a producer and reproducer of dominant culture, behavior, and norms of engagement. Deviation is identified because of its juxtaposition against dominant culture. Spurgeon (2012) found that the civic engagement and political disengagement of the millennial generation is viewed as deviant, different, and new because of the “control” behaviors of previous generations where political engagement was high, and civic engagement was low. Other generations, such as Generation X place a high priority on voting (political engagement), but not on volunteering (civic engagement) (Zukin et al., 2006). Thus, one option is that the behaviors of previous generations are viewed as the “control culture” and the behaviors of the millennial generation are viewed as “deviant” (Spurgeon, 2012). Control culture is often viewed as the more powerful form of identity in society because of its acceptance by the media as dominant and thus for its ability to alter and drive media discourses (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). The alternative to this depiction of the millennials as deviant is the possibility that the millennials are recognized by the media as dominant and the control culture and the older generations are the deviants (Spurgeon, 2012). This uncertainty as to who is the control culture and who is the deviant group will be examined in the discourse analysis of the media’s content, thus informing political news media’s structuration of society.

This deviance is then translated by the media in the act of production, where a deviant group is recognized by the media because of its difference against the control culture (see Figure A). Hall defines the media as “the means of global communication, by complex technologies, which circulates meanings between different cultures” (Hall, 1997, p. 3). The media can transform and represent the event through their use of

discourse and language in an effort to connect with the perceived audience (Hall, 1997). Through this process, the media appear to be “operating independently of the primary definers” or control culture, even though it was the control culture that first raised awareness of the defectors to the media (Hall & Jefferson, 2006, p. 61). The media thus produces the identity of the deviant group through the development of discourse and language used to describe them (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). The control culture then reproduces this language and discourse in an effort to reaffirm their own correct and dominant behaviors and establish distance between their social identity and that of the deviant (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). Finally, the media reproduces the language and discourses now being used by the control culture to distinguish between itself and the deviant group through its continued use of such language and discourses in its coverage (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). Hall and Jefferson (2006) summarize this process:

Once the media have spoken their voice, on behalf of the inaudible public, the primary definers can then use the media’s statements and claims as legitimations (magically, without any visible connection) for their actions and statements, by claiming press- and via the press, public- support. In turn, the ever attentive media reproduce the control culture statements, thus completing the magical circle, with such effect that is no longer possible to tell who first began the process; each legitimates the other in turn. (p. 61).

Importantly, Hall and Jefferson (2006) suggest that media’s effects lie in the viewer’s ability to decode the messages produced (or reproduced) and incorporate the language and discourses into identity. If, as Hall and Jefferson (2006) posit, the older generations are projected as the control culture, they can then use the media to legitimize their “correct” forms of political engagement and citizenship and reaffirm their conceptualization of the millennials as deviant and potentially harmful to society. Hall

and Jefferson (2006) propose that youth is often a “metaphor for social change,” a change which generates social anxiety in older generations who focus on the eroding of traditional landmarks, sacred order, and institutions of traditional society (p. 56). The media thus confirm these social anxieties because of its reproductions of the control cultures language and discourses. The control culture also confirms the media’s perception, discourse, and language because of its adoption of these ideas, thus the media too are legitimized by the control culture.

However, it is not just the control or dominant culture that decodes the media’s discourse and language; the powerless, or the deviant group similarly must place the media in relation to its own identity (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). The millennial generation would then use a range of reactions that fit into three decoding categories: operating inside the dominant code, applying a negotiable code, or substituting an oppositional code (Griffin, 2011).

First, the millennials can decode the media’s messages and operate inside the dominant code. Griffin (2011) suggests the first reaction of the millennials could be to accept the messages of the media as reflecting reality and begin to believe that their forms of civic engagement and political engagement are exactly as the media describes them. Thus, the millennials will also incorporate the language and discourses used by the media into their own lexicon and identity. Alternatively, the millennials could also apply a negotiable code. “The audience assimilates the leading ideology in general, but opposes its application in specific cases” (Griffin, 2011, p. 351). This suggests that the millennials could accept that their forms of engagement are new and different but oppose the assumption that these forms of engagement or citizenship are harmful or destructive to

society and democracy. Finally, through substituting an oppositional code the audience can “see through the establishment bias in the media presentation and mount(s) and organized effort to demythologize the news” (Griffin, 2011, p. 351). Through this third option, the millennial generation can attempt to change the discourse and language used by the media through social protest, unrest, and outward critique of the media’s messages. While Hall and Jefferson (2006) say that many social groups have attempted such changes in the past, only one campaign (“Black is Beautiful”) has ever successfully accomplished such a change in media discourse and language (Hall, 1985). However, Hall (1997) also proposes that such change is not always the goal. Success can be found in exposing the media’s structuring of society and the media’s role in daily life without changing it. This effort is successful when it leads to people in the control culture beginning to critique the messages of the media and seeking other sources for information on the deviant group.

Each of these three decoding categories reflects different relationships with the media. If the millennial generation “operates inside the dominant code,” then media has the strongest effect on group identity and self-perception. By modifying their self-ideology to match that of the media’s, media exerts control over the group. Hall (1997) proposes that through the process of discursive formation, if the media is successful at exerting influence over the millennials on this topic, they will likely be able to do so on other topics as well.

However, if the millennial generation “applies a negotiable code,” the group begins its critique of the discourse and language used by the media, giving the media less influence (Hall, 1997). Although in this decoding option the group is still influenced by

the media, the critique levied at the application aspect of the discourse and language suggests a heightened attention to the bias of the media as well as the awareness that the media does not accurately reflect reality. While the media may still have an effect on the group, it is not as strong as in the “operating inside the dominant code” option. This influence, primarily lies in the generation use of the language set forth by the media, even if it is being used to critique or oppose.

Finally, if the millennial generation engages in “substituting an oppositional code,” the media will exert the least amount of influence over the generation (Griffin, 2012). Because this requires the generation to organize and actively critique the media, the generation outwardly rejects the identity laid out by the media and instead proposes their own discourse and language. Again, through discursive formation, it is likely that if the generation is “substituting an oppositional code” on this issue, and potentially others. Thus, although the media still has an effect due to its presence and the generation’s decoding of the messages, it is a much weaker effect. Through a discourse analysis of journal reactions by the millennial generation to specific news stories, these three decoding options can be identified based on the acceptance, use, critique, or substitution reflected within. Thus, the second half of this study will look at the millennials’ reactions to the discourses present in the political news media to identify the three decoding options. Using these three decoding options from Hall and Jefferson’s (2006) work, we can see how members of the millennial generation respond to these discourses.

Other scholars have also studied the reactions and relationship between the media and whom it describes as deviant. Reid-Brinkley (2012) proposes that when a group believes it is being misrepresented in the media, they begin to view the media as a biased

source, using their own misrepresentation as evidence of faulty reporting and errors. This is also supported by Kelly's (2006) work, that argues these groups view their misrepresentation as a product of a biased media environment.

The media constantly defines and conceptualizes the millennial generation in their discussion of voter turnout, political participation, and elections. In doing so, it is clear that their definitions of the group have not gone unnoticed. Even if the groups reject the news media for the reasons Vidali (2010) states, according to Hall's (1997) work, the media still has an effect. By first studying the discourse, and asking the generation to react to the discourse, this relationship can be further analyzed.

Research Questions

Discourse Analysis of Political News Media (Definitions can be found in Table A)

1. What *discourses* are present in media (television and Internet news articles) coverage of the millennials in the 2012 election?
2. How are *civic* and *political engagement* addressed by media (television and Internet news articles)?
3. How are *duty-based citizenship* and *engaged citizenship* models addressed by media (television and Internet news articles)?
4. How do media (television and Internet news articles) refer to the group as *disengaged*, *actively disengaged*, or *totally engaged*?
5. Based on the discourses present, what perspective is used to describe the millennial generation's involvement in the 2012 campaign?

Discourse Analysis of Journal Reactions (Definitions can be found in Table B)

6. How does the millennial generation react to the discourses present in political news media?
7. How does the millennial generation accept, reject, or negotiate the discourses of the news and what do they use to justify their reactions?

These answers will be addressed and investigated through an analysis of online and television news media and millennial journal entries collected during the 2012 election news cycle.

Studying the 2012 Election

This dissertation approaches the issue of media-interpreted engagement through an analysis of millennial journal reactions and a discourse analysis of online and television political news. This multi-part approach allows for a complete understanding of both the media perspective on millennial engagement, and the millennials' reaction to the media's depiction. These methods will be used in an effort to answer the research questions proposed in the earlier section as well as expand upon the concepts and definitions laid out by previous research. The following section describes the approaches used in this dissertation with focus on data collection and discourse analysis methods. Because the millennial journal reactions and the political news discourse analysis will both center around the same set of news articles and sources, the scope of these articles will be defined first.

Content Collection

Discourse analysis is used to explore the language, themes, patterns, and structures exhibited within a set of texts. A study of discourse allows the researcher to look at a single instance, a set, or the context of the texts' production and reception. For

this study, the texts examined include the top sources used by the millennial generation to access political news. Political news media is operationalized in this study through the practices and publications of a media outlet. Farnsworth and Lichter (2011) define political news media as content that offers “mediated perspectives on the campaign” (p. 4). While a broad definition, this offers the flexibility of allowing the audience (rather than the researcher) to define political mass media. This tactic was successful for Farnsworth and Lichter (2011) who used audience collected data to direct their attention to specific news stories and their sources. Specific sources for both the online political news discourse analysis and the television political news discourse analysis are discussed in the coming section.

Graybeal and Sindik (2012) conclude that although the millennial generation is generally thought of as the digital generation, most of their civic and political news comes from television sources (43%) as opposed to online ones (35%); (see Figure B). The remainder of their news gathering activity comes from newspapers (8%) and radio (14%). The authors propose that this has to do with patterns of accessibility, lifelong habits, and thoughtful critique and analysis of source credibility. “The students, many of whom grew up in households where their parents regularly listened to and read media outlets such and *The New York Times* and NPR, said traditional media outlets still do a better job of facilitating civic engagement than new technologies with content derived from less of a professional journalistic ethos” (p. 41). Further, Graybeal and Sindik (2012) found in their focus groups that millennials gather their news information from news recommended by friends and family, not exclusively and directly from the news producers. Turner (2009) suggests that rather than these news recommendations from

family and friends coming vocally, news content is often sent through email, text messages, and social networks. This is further supported by Zúñiga (2012) and therefore, a study of digital political news sources needs to take into account these means and goals of news circulation being used by the millennials.

In an effort to specifically look at the sources used by the millennial generation on political news, both digital and television sources are examined. Together, they account for 78% of political and civic news consumption and will ultimately reflect the discourse that is projected and received by the millennial generation (p. 41).

According to Pew, political news consumption regarding elections rises before and after a major election (see Figure C). As demonstrated in the 2010 midterm elections, election interest and coverage is at its highest between one month before and after the election. This two month period is popularly referred to as a “hot zone” of election coverage. Thus, it is important to study this time period when more people tune into election news and the news dedicates more time and space to covering the election. Pew further found a strong correlation between the amount of news coverage and public interest in the elections (see Figure D). Thus, this two-month period of time takes place when election coverage and attention to election coverage is at its peak and is the focus of this dissertation.

Television content. The Pew Research Center’s 2012 report on *News Sources for Campaign Information* supports Graybeal and Sindik’s (2012) findings and adds that television news remains the dominant place for millennials and youth to gather political information. They find that cable news sources are the major sources of campaign and political information for young people in the 2012 election season. The majority of young

people watch cable news more than nightly news and local news programming (see Figure E).

Further, in a 2010 study, Pew identified the most frequent cable news sources for young adults (18-29 years old). Cable shows with high amounts of millennial audience include: *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*, *Rachel Maddow*, *O'Reilly Factor*, *Hardball*, and *Hannity* (see Figure F). For the scope of this project, these shows will be watched in their entirety to understand the discourses present regarding political participation of the millennial generation. These shows will be recorded nightly from October 6, 2012 until December 6, 2012, and will number 179 hours total (accounting for days when the shows do not air, rerun, or have shortened durations). Because these shows represent a variety of political and civic perspectives, the diversity of the shows' orientation will address whether political bias is involved with the production of discourse on this topic.

Online content. To select the online sources for this discourse analysis, Dublin based news aggregate *NewsWhip* provides a list of the top digitally read and re-posted news stories and sources found on Twitter and Facebook. In 2012, they released the top 25 political news sources presented or connected to on the two popular social networking sites (see Figure G). Because these social networks are populated by millennials, the news stories shared and linked to on these sites reflect the political and civic news sources of the generation. To compile this list, *NewsWhip* pulls stories from over 6,000 news sources globally, and then publishes and links to the most frequently re-posted articles from these sources. This list is updated daily and can be controlled for nationality and age of the reader as well as the topic of the post. Therefore, it is possible to look at

the most popular articles read by American millennials on the issue of Election 2012 on any day. In the absence of other measures of news source frequency, the top twenty-five sources aggregated on *NewsWhip* for the 2012 year present the most credible means of assessing and accessing the popular political and civic articles. The daily re-count of the 36 most read and re-tweeted or re-posted articles on *Election 2012* can be further analyzed using discourse analysis methods to look at the discourses present within.

Using *NewsWhip*'s article archive is far more credible than other news aggregates who count website impressions, because it reflects not only that the article was accessed by someone in the millennial generation, but it was also engaged with. The act of re-posting or re-tweeting suggests that the individual read it (or at least part of it) and felt inclined to share the information.

The scope of the online discourse analysis includes the top 36 daily articles collected by *NewsWhip*. In total, the data set is made up of 2097 online political news articles. The television discourse analysis will include a look at the telecasts of the most viewed political and civic oriented television shows. In total, the data set also includes 199 episodes from the above listed television shows.

While all sampled articles and television will be read in an effort to understand overall discourses present, articles and textual instances where the media address the millennials' participation in the 2012 election will be specifically examined and analyzed. These issue-specific articles and television coverage represent the texts that will be included in the discourse analysis, while the wider universe of data will represent the context.

Analysis of Millennial Journal Reactions

Harvey (2011) identified diary entries as important tools qualitative researchers can use to understand a group's reactions and perceptions of a specific topic. Unlike interviews or focus groups, diaries allow for respondents to write reflections instantaneously, rather than waiting for an upcoming interaction with the researcher. To understand the nature of the decoding of the millennials in regard to political news media, journal entries from an eight-week period are collected from participants from October 6, 2012 until December 6, 2012. Each week members of the millennial generation will be asked to read the ten stories from *NewsWhip.com* on their specific assigned day and watch one of the television programs identified by Pew. Then, in journal form, respondents react individually to the messages within the text. Assigning days to each participant ensured that each day of the eight weeks is covered equally with no articles receiving more or less attention or reaction than the others (see Appendix A). In total, each participant will write a 100 word reaction to each news article and television program, equaling eleven reactions per week. A total of 15 millennial participants will be selected for inclusion in this study based on their enrollment in a special topics class titled "Political Media." The class is offered as an upper-level elective for students interested in learning more about the presentation of politics in the media. Students enrolled in class are between 20 and 25 years old. In total, 1320 reactions (8 weeks x 15 students x 11 reactions/week) were estimated to be collected for the entirety of the study. However, because of missing entries and weeks, the total amount of journal entries 1122 entries were analyzed. These 1122 reactions were analyzed for discourses and the presence of the three decoding options identified by Hall (1997). This method was similarly used by Roberts et al. (2001) and Couldry, Livingstone, and Markham (2007)

who collected weekly diary entries asking respondents to reflect on crime based newspaper articles and their sense of community safety.

Analysis of Television Content

To identify and analyze discourses present in television news coverage, a discourse analysis of the six most popular political news shows was conducted. These six programs include: *Hardball*, *The O'Reilly Factor*, *The Rachel Maddow Show*, *Hannity*, *The Daily Show*, and *The Colbert Report*. Each of the shows is described in the following section. Each show was recorded daily from October 6, 2012 until December 6, 2012. This sixty day period of time represents the hot-zone of election coverage, where the American public pays the closest attention and follows political news the closest.

All shows were recorded Monday through Friday through a TV Box device that allows television shows to be recorded through a computer on an external hard drive. All six shows were recorded during their normal times slot (see Table C) in full duration. Although some shows such as *The Rachel Maddow Show* and *Hannity* do air special editions on some weekends, because those episodes were not recognized in the Pew study that identified these six shows as regularly watched by American millennials, they were not included in this study. The number of episodes and hours of the total episodes is found in Table C.

Although all of the shows air regularly, some episodes were cancelled during this period of time due to external events. Coverage of the Vice Presidential Debate on Thursday October 11, 2012 and the second and third Presidential Debates on Tuesday, October 16, 2012 and Monday October 22, 2012 aired from 9:00-10:30pm. MSNBC and the Fox News Channel turned to live coverage of the debates starting at 8:00pm on those dates, resulting in cancellation of *The Rachel Maddow Show*, *The O'Reilly Factor*, and *Hannity*. Although all three hosts were featured during the pre and post-debate coverage,

they did not host the special features. Thus, this coverage is not included in the analysis. Hurricane Sandy hit the American east coast on Monday October 29, 2012 resulting in three nights of national emergency broadcasts and the cancellation of regularly scheduled programming on MSNBC and the Fox News Channel. During this period of time, Comedy Central aired repeated episodes of *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*. Thus, no data was collected from Monday October 29, 2012 to Wednesday October 31, 2012.

Following the election, several broadcasts were also cancelled for the Thanksgiving holiday. *Hardball* and *The Rachel Maddow Show* aired holiday specials and *Hannity* aired a special episode titled “Thanksgiving Behind Bars: A Special Report” from Wednesday November 21, 2012 until Friday November 23, 2012. Comedy Central also aired repeat episodes of *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* during this time. The only show to air new episodes during the Thanksgiving holiday was *The O’Reilly Factor*, who instead aired holiday specials such as “The Factor Goes Hollywood” which interviewed famous actors and actresses about their lives in 2012 and “The Great American News Quiz” where O’Reilly quizzes other Fox News anchors in a game show format. Although they do not follow the traditional format of *The O’Reilly Factor*, these shows were recorded and included in the analysis because of their new nature and because they were aired during the show’s normal time slot.

Overview of Television Shows

Hardball with Chris Matthews

Hardball with Chris Matthews (alternatively titled *Hardball*) is a live nightly news program airing on MSNBC from 7:00pm until 8:00pm EST. The program airs Monday through Friday from Matthews’s Washington D.C. Studio. *Hardball* has been featured on

MSNBC since its 1999 debut, although it was also previously shown on the America's Talking and CNBC networks.

The show features Matthews's commentary on current political events from around the world. He typically interviews three to five guests on his show and divides the show into six segments, each devoted to a different topic. Most notably, Matthews begins each episode with a "Let Me Start" segment that describes either breaking news or a news story from the past 24 hours. Halfway through his show, *Hardball* hosts a "Sideshow" segment that allows Matthews to humorously poke fun at politicians and other media. He often features segments from *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* that he finds funny. His final segment is always titled "Let me Finish" and features Matthews' commentary and personal reflections on a current event or upcoming issue.

The O'Reilly Factor

The O'Reilly Factor airs Monday through Friday from 8:00pm until 9:00pm EST on the Fox News Channel. The show is hosted nightly by Bill O'Reilly live from New York City, although radio personality Laura Ingraham guest hosted for O'Reilly during two episodes following the election. The show has aired on Fox News Channel since its start in 1996.

The O'Reilly Factor features seven segments each night focusing on breaking news coverage and current events. All but one episode begins with the "Talking Points" memo, a short (less than five minute) breakdown of a current event and O'Reilly's interpretation of the impact and effect of that event. This memo is often referred to throughout the show and viewers are encouraged to go online and download the entire memo. O'Reilly also interviews guests on his show regularly, usually interviewing two at

one time. In these two guest formats, each guest represents a different political party or orientation. O'Reilly then encourages debate and lively conversation between the two guests, while he moderates. The show's last segment always features O'Reilly answering letters and emails sent from viewers. Following the letters, O'Reilly provides viewers with a "Tip of the Day" in which he provides suggestions on topics such as the use of technology, buying Christmas gifts, or forgiving friends. The show concludes with O'Reilly's "Word of the Day" where he introduces a word to the viewers and encourages them to use it. Other frequent weekly segments include "Watters World" where producer Jesse Watters walks around a local (usually NYC) area and interviews people on the street. The interviews are edited and short clips from other television shows and movies are inserted between for humorous effect. "Watters World" airs weekly on Wednesdays. "Miller Time" is another weekly segment on *The O'Reilly Factor* featuring comedian Dennis Miller. O'Reilly interviews Miller about themes, events, or issues from that episode and Miller provides an often darkly humorous answer. Miller also tours and performs with O'Reilly when O'Reilly makes guest appearances or has speaking engagements.

The Rachel Maddow Show

The Rachel Maddow Show airs on weeknights on MSNBC between 9:00pm and 10:00pm EST. The show is hosted live nightly by Rachel Maddow although two episodes were guest hosted by substitute Chris Hayes. The show has aired regularly since its premiere in the fall of 2008.

The Rachel Maddow Show does not feature regular segments in the same style as *Hardball* or *The O'Reilly Factor*. However, the shows segments do follow a similar

timing each episode. The first segment of the show features an event from the previous day, usually introduced in a narrative story-telling format, rather than a traditional news lead. Current events are often introduced by Maddow giving the audience a piece of trivia or relating the issue to a part of American history. Maddow also interviews guests on her show, usually featuring just one interviewee at a time. During the post-election coverage, Maddow devoted two segments during two days (for a total of four segments) to a one-on-one interview she conducted with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. Although each episode did not follow a specific pattern of segments, most episodes had about six segments each, featuring different current events or issues during each one.

Hannity

New episodes of *Hannity* are aired Monday through Thursday from 9:00pm until 10:00pm EST. When Fox News Channel airs a Friday or weekend episode of *Hannity*, it is usually a repeat from a previous episode during the week. The Friday and weekend timeslots are most often occupied by other programming such as *Fox News Special Reports*. *Hannity* was previously named *Hannity & Colmes* because it was live co-hosted by Alan Colmes (who still appears regularly on the program). *Hannity & Colmes* aired on the Fox News Channel from 1996 until 2009, when Colmes left and *Hannity* became the only host. Although during election 2012 the show aired at 9:00pm EST, the show's timeslot was changed early in 2013 due to low ratings (Easley, August 8, 2013).

Like *The Rachel Maddow Show*, *Hannity* does not feature regular segments, but instead features individual news stories and current events during each segment. *Hannity* often begins his program with a "Fox News Alert" which is used to introduce a viewer to a new big story or breaking news. *Hannity* features six or seven segments per show, each

one devoted to an individual news story. Hannity also interviews guests on his show.

Adopting a format similar to *The O'Reilly Factor*, he features two guests from opposing political affiliations.

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart (alternatively titled *The Daily Show*) is aired on Monday through Thursday from 11:00pm to 11:30pm EST on Comedy Central. The show is pre-recorded each night, meaning that while it features current events, the events must take place before filming to be included on the show. Events taking place later in the evening, such as the debates, were the subjects of the following night's episodes. *The Daily Show* did air live on election night 2012, allowing for live commentary on the election results. Stewart took over hosting *The Daily Show* in 1999, after Craig Kilborn left the show in 1998.

The Daily Show features three regular segments in each half-hour episode. The first segment is typically a monologue delivered by Stewart, reflecting on one major news story or issue. The issues are introduced using humor, including funny imagery, graphics, and titles, such as "Democalypse 2012," that focused on election polling results. The second segment is often devoted to another current event, but this time featuring a guest "analyst" or member of *The Daily Show's* "news team." The news team members, such as Lewis Black, Samantha Bee, and John Oliver, are other comedians who introduce a topic satirically and interview prominent people associated with that topic. The third and last full segment of the show features an interview conducted by Stewart and a notable guest. Guests in this sample include Nate Silver, Rachel Maddow, and Governor Chris Christie. Because these interviews often need more than one segment, the second

segment of the show is often also devoted to this interview. Finally, each episode ends with a “Moment of Zen,” which is a short clip of a humorous segment of news television.

The Colbert Report

The Colbert Report is a satirical news program aired Monday through Thursday from 11:30 until 12:00am EST on Comedy Central. The show, a spinoff of *The Daily Show*, has aired continuously since its premiere in 2005. Satirical in nature, this show reviews current events and issues. Steven Colbert plays a conservative television host who compares himself to Bill O’Reilly and the Fox News Channel personalities.

Similar to *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report* features three segments. The opening segment humorously reviews a current event story, generally using a conservative bias to humorously depict each facet. The second part of the show features a regular segment, such as “The Word” or “Tip of the Hat, Wag of the Finger” to introduce a news event or issue Colbert will address. During the election coverage this included his weekly update on the “Colbert Super PAC” which he created to demonstrate the political fundraising process. His final segment features an interview of a celebrity, politician, historian, or musical guest.

Methodology

To complete this part of the analysis, all 199 television episodes (179 hours) were viewed. Each episode was watched carefully by the researcher for mentions of young people, the millennial generation, or college students. When any of these groups were identified or mentioned, notes were taken on the content and context of the discussion. Transcripts of the segments that mentioned these groups were also created to document

these mentions. Each episode was watched in full one time, although the researcher returned to the segments that were noted for their mentions of these groups.

To identify the frequency and patterns of each show, mentions of “young people,” the “millennial generation,” and “college students” were identified based on the segment of the show. This study will use the term “millennials” as a coverterm for these groups and terms of reference. Each show segment was identified based upon its appearance in-between commercial breaks. Segments of a television show can also be identified by the host introducing a new topic or sometimes changes on the screen matter (headings or scrolling bars) that tell the audience the name of the current topic. Each mention of the groups was documented by recording the transcript of the show for its content, but also what segment it was featured during. While all shows were watched during this analysis, not all shows mentioned these groups in each episode. By documenting the number of segments and episodes these groups were mentioned during, a deeper understanding of the frequency of the topic in televised news can be reached. A crosstabs statistical analysis, as well as a Chi-Square test can be conducted to investigate if there is any substantial difference in the pre and post-election television segment coverage. By analyzing this, a deeper understanding of the way the millennial coverage may have changed during the election can be identified and investigated.

To identify discourses present within the television coverage, the manuscript of all segments mentioning young people and the millennial generation was analyzed through NVivo. NVivo allows qualitative researchers to openly code sections of text and refer back to them using color-coded tags. Each tag can be used to represent an emerging theme, discourse, or trend in the coverage. It also allows the researcher to attach notes or

connect segments of the transcript to each other. After going through each of the episodes and noting emergent discourses, a complete list of the discourses is created by NVivo. The researcher can then edit the list, collapsing similar discourses and identifying a smaller set of exhaustive and exclusive themes. This list of discourses is fully described and detailed in the following sections.

Segment Findings

While it would be nearly impossible to determine how frequently each discourse appeared throughout the television news coverage in this analysis, what can be determined is the frequency of specific mentions of young people, the millennial generation, and college students in each show. Further, by analyzing what segment these mentions dominantly occurred by, we can see how important the television news shows deemed these groups. Agenda setting theory and journalistic practice of gatekeeping suggests that the most important issues, events, and stories are shown at the beginning of a television broadcast, while less important stories are reserve for the end. By looking at the frequency of these mentions, and the segments in which they occur, a deeper understanding of these mentions can be reached. This can be further investigated looking at differences between the frequency of mentions and segments in the pre and post-election coverage. The discourse analysis can be used to triangulate the data and provide an in-depth look at the amount and type of coverage.

First studied was the number of segments discussing the millennial generation before and after the election for each show. By starting the statistical analysis by looking at the amount of coverage of each show, it will be clear which shows discussed the millennial generation most frequently (in the most number of segments), and which

shows differed in their discussion of the millennial generation before versus after the election. Using a layered crosstabs, the following was found of each of the six television shows (see Tables D and E).

Overall, there were 141 segments from before and after the election focused on the millennial generation, young people, or youth. As demonstrated by the Chi-Square, a .000 significance suggests there was a significant difference between the number of segment coverage on the millennial generation before and after the election (see Table D). Prior to the election, 63 segments were focused on this group as opposed to the 78 segments after the election. Additionally, there is a difference in the number of segments the millennial generation was featured in each episode. It was more common for the millennials to be featured in one segment prior to the election. After the election, millennials were also featured in two or three segments in each episode (see Figure H). A full detailed description of content of the segments is in the next section.

Starting with *Hardball*, it is clear that the discussion of millennials, youth, and young people grew after the November 6, 2012 election (see Figure I). This is evidenced by the frequency of millennial coverage in two or three segments after the election. Although when millennials were discussed 14 times in one segment per show intervals, it is the five shows after the election where millennials are discussed during two segments, and the one show after the election where millennials are discussed three times that substantially show a difference in the amount of coverage given to the millennial generation on *Hardball* before and after the election. In the coverage before the election,

millennials were the focus of 14 segments of *Hardball*. After the election, they were the focus of 20 segments on the same show.

Next, statistical findings regarding the frequency of segment coverage of *The O'Reilly Factor* similarly found that there were more segments about the millennial generation after the election than there were before the election (see Figure J). 14 segments prior to the election were focused on the millennial generation, as opposed to 18 after the election. What is interesting here is the number of episodes where the millennial generation was featured in multiple segments after the election. Five episodes after the election featured the millennials in two segments, and three episodes featured the millennial generation in three segments. Although singular mentions of the millennials went down after the election, multiple mentions went up.

The Rachel Maddow Show similarly depicted more coverage of the millennial generation after the election (see Figure K). Different from both *Hardball* and *The O'Reilly Factor*, *The Rachel Maddow Show* only featured the millennial generation in one or two segments per episode (not the three segments of the previous shows). Similar to *The O'Reilly Factor*, singular segment coverage of the millennials went down after the election, but two segment features went up. The millennial generation was the focus of ten segments prior to the election and 14 segments after.

Hannity, similarly showed a difference in the segment coverage of the millennials before and after the election (see Figure L). While overall segment coverage still went up after the election, from 9 to 10 segments, it is the way this was done that is different. There is a substantial difference in the number of shows that mention millennials in one segment before and after the election. Nine shows from before the election discuss the

millennial generation in one segment, however only four shows after the election do the same. This is also the only show where the two segments outnumber the single segments before or after the election.

The Daily Show also differed in its consideration of the millennial generation (see Figure M). There was only a slight increase in segments on the millennial generation after the election from 8 to 9 segments, and millennials were still only mentioned once in the episodes. No multiple mentions (as found on the other shows) existed.

The Colbert Report, like *The Daily Show* only featured the millennial generation in one segment of the episodes (see Figure N). However, unlike all the other shows considered in this study, this was the only show to decrease its coverage of the millennial generation after the election. Prior to the election there were eight segments dedicated to the millennial generation, whereas after the election there were seven.

Importantly, five of the six shows increased the number of segments they devoted to discussing the millennial generation after the election. With the exception of *The Colbert Report*, multiple segments also rose after the election, adding to the overall number of millennial segments after the election. This is important because it provides a numerical overview of the changes made in the coverage before and after the election when it comes to the number of segment coverage given to the millennial generation. The following section will detail the content of these segments.

Discourse Findings

Identified in the analysis of the television coverage were four discourses that invoked or related the millennial generation. While most discourses directly mentioned youth and gave ample evidence that this meant citizens between the ages of 18-32, the

term “millennial” was rarely used as a descriptor. This will be fully explored in the following sections.

After watching each of the episodes recorded from before and after the election, four emergent discourses were identified. First, the millennial generation became connected to other minority and demographic groups. The millennial generation was often described as being part of a coalition of voters who helped the President win re-election. Other members of the coalition identified in the shows are African Americans, Latinos, Women, and sometimes Asian Americans. Second, particularly after the election, there is immense coverage of the millennial voter turnout. As mentioned previously, millennial voter turnout was estimated to be very low prior to the election. After the election, many of the show hosts reflected on their surprise and shock that the millennials participated so heavily. This discourse is also coupled with a discourse of changing demographics in America. As the millennials come of voting age, other demographic groups, such as Latinos, are growing larger. It is then the interests of these growing demographic groups that are reflected upon. Third, there is substantial reflection on the means by which the Obama campaign targeted and appealed to the millennial generation and other members of the coalition. The Romney campaign, as well as members of the media accused President Obama’s campaign of promising entitlements and gifts to millennials in return for voting for him. The ethics of this, as well as the plausibility of this become a central concern in the coverage. Finally, actual interviews with millennials and young people (or the lack thereof) further illuminate the ontological views of the media on this group.

Discourse 1: Connecting minority groups to each other

Throughout both pre-and post-election television coverage analyzed in this chapter was a steadfast connection drawn between young people and other segmented groups. These include African Americans, Latinos, Women, and Asian Americans. In the pre-election coverage, groups were often combined when addressing the early voting turnout rates or the controversial voter identification legislation passed in several states. For example, on the October 8, 2012 episode of *The Rachel Maddow Show*, Maddow described the early voting lines in Ohio. “They waited for 10 hours and more in some places in Ohio, especially the districts with large amounts of African Americans and college students” (*The Rachel Maddow Show*, Oct 9, 2012).

Maddow continued in her combination of demographic groups as she described voter-identification legislation in Ohio and Wisconsin.

Do you remember that scary voter fraud is a felony billboards that went up all over Ohio and Wisconsin a few weeks ago? They made it seem like maybe you trying to vote might get you years in jail? Dozens of these billboards went up in mostly, ah predominantly, black or predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods or in places where college kids tend to live in cities like Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Milwaukee. (*The Rachel Maddow Show*, November 21, 2012)

It is the combination of young people with other groups such as black and Hispanic individuals that describes young people as effected or at least impacted by the voter-suppression efforts in some states.

The combination of groups was not just focused on the act and prevention of voting, it was also used when describing “undecided voters.” On October 16, 2012, *Hardball*, continued the combination of demographic groups to discuss undecided-women voters. During this segment, Joy-Ann Reid, managing editor of *The Grio*,

introduced the idea that it was not all women who were in the undecided category. Rather, younger female voters should be considered strong Obama supporters, while older married women truly embodied the undecided voter.

You know, I think there are two women voters. There is the older white suburban women's vote and there is a younger vote. I can't think of a younger woman that I've ever talked to that isn't outraged and just shocked at the way this Republican Party operates. (*Hardball*, October 16, 2012)

Later in that same episode, when Matthews expressed concern that many of the demographic groups that strongly supported President Obama in 2008 lacked enthusiasm, *Washington Post* columnist Eugene Robinson suggested a way the campaign could ensure these groups voted again in 2012. "Well, he has to outline the choices; the choices have to be outlined. Uh, I ah, ah, I think to young people, to Latino's, to African Americans, the President has to talk about his record, talk about things he has done." (*Hardball*, October 16, 2012).

This combination of groups, particularly Latinos, African Americans, young people, and women came to be known and recognized as a "coalition" of voters that supported the President in both 2008 and 2012. These groups were co-listed so often that it became embedded in the way the television shows thought about the electorate. The term was used both by the television hosts as well as by representatives of the two campaigns. In an interview with Deputy Campaign Manager for President Barack Obama on November 5, 2012, Stephanie Cutter stated

For those that are early voting, broad coalition of people, young people, women, African Americans, Latinos, they're all coming out to cast a vote early for this President. In many states there is still an opportunity to do that, Ohio, you can still cast a ballot today. (*Hardball*, November 5, 2012)

The discourse and use of the term “coalition” became more frequent in the weeks after the election. While prior to the election there was some concern that these demographic groups would fail to vote, in the aftermath of the election, these groups were cited as the only groups that mattered. For example, On October 16, 2012, Chris Matthews expressed concern that these demographic groups were lacking enthusiasm and may not understand the real issues in the election:

President Obama rode a wave of enthusiasm to the white house back in 2008, sometimes called the ‘Coalition of the Ascendant.’ That coalition had a heavy dose of young people of course and minorities, particularly Hispanic voters. The President's got to engage them again. He's got a challenge this time...I'm worried about people my kids age, you know? Kids who never saw a President like Obama, and they sorta take it for granted, to be honest about it. They think he's just another President maybe. There is a big difference between him and what the other guys offering. Do they know the choices involved here? (*Hardball*, October 16, 2012)

Prior to the election, the coalition was viewed as an uncertainty, a large mass of individuals who might or might not show up on Election Day to vote. Part of this assumption results from the polling procedures and assumptions made. Mary-Anne Marsh pointed out during her October 25, 2012 appearance on *The O'Reilly Factor*,

I'm telling you, on November 6th, all the voters that the Obama campaign got to the polls before November 6, Women, African Americans, Latino's, and young people- folks, who aren't counted in these polls because they are not likely voters, they're just registered voters, they're least likely to vote, are going to vote for them. (*The O'Reilly Factor*, October 25, 2012)

Because these groups were not considered likely voters (something that will be analyzed in the upcoming section), polling predictions often did not factor in their potential effect.

Prior to the election, this combination of groups was viewed as weak, as demonstrated by the concerns of Chris Matthews and the assumptions made by most polling organizations.

However, the conceptualization of this combination of groups as being weak ended immediately following the election results. On the first segment of the first *Hardball* following the election, Chuck Todd noted the critical effect these groups had on the outcome of the election. “This was structural, this was demographic, this had nothing to do with any issue.” (*Hardball*, November 7, 2012). John Heilemann, co-author of *Game Change*, continued this commentary when arguing the Obama campaign was re-elected because of the attention they paid to these demographic groups.

They [Obama campaign] looked at this election, as a contest, in a lot of ways, between demographics and economics. That the economic conditions of the country were going to be a head wind for President Obama, and the only way for them to win, was to focus like a laser beam on four groups. Now, the rest of the stuff of the campaign, was in some ways, just ah, mood music. They were looking at, African Americans, Hispanics, ah, college educated white women, and young voters, in nine states. (*Hardball*, November 7, 2012)

It is not just that these political analysts argue that the combination of African American, Latino, women, and young people were important, it is that they argue they were the only thing that mattered. Heilemann even goes so far as to call other electoral groups and issues, “mood music.”

On the November 7, 2012 episode of *The O'Reilly Factor*, Dick Morris issued a public apology for his incorrect polling predictions and assumptions. “I made a mistake, I undercounted the ah, minority turnout, and women, ah, and young people, not ah, single women. I thought that the 2008 turnout was a fluke.” (*The O'Reilly Factor*, November 7, 2012).

However, the more frequently these groups were talked about as one coalition, the more often they also were referred to as minorities. For example, when Jon Stewart responded to Dick Morris' apology on his November 7, 2012 episode:

But, bumbling Dick, blamed the demographics. (Stewart imitates Dick Morris) I thought the minorities that showed up in 2008 would have disappeared by now. I thought maybe they would have returned to their home planets or reach their expiration date, dissolve into whatever minorities are made of, or something, but turns out they still exist in the human form. (*The Daily Show*, November 7, 2012)

The use of minority in conjunction with the coalition became a frequent focus for commentators in the post-election coverage. This was especially true when the hosts and guests began making suggestions for the Republican Party. After two failed elections, many of the television shows suggested it was the Republican Party's failure to connect with the four key demographics that was responsible for the electoral results. Dee Dee Benkie, *Fox News* political analyst, suggested on the October 8, 2012 episode of *The O'Reilly Factor*, "We need to have new leadership, we need young people, Latinos, minorities, it is very important the Republican Party sees this." Statements such as these reinforce the importance of the coalition of voters who supported President Obama. Rather than focusing on the Republican Party's position on issues, Tea Party extremism, or candidate problems, it was the party's inability to connect with minorities, women, and young voters that was described as the fundamental flaw. On November 26, 2012 episode of *The Rachel Maddow Show*, Maddow argued that the realization of the Republican Party's need to connect and court the coalition began immediately after the election.

You know, it's funny, if you listen to the beltway talking about what is going on in American politics right now, the major narrative about what's going on right this second, is about this sort of course correction happening in the Republican party. Right, the Republican Party has

learned its lesson. If only in the interest in self-preservation, the Republicans are right now giving up on these policy stances that cost them so much in this last election, that made their party seem essentially pre-modern. All of the stuff that alienated women, and young people, and non-white people, and gay people, but if you listen to the beltway media, Republican course correction on this problem, course correction is totally underway. (*The Rachel Maddow Show*, November 26, 2012)

The description of the coalition as made up of minorities is also a result of the attempt to find commonality between these diverse groups. Rather than constantly referring to the combination of groups as a coalition, the term “minority” came to be associated as a synonym or even nickname for these people. In an interview with Chris Matthews on December 6, 2012 episode of *Hardball*, History Professor Judith Brown-Dianus argued the voter identification laws were fundamentally designed to suppress the coalition’s vote. However, instead of using the term coalition, she calls the wider group “minorities.” “The laws themselves were aimed at minorities...We're not speculating about this, we know the hard core facts are this was an attempt to take the vote away from African Americans, the elderly, young people, and Latino voters” (*Hardball*, December 6, 2012).

Discourse 2: Reflecting on youth voting turnout and demographic shifts

Reflections on youth voting turnouts was also strongly depicted in reflections that the election showcased a change in the American population. The election results and demographic turnout was used as a way to suggest that America was in the process of becoming a majority-minority country. While the term “minority” in the context of majority-minority usually reflects a change and growth in racial populations, within the context of the television coverage after the election, it is clear the term “majority-minority” or a reflection on the changing demographic makeup of the United States

includes the changing role and prominence of young people. For example, on the November 8, 2012 episode of *Hardball*, Bob Shrum suggested that young people were a part of the minorities who were coming to prominence in the American electorate.

We're going to become a majority-minority non-white nation, white men are now only 33% of the electorate, and that's the heart of Republican strength. Ah, what's happened in the election, you had a gender chasm, you had an African American chasm, you had a Hispanic chasm, and a chasm with young voters, and Republicans can't win the white house under those circumstances. They're going to have to re-think this. (*Hardball*, November 8, 2012)

Similar to the way young people were linked with other demographic groups during the descriptions of a coalition, when describing the changing make-up of America, young people were now linked to the idea of a non-white majority. This connection, that young people help make up the non-white minority-majority was reinforced in other television programs. On the November 8, 2012 episode of *The Colbert Report*, Steven Colbert sarcastically suggests that the election results indicate the power of the minority groups and lack of power of the traditional white-establishment.

I tell you folks, there is a simple reason why America is over, it's because last night's election wasn't decided by real Americans. (footage of Fox talking about changing demographics) Papa Bear, Bill O'Reilly is right, the white establishment is, guys like us, were the minority now, and were helpless against this tide of nonwhite people (picture of black, Latino youth) who want stuff and things, they're the thing, stuff wanters. Whereas, traditional white people, of any race, we don't want things, we have things. Ok? (*The Colbert Report*, November 8, 2012)

The idea that America was changing due to the change in demographics was often reported as a surprise. As argued by Mary Anne Marsh in the days before the election, many political polls failed to take into account African Americans, Latinos, women, and

young people. As a result, there were few people who predicted the turnout of these groups would be important in the electoral decision.

Easily one of the most surprised hosts by this demographic appearance and contribution to the election was Chris Matthews. On his November 7, 2012 episode, he reflected that the voting turnout this year went against general mentality. “I remember Chris Starbrough, saying you can't get elected on the young vote, and I looked at the numbers, Chuck and Johnathan, and these numbers from young voters were better than last time, for Obama, who would have predicted that?” (*Hardball*, November 7, 2012). Immediately after his comments, Chuck Todd offered a connection between the youth vote and other demographic groups. “We'll they went and they also, and they had time to change the makeup of the electorate, in the state of Florida, they went and registered new voters... young voters, women, Hispanics, Asians, the black vote.” Todd then brings the conversation back to the changing demographic makeup of the country and new “majority-minority.”

Every other [demographic group] went up a point or two, and they're going to keep going up, more dramatically as we go forward, as we head towards being a minority-majority. And so, the Republican party must, if it is going to be, not just a plausible governing party, but an existent party, not an extinct party, it has to Figure out a way to get right with those groups. Particularly, the Hispanics, you cannot be a national governing party, getting 26 or 27 percent of the national Hispanic vote, you need to be up near 40. (*Hardball*, November 7, 2012)

Chris Matthews was not the only one who expressed surprise that these new demographic groups ended up as the most critical during the election. In her November 8, 2012 show,

Rachel Maddow stated “That was the November surprise this year, it turns out people wanted to vote” (*The Rachel Maddow Show*, November 8, 2012).

In an interview with Sean Hannity, Dick Morris also expressed surprise at the changing demographics that caused his polling predictions to be incorrect.

Well, I was dead wrong, it was exactly the same, in fact with young people, even a little higher than it was in 2008. And this reflects a permanent demographic change in the United States, ah it is no longer a country run by white married men and married women. Ah, by the time you add up blacks, and Latino’s and single women and young people, um, you’re talking about close to half the vote, and the Democrats win that half the vote almost four to one. Ah, which means the Republicans have to win almost everybody else by more than three to one, to be able to win. But Sean, I hope people aren’t mad at me about it, it was an honest mistake, I spoke about what I believed and I think there was a period of time when the Romney campaign was falling apart, people were not optimistic, people thought there was no chance of victory, and I felt that it was my duty at that point to go out and say what I said, and at the time I said it, I believed I was right. (*Hannity*, November 12, 2012)

In addition to reflection on new demographic data, Morris suggests that the political activity of these groups may be a permanent feature rather than a fluke. In a November 7, 2012 interview on *The O’Reilly Factor*, pollster Scott Rasmussen took the opposite approach by describing his surprise at the lack of white-male voter turnout. “What surprised me the most was how precisely the Obama campaign predicted the white turnout. That was decisive” (*The O’Reilly Factor*, November 7, 2012).. O’Reilly agreed with Rasmussen that it wasn’t just the turnout of the young or Latino voters that was important; it was the decline in senior and white male voters.

Rasmussen: But the story here is, they [young voters] did show up in bigger numbers, and seniors did not. Seniors were much more favorable to Mitt Romney. Basically, the Obama campaign knew who they had to get to the polls.

O'Reilly: And they got them out.

Rasmussen: And they got them out.

O'Reilly: Did that surprise you, Dr?

Larry Sabato, PhD.: Ah, yes it did, look, ah, everybody said before the election, and on election day, Ohio, Ohio, Ohio, well now that the election is over, we ought to be saying, demographics, demographics, demographics, because that explains what happened in this election, and why, were on a new path now, there's no question about it. (*The O'Reilly Factor*, November 7, 2012)

Depicted by this interaction is the view that demographics were critically important to the outcome of the election and are also an indicator of change in America. The question and point of debate for these hosts is if this change is permanent or temporary. The discourses surrounding this debate will be featured in the following section.

Discourse 3: Youth, entitlements, and gifts

Despite the recognition of changing demographics and that several specific demographic groups were the ones who decided the election, the way in which these groups are described as having a role in the election results suggests that these groups did not vote on their own. On Fox News' election night coverage, Bill O'Reilly offered his reason for the Obama victory and Romney loss. He suggested that America's new entitlement culture was to blame. Because key groups, such as young people, Latinos, African Americans, and women all wanted free things from the government, they voted for the political party and candidate who promised them the most things for free. In addition, the feeling of entitlement was a moral failing of these groups, marking them as lesser Americans. He stated:

It's a changing country the demographics are changing; it's not a traditional America anymore. And there are fifty percent of the voting public who want stuff. They want things. And who is going to give them

things? President Obama. He knows it, and he ran on it. (*Fox News Election Night*, November 6, 2012)

In his November 7, 2012 episode, O'Reilly opposed a guest who argues that these changes are permanent.

Well, I'm not so sure about the new path business, I understand there's, as I said in the talking point's memo, the Republican party has to re-boot, and have a message to Hispanic Americans, that they are a party that should be considered. But, as I said, if the economy doesn't turn around, you can forget about the Democratic Party. They're going to just evaporate, because the people have been very generous to Barack Obama, the American people are very generous to him, they are giving him another chance, he fails now, believe me. (*The O'Reilly Factor*, November 7, 2012)

While O'Reilly advocates that the election results represent a change in American culture and rise of entitlement, he also argues that this change is not permanent. It can change if the economic climate does not improve over the next four years or if the Republican Party finds a way to appeal to these groups. Similarly, this entitlement-centric discourse was used many times in the days following the election. Sean Hannity argued in his November 8, 2012 episode:

What appears to have happened is the liberal welfare state has now grown. More and more Americans are now dependent on the welfare state, and as they have, they find themselves siding with the party of government. Now to be clear, this isn't permanent. Things can change.... America in some ways is changing, and its changing in this way that, you know, it's the allure of free. It's the allure of ah, no pressure, it's the allure of government taking care of you. (*Hannity*, November 8, 2012)

Unlike Morris or Sabato, Hannity argues that the entitlement or liberal-welfare state can change, and is not a permanent feature of America.

The discourses surrounding the entitlement culture were further motivated by the coverage given to a leaked conference call with Mitt Romney, just six days after the election. On November 14, 2012, Chris Matthews reported that while on a conference call with donors, Mitt Romney “attributed his rival's victory to 'the gifts' the administration had given to blacks, Hispanics and young voters during Obama's first term. Obama, Romney argued, had been 'very generous' to blacks, Hispanics, and young voters.” The gifts remarks were covered by all six shows and prominently discussed in the context of the Romney loss and demographic changes.

Rachel Maddow responded to the gifts comments by expanding upon the examples of gifts noted by Romney.

On that conference call, Romney listed other gifts, such as free contraceptives for 18-29 year old women, dream act waivers, and student loan interest rate cuts for college students. The Romney campaign, what remains of it, released a statement today authenticating the tape and saying quote, ‘Governor Romney was simply elaborating on what (Obama Senior Strategist) David Axelrod had said about the Obama campaign's effort to target key demographics, most specifically, women.’ For the record, David Axelrod said nothing like that. (*The Rachel Maddow Show*, November 14, 2012)

Closely tied to these conversations on gifts were the issues that the hosts and guests associated with each demographic group. In Maddow’s quote it was free contraceptives, dream act waivers, and student loan interest rate cuts that were all issues that concerned young voters. O’Reilly expanded this list and demonstrated his support for Romney’s gift analysis of the election. In this conversation with Sabrina Schaeffer, he voiced his support and expands on why the gift appeals were so effective in 2012:

O’Reilly: One of the reasons I couldn't win was I couldn't get over the entitlement society, now that was my analysis as well, when you get a

tremendous amount of money flowing out of Washington into certain hands, the hands that are receiving the money, are not going to want it to stop. So therefore, they are going to devote, which they did, all the stats show they did, income under 30,000 dollars overwhelmingly broke for Barack Obama, so I don't think the governors analysis was wrong, whereas Governor Jindal does think he's wrong. I think he's right on the money... It's very difficult to overcome a voting block that's getting money.

Sabrina Schaeffer: Well I certainly think he's onto something, there are a lot of reasons Romney lost this election, but he does get at the inner psychology of the Obama campaign, which was to see themselves as the provider to the people, and whether we are talking about young voters, or women, providing college loans to protections in the workplace, to staying on your parents healthcare until you are 26, to free birth control, there is definitely a message of providing-

O'Reilly: And it worked! It allowed the President to keep power.

Schaeffer: You know, I don't blame the American people, there are a lot of people who are suffering right now, a lot of people who need some help, um, the problem I think was that the president packaged this free stuff with a lot of fear, and that's where I just found this to be a despicable campaign." (*The O'Reilly Factor*, November 15, 2012)

Again college loans, protections in the workplace, healthcare, and birth control that are used as examples for gifts to young people to encourage them to vote for President Obama.

However, there were many instances where the gifts comments were critiqued and objected to. On the same *Hardball* episode that first introduced the leaked conference call with Romney, Cynthia Tucker announced her outrage that she was given gifts to vote for Romney because she was an African American woman.

Cynthia Tucker: Chris, let me just say, for Ryan's comments, I'm still waiting for my gifts, I'm waiting for my gifts from Obama, I haven't received my gift yet! Maybe it was lost in the mail.

Matthews: You mean, you may have voted for him without getting that thing in the mail that he was supposed to send everybody? (*Hardball*, November 14, 2012)

While humor was one way that the hosts and guests of the television shows responded to the comments, there were other critiques of the gifts and entitlement comments. This Matthews began his November 16, 2012 episode by calling out Mitt Romney's tendency to blame others.

We now know how Mitt Romney is without a script, the words that come into his head like that 47% stuff from May that got out in the campaign that are just bad. The evidence is that this guy's default switch says blame the little guy, call him a mooch, a taker, a parasite, someone who is up for sale to any politician ready to pay, in fact, gifts, that's what the little guy wants. The older person, the hard up youth, the minority bought-able, pay up, scratch, just put it across their palms and they pull the lever for you. Cash and carry. Well the smart conservatives know this is no way to treat a potential voter. (*Hardball*, November 15, 2012)

What Matthews recognized is the discourse surrounding the youth vote reflected the ideology that their political participation and action could be bought or purchased through the giving of gifts and entitlements. Matthews expanded this idea:

It had it all, the accusation that minority voters could be scarfed up with a little chump change. Throw them a little something and the votes will come pouring back. Well here he was yesterday, Romney, schmoozing with his donor base about how the whole thing went wrong. It seems the President did some whole-sale purchasing, he said, he bought the minorities with healthcare, and bought the students by giving the students interest free student loans. Wow, great work there Mitt, you're at it again with your double barrels. One, claims that aren't true. Two, that ol' dog whistle of yours. Fact: The people in the income bracket you state there have to kick in to get welfare. Fact: students pay interest on their college loans. Nobody's getting anything for free. And the sick thing, there Mitt, is your need to say they do. You keep saying the President didn't really win the election; it was all one big bribery case. Question, why's Mitt still doing this?... But then when you insult to injury, when the other party

says, oh you were all bought, it seems that that would just fortify the Democratic tendencies of the people who we are talking about here. (*Hardball*, November 15, 2012)

Matthews is not the only host to argue that these gifts comments and the country's changing demographic makeup. Jon Stewart also addressed these issues on his November 15, 2012 episode of *The Daily Show*:

How do you think traditional Americans would have reacted to a Mormon candidate for president? Seeing as in 1857, President Buchanan sent the US army to Utah to fight them, and believe me, not to protect America's claim to its least drinkable lake. Bernie, Bernie, Bill, Fox, Bubulahs! You don't need to worry so much, what you are demonstrating is the health and vitality of America's greatest tradition, of fevered frightened ruling class, lamenting the rise of a new ethnically and religiously diverse new class, one that will destroy all that is virtuous and good and bring the American experiment crashing to the ground. Except you are forgetting one thing: that is the American experiment. An ethnic group arriving on America's shores to be reviled and hazed, living in squalor, or if they are lucky, squalor heights, working hard to give their children or grandchildren the opportunity to s*** on the next group landing on our shores. So enough! Enough! Relax! Enough with the lamentations! Unless your real name is 'Sitting Bill,' you've got nothing to complain about! (*The Daily Show*, November 15, 2012)

Later in the same episode, Stewart tied this change in demographics back to the actions and beliefs of young people. In his interview with Andrew Napolitano the two discuss the tendency of older generations to react to new generations.

Andrew Napolitano: Listen, I candidly salute you for the history of the country you gave, because the establishment always fears the next generation. And if the establishment stopped the next generation from coming in, you and I wouldn't be here.

Stewart: And we pretend that the next generation is not a virtuous, but does not understand the American experiment as well as they do.

Napolitano: but the country is big enough to expand and absorb one out of many. the many come here and form a wonderful mosaic. (*The Daily Show*, November 15, 2012)

However, this commentary and critique of those supporting gifts and changing demographic discourses did not go un-noticed. Bill O'Reilly directly responded to Stewart on his November 19, 2012 episode in a segment called "Reality Check."

Well here's what I'm talking about Mr. Obtuse, if you and your 17 writers would actually look at the exit polling, you'll see that a coalition of voters put the president back into the Oval office. That coalition was (emphasizing with hands on mouth) non-traditional! Which means it veered away from things like traditional marriage, robust capitalism, and self-reliance! Instead, each constituency that voted for the president, whether it be single women, Hispano-Americans, African Americans, whatever had very specific reasons for doing so. What do you think was going on at the Democratic convention, when a variety of speakers put out a laundry list of reasons they want the government to provide. Did you miss that Jon Stewart? Traditional American voters want a smaller government in Washington, more local control, some oversight on abortion, and believe in American exceptionalism. The majority of voters who voted for President Obama wanted large government that spends heavily on entitlements, because that reduces so called, income-inequality. They want equality for gays in the marriage arena, they want unfretted abortion with no parental notification for minors. They want a one-world foreign policy that gives other nations equal status to America. Here's a bulletin to those pin-heads at comedy central, those are not traditional positions! Are we clear about this? But, Mr. Stewart wasn't finished. (clip of *Daily Show*) Notice the word lamenting, no lamenting here, no lamenting zone. Stewart obviously channeling Ben Franklin, one of our great experimenters. So here's the deal, the country's definitely changing. The values of traditional American's are being challenged, by the coalition the Democrats effectively put together. That's the deal, no lamenting, no race-baiting, no bull feathers. Check two, while Stewart is musing about the great direction is heading, I'm trying to get folks to understand America's fascinating history, and it's working, much to the chagrin to the forces of darkness. Yesterday, *Killing Kennedy* number 1. (*The O'Reilly Factor*, November 19, 2012)

O'Reilly's response to Stewart's comments came in the aftermath of a *Washington Post* article that described O'Reilly's entitlement culture remarks on election night as racist and racially driven.

Discourse 4: Interactions or interviewing youth

Throughout the pre and post-election coverage, there were a few interviews and interactions with young people. These interactions occurred both inside and outside of the set, such as on the street, on the campuses of the debates, and through the reading of fan mail. Of all six shows, *The O'Reilly Factor* featured the most youth-interaction, generally through a segment called "Watters World," that aired each Wednesday and on debate nights. During this segment, Jesse Watters would clip together pieces of interviews he conducted, intermitted with very short (two or three second long) clips from pop culture, such as television, movies, or comedic routines. These quick clips served as a way to humorously and sarcastically respond to the things that were being said by the interviewees. However, what is important about these segments is that almost all of them (during the course of the election coverage) were of young people and college students. For example, on the night of October 16, 2012 and the Hofstra Debate, Bill O'Reilly introduced "Watters World" by saying "Jessie Watters rounded up a few students to see what they know and what they don't know." In Watters' clip of an interview, he featured three young female Hofstra students.

Watters: What year are you guys in?

Group of three girls: We're freshmen

Watters: So you have no idea what's going on?

Girls: No

Clip from *Knocked Up: Oh Wow*. (*The O'Reilly Factor*, October 16, 2012)

In another interview featured during the segment, Watters interviewed a young man in front of his college dorm.

Watters: Are you enthused about this debate?

Young male: I am very excited.

Watters: You look cold.

Young male: I am very cold, I decided not to wear a coat.

Clip of old movie: Mom yelling at son "you keep out of this" (*The O'Reilly Factor*, October 16, 2012)

In a third interview clip, Watters asked a college male what question he would ask the candidates if he could.

New Young Male: It would just be did you enjoy the campus? Did you like Hofstra University?

Watters: So you're going to get one question with the candidate and your going to ask them how they like the campus?

Clip: you let me worry about that, ok? (*The O'Reilly Factor*, October 16, 2012)

In his final interview, a young college female voiced her opinion about Romney as a potential president.

Young woman: I don't think that he's really um elaborated on anything, so

Watters: Now did you watch the last debate?

Young woman: Yes I did.

Watters: Did you hear when Romney explained his five-point plan

Young woman: Yeah, I did.

Watters: Do you remember any of those five points?

Young woman: No.

Edited clip of Willy Wonka: She was a bad egg. (*The O'Reilly Factor*, October 16, 2012)

These clips serve as an opportunity for the television shows to demonstrate that they are in-touch and correct about their assertions of young people. They also serve as a way to

separate the out-of-touch young people from the experienced and enlightened hosts and guests on the shows. By using sarcastic clips at the end of each interview segment, these interviews and the poking fun of young people seem to be done in jest. However, the real message is that young people are ill-informed of political issues. Even when they take up a stance on a candidate or issue, the interviewer finds a way to critique or belittle the comment (and those kids are just silly and self-obsessed).

Watters was often interviewed by O'Reilly after the segment about his personal reaction to the comments made by his interviewees. After asking college students at Brown University in Rhode Island about Ann Coulter being de-invited to guest speak, Watters shared his view of the young adults. "It's embarrassing, and like you saw, half the people don't even know why they don't like Ann Coulter." To this O'Reilly responded, "Yeah, but I don't blame them, you know, you were in college, ok, you see. You see, I was in college, we were idiots too." (*The O'Reilly Factor*, December 3, 2012). It is not just the "Watters' World" segments that depict young people as ill informed; it is also the commentary and discussion by Watters and O'Reilly that supports this position.

Interviews with young people were also cited by hosts and guests to support their outlook on the election. Different than Watters World, however, these interviews were seemingly informal in nature. Rather than showing clips of the interviews, the guests and hosts referenced these interactions generally, without specifics. For example, prior to the election Laura Ingraham told Bill O'Reilly that young people were mostly voting based on the economy, rather than being influenced by politicians' stances on social issues.

Yeah, and even in Indiana last night, I gotta tell you Bill, I spoke to like 3 to 400 people last night, and obviously these are mostly conservative folks, but even people who came up to me on the street, I talked to a bunch

of the kids were there for the Future Farmers of America conference, they're 18 19 year olds, and they're all like, look, it's the economy stupid, you're all talking about these social issues, and I know you care, it's the economy (shouted) stupid, we need this thing fixed. That's what they're- these are young people, these are the young people. (*The O'Reilly Factor*, October 25, 2012)

These references to young people are often used as anecdotal evidence that supports the commentary and position of the guest. These references to conversations did not end after the election. Matt Viser appeared on *Hardball* on November 9, 2012 to discuss his own journalistic coverage of the election.

I went to Ohio State on Halloween Night, and it was a night where college kids should be doing anything but voting, but the Obama campaign had these ah, busses and they were bussing people out Franklin County to go vote early. It was a lively seen, loud music, and at the end, after they voted, the Obama campaign had four or five people walking down each row gathering data on each student who had voted, asking them their names and if they can volunteer on Election Day and gathering information. So the next morning I sat down with the Romney campaign ah, people on the ground in Ohio and I asked them are you doing anything similar, is there anything to replicate that and they said the juice on that is not worth the squeeze. (*Hardball*, November 9, 2012)

Viser's comments serve as a way to support his position that the youth turnout in the 2012 election was the result of hard work by Obama campaign to cultivate and encourage voter turnout. The supportive nature of Viser's example is fully realized in the conversation he had with Chris Matthews following this story.

Matthews: They don't think it was important. I was skeptical because I kept seeing the president go to college campus after college campus, and I say, he ought to be back in Washington running the country, like he did with the storm, in the office. But apparently that's what got younger generations from 18-29, out to vote, all that stirring up with them.

Viser: yeah, yeah, you had also a new group of college students who were not the college students who were excited four years ago. They were different college kids.

Matthews: A two percent, or one percent increase in their share of the vote. (*Hardball*, November 9, 2012)

Exchanges such as this offer the shows an opportunity to give the perception of actual discussion and conversation with the millennial generation, without actually having to. By using first-hand accounts of their interviewees, there is an illusion of accuracy or the hosts being in-touch, even though they rarely actually talk to the group itself. Ingraham and Viser reporting their interactions with the hosts add credibility to the hosts perceptions and views because it seems as if they are providing evidence of an actual exchange. This becomes a persuasive technique, a type of third-party verification stemming from the credibility of the guests on the show. However, because millennials rarely (and in some shows, never) appear on the shows, the audience has to take the information at face-value because there is nothing to compare the stories by the guests against.

Analysis of Digital News Content

Prior to analyzing the actual discourses present in the *NewsWhip* dataset, it is important that the sources and timing of stories are investigated. During the collection process, 35 news articles were collected each day between October 6, 2012 and November 4, 2012. This time range was selected because it is considered the “hot zone” of the election, meaning it is the period of time when citizens pay the most attention to political news during an election cycle. These articles were collected based on the frequency with which American members of the Millennial Generation tweeted and posted on Twitter and Facebook each day. In total, 2097 articles were collected during the 60 day hot zone period of the 2012 US national election. However, because 274 articles were popularly tweeted and posted across two or more days (thus they appeared in the dataset two or more times), a total of 1822 unique articles were collected for analysis.

Also important in this analysis is a consideration of the publications that produced the articles. Out of the 2097 articles collected (including repeats), the four most popular sources were *The Huffington Post*, *Maddow Blog*, *ABC News*, and *Fox News*. These online sources make up 1504 or 71.7% of the 2097 articles most frequently tweeted and posted on Facebook and Twitter by Millennials. Other sources include *BuzzFeed*, *NPR*, *Twitchy*, *NBC*, *Politico*, *the LATimes*, *The Guardian*, *Time*, *Slate*, and *The Nation* (see Table F and Figure O).

By further tracing the appearance and frequency of each of the top four publications over the course of the hot zone of the election we can look at changes in popularity of each source. Of the four most popular sources, it is *The Huffington Post* that

is most popular during most of the election coverage. However, what this graph also shows, is that *The Huffington Post* loses its dominance in the days following the election, and by the end of the election “hot zone,” it is nearly equal in popularity with the other four sources (see Figure P). This trend will be fully explored later in the discussion section.

Coding

Finally, prior to completing a discourse analysis on the dataset, open coding was conducted to get a big picture view of the general topics covered in the articles that were tweeted and posted most frequently by the Millennial Generation. In conducting the open coding, a posteriori categories were developed after thoroughly reading each of the 1822 unique articles. After a list of exhaustive and exclusive codes was developed, each article was assigned a single code that represented the dominant theme or topic of the article (see Appendix B). For clarification, the article set was divided into three groups. First, those articles tweeted and posted prior to the election, from October 6, 2012 until November 5, 2012. Second, those articles tweeted and posted on the Election Day, November 6, 2012. Finally, those articles tweeted and posted after the election, from November 7, 2012 until December 4, 2012.

When open coding, 10 major categories were developed based on the content of the news articles. Each major category includes subcategories that further break down the major themes and describe the articles. The 11 major categories include: Money/Finance, Voting Populations, Reflections on Wins and Losses, Campaign Strategies and Efforts, Campaign and Voter Issues, Polling, Predictions, and Horse Race Coverage, Military and National Security, Meta-Media Coverage, Hurricane Sandy, and Humor, Satire, Fake

News. The Tables in Appendix B show the counts and percentage of each category and sub category (see Figure Q).

The largest major category in the dataset is campaign and voter issues, which accounts for 501 of the 1822 articles or 27.5% of the dataset. This major category includes coverage of taxes, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and workers unions, and equal pay for women and The Lilly Ledbetter Act. However, the largest subcategory in this major category regarded voter identification legislation and voter rights which describer 155 (8.5%) of the 1822 articles in the data set.

The second largest major category in the dataset is campaign strategies and efforts, which represented 352 (19.3%) of the 1822 articles in the dataset. This major category included 83 (4.6%) articles about campaign and political lies and 72 (4.0%) articles about candidate endorsements.

The third largest category in the dataset includes articles on money and finance, which included 218 (12%) of the dataset. This included subcategories such as 89 (4.9%) articles on the fiscal cliff and 35 (1.9%) articles on the general financial system.

The fourth largest category in the dataset is on the wins and losses of the Democratic and Republican parties. This includes 210 (11.5%) of the 1822 articles in the dataset. The largest subcategories include 70 (3.8%) articles explaining the Romney loss, GOP failure, and casting blame and 58 (3.1%) articles explaining the meaning of Obama's victory, explaining how Obama won, and President Obama's plans for the future.

The fifth largest major category on youth was on voting populations, and included 106 (5.8%) of the 1822 articles in the dataset. This major category also included the

largest amount of subcategories, 26 total. Important to this analysis, the subcategory of Millennials, College Students, Young Adults, Young “Nones” is included in this major category, making up 23 (1.3%) of the 1822 articles in the dataset. This subcategory will be explored in the following section.

The sixth largest category was on political polling, predictions and horse race coverage. This accounted for 156 (8.6%) of the 1822 articles in the dataset. Unlike the previous categories, this did not have any subcategories, but will be fully explored in the coming section.

The largest subcategory of the articles in the dataset is political polling, predictions, and horse race coverage. With 158 (8.7%) articles from the dataset, this subcategory also served as a major category.

The *NewsWhip* dataset was collected based upon the frequency with which the millennial generation tweeted or posted news articles on social media sites, Facebook and Twitter. While the journal analysis provides more insight into the issues of dominant importance to the millennial generation, some insights based on the content of the dataset can also be made. First, articles about political polling, predictions, and horserace coverage as well as articles about voter-rights and voter-identification laws were the most frequent in the dataset. They accounted for a combined total of 304 (16.6%) of the 1822 articles. The remainder of the articles were spread out among the other categories, with no other category totaling over 100. The dominance in popularity of these two article contents suggested that in the journal analysis, reflections on these articles should be especially considered.

The frequency of articles is likely due to two reasons. First, the articles may have been more popular and more interesting to millennials, thus causing them to share them more often on social media. Alternatively, it is possible that there were simply more articles written on these subjects, thus millennials were more likely to encounter and read articles on these subjects. These two possibilities will be further discussed in the journal chapter and discussion chapter of this dissertation. However, based on the dataset and the severe popularity of some content and minimal appearance of others, it is most likely a result of a combination of the two reasons.

The infrequency of articles about the millennial generation is also important, especially considering that children (those not eligible to vote) were discussed more often. While outside of the scope of this study, future research should investigate the popularity and occurrences of this topic. Also, the other voter groups identified should also be studied, especially considering the many categories addressed in the content.

To support reliability, a second coder was asked to read a 3% (55 articles) random sample of the 1822 articles and assign codes. After asking a second coder to assign a dominant code to each of the articles, a Cohen's kappa test was conducted to determine statistical reliability and agreement between the two coders. The kappa for the random selection of the 55 articles was 87.9%, above the disciplinary average of 80%.

Millennials in Online Election News

Despite that these articles were selected by American millennials during the course of election 2012, there is almost a complete absence of a reflection on millennials outside of political polling (which will be discussed in the next section). This opposes the position that millennials are obsessed with themselves, considering if this was true, the

dataset should have had many millennial references (Twenge, 2007). Instead, there is a type of millennial invisibility in these articles that suggests millennials were not a large part of the election. Of the 1822 articles, only 23 articles were explicitly and primarily about the millennial generation. While these articles are important and will be fully explored in this section, there are a few other categories that are also important in the consideration of the millennials in the election 2012 news. The way technology was discussed in online news articles is also critically important because of the strong connection made between the use and adoption of technology by the millennial generation by other scholars (Montgomery, 2004). This section will also consider how the millennial generation was discussed after the election, as a possible explanation for the results.

Articles about Millennials

The first two articles from the *NewsWhip* dataset about the millennial generation focus on millennial students at Ohio State University who were outraged by an advertisement placed in the University newspaper about Romney's support of Michigan State athletics (one of Ohio State's rival). Both *Buzzfeed* and *The Huffington Post* covered this incident occurring in the key battleground state of Ohio. The articles were the 14th (*BuzzFeed*) and 23rd (*Huffington Post*) most shared on October 6, 2012. Both articles suggest that this advertisement placed by the Ohio Democratic Party was clearly intended as an attempt to influence college-age students. However, the tone and discourse surrounding this advertisement suggest that this advertisement is a silly and humorous example of the cut-throat election environment, but still one that will affect the desired group, the millennial generation. *Buzzfeed's* subtitle for this article reads, "Sh*t just got

real in the battleground state,” humorously pointing out that this advertisement is far from the first or worst of the advertisements in the key state. However, it is *The Huffington Post* that really hints this humorous advertisement is effective with the desired group.

They state

Ohio's Democratic Party also hits Romney's Wolverine fandom on its website, criticizing Romney for loving ‘the Big House, Ann Arbor, and all things (except the auto-industry) in that state up North.’ Ohio State and Michigan have had a heated football rivalry for decades, with ESPN once ranking the feud the top greatest sports rivalry. (Lavendar, P., October 6, 2012)

Gee’s (2010) work on discourse analysis suggests that a vital consideration is the significance given by a topic or issue. Here, the articles about Romney’s collegiate allegiance suggest that while the article may be of importance with the Ohio and Michigan university demographic, in comparison to other issues, advertisements, and people in the election, this was far from significant. What this also does, is it casts the group that would find deem this as an important topic (the college students) as being ill-informed or fixated on the wrong issue. This discourse is carried through in other media coverage in the *NewsWhip* dataset.

Less than three days later, *The Huffington Post* reported and shared a viral video of a group of young men who created a rap to support Mitt Romney. The young men in the video are described as “white suburban white kids who appear to live in Utah (which many refer to as the South Central of the northern Southwest).” From this statement alone, it appears that the newspaper is identifying the rappers as silly and unimportant.

This is reinforced by the opening sentence of the article:

The coveted rapper demographic is still up for grabs in the presidential race, and the stakes just blew up. On one hand, Snoop Dogg, er, Snoop

Lion refuses to vote for Romney because "he looks like a ho." (October 8, 2012)

This relates to Gee's consideration of identity as a marker of discourse. Again, here, the rappers are treated as if their rap video is inconsequential and a funny example of how youth "think" politics works. The article fails to consider that the video could have been made as an ironic gesture to the political system or media coverage, prompted by a critical reflection by youth. Instead, the video and its creators are depicted as out-of-touch and unaware of the real political environment.

Referencing the Millennial Generation

This depiction of youth's identity is also found in the language used to identify this demographic group. For example, one article on NPR's website identified the group using the term, "young nones," referring to the group's lack of religious affiliation and practices.

What's more, there's little evidence to show that "generational cohorts" tend to become more religious as they get older, Smith says. So today's young "nones" are likely to stay that way. Ann Duncan, an assistant professor of religion at Goucher College in Baltimore, agrees that "younger voters in particular are frustrated with the failure or refusal of traditional denominations to change with the times and embrace broader ideas on marriage and the environment, for example." (Neuman, October 9, 2012)

The term "nones" refers to the group's responses on survey's when they are asked about their religious denomination or beliefs. However, the term "none" can also easily be interpreted as a negative identity marker. In a society that is obsessed with more, being called a none can be interpreted as a negative (Bishop, 2011). This is reinforced later in the article:

And, as a whole, many Americans are still uncomfortable with the idea of a president who doesn't believe in a deity. In a poll conducted earlier this year, barely half of those polled said they would be willing to support an atheist in the White House. That's an increase from 40 percent in 1978, but still ranks at the bottom of a fill-in-the-blank list behind a gay or Muslim president. Currently, there is just one member of Congress, Rep. Pete Stark, D-Calif., who says he does not believe in a Supreme Being. (Neuman, October 9, 2012)

Other articles use the term “young none” to refer to the group, especially when discussing the way that religion and politics intersect. In *The Huffington Post* article, “Young, Catholic, and Conflicted” from October 16, 2012, the confusion regarding the religious identity is expressed.

You'd think my strong Irish-American Catholic background -- complete with a large family, weekly Mass, patron saints and 16 years of Catholic school -- would have built a solid foundation upon which I could rest my religious convictions. But alas, here I am, once again evading any kind of religious identification in favor of putting my head between my knees, my fingers in my ears and saying, "I don't know; I DON'T KNOW!" over and over again. (Boyle, October 12, 2012)

This article, written by a millennial, argues that the problem of religious identification does not just rest with the pollsters and the religiously fervent, it is also exemplified by the mixed feelings of the millennial generation. Articles like this one, combined with the article depicting the generation as a “none,” suggest that the generation is fraught with in-decision, thus making them weaker, and lesser than those who are able to make up their mind on this issue.

Importantly, the millennial generation was rarely called the millennial generation in the entire *NewsWhip* dataset. Instead, journalists referred to the group as “young nones,” “youth,” “young voters,” “young Americans,” and “twenty-somethings.” While it is clear that all these names refer to the group of individuals who are more widely

known as the millennial generation, the absence of this concrete name is important. Gee (2008) argues that issues of identity are critically important in understanding the discourses surrounding a group of individuals. Because the group is referred to inconsistently, the group's identity becomes murky.

This inconsistency does not seem to be a problem for other social groups, or even other generational groups. The Baby Boomer generation is consistently referred to by their name, as are several other demographic groups (identified in the Table with counts), such as Latinos, women, and veterans. The multitude of names used to identify the millennial generation provides a challenge to readers to identify and learn about the group. This may also reflect that in the news media, the group has an inconsistent identity, especially considering the way the millennials were discussed in relation to technology and the election results.

Technology

Millennials were also closely tied to conversations on technology during the election coverage. While technology was also its own category, which mostly focused on polling innovations, candidate technological tools and platforms, and social media as a political predictor, references to technology were common in the articles primarily about the millennial generation.

For example, one article identified Internet technologies as the reason that so many young adults dressed up as Big Bird for Halloween. An ABC news article from October 10, 2012, suggested that it was the dramatic and sudden appearance of Big Bird meme's following the first Presidential Debate that prompted two dominant online retailers to sell out of the adult women's costume:

When GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney spoke about cutting funds for PBS during last Wednesday's debate, he said, "I love Big Bird" – PBS airs and partially funds "Sesame Street," which is Big Bird's home. Since that moment, the 7-foot bird has been a hot topic of discussion, **inspiring memes**, parodies and even **presidential campaign videos**. It has also apparently spurred a new Halloween costume craze. (Fama, October 10, 2012; bold original to quote)

Although the article never formally mentions the millennial generation, the photograph of a young, twenty-something, wearing the "sassy big bird costume" suggests that it is young adults causing the surge in purchases. This insinuation of the young adult image is further propelled because Halloween is widely considered a young holiday, and the costumes being sold are a part of the young-adult product line.

Also important is that technology used by the millennial generation is being depicted as focused on a silly and somewhat unimportant topic, especially compared to the topics the main technology category involved (polling innovations, candidate technological tools and platforms, and social media as a political predictor). Similar to the way that the viral rap video and the Ohio-Michigan rivalry described the interests of millennials, the discussion surrounding millennial use of technology positioned the group as using it for silly and unimportant topics, such as Halloween.

Alternatively, technology is also depicted as an antidotal example of a candidate's public opinion. In an article from November 12, 2012, CNN reported that Mitt Romney's Facebook friend count was falling by the day, suggesting that youth on the popular social media site were actively ending their friendship with the candidate after he failed to win the Presidency:

The former governor's team hasn't been doing much on social media lately to persuade (young) people to stick around. After a flurry of activity leading up to the election, his official Facebook and Twitter accounts went

silent for four days afterward. On Saturday, the campaign finally posted a photo of a sad-looking Romney with the message, 'From the bottom of our hearts, Ann and I thank you for your support, prayers, efforts and vote. We are forever grateful to every one of you.' (Kelly, November 12, 2012)

Here, social media is not looked at as a cause for the Obama victory or Romney loss, as it is in the technology category. Instead, it is a supplementary example provided by the journalist to reinforce why Romney lost. Again, social media and technology are discussed differently when they are removed from the context of youth and the millennial generation. Social media is used as just one example of Romney's failure to maintain support after the election when discussed in the context of young people, but it viewed as the main reason why President Obama won another term when looked at in the context of the entire electorate. This is visible in an NPR piece from November 12, 2012 that credited the Obama campaign's use of new technologies with his victory:

But other technological advances are credited with helping propel President Obama to victory. The campaign developed new online tools, including a program called Dashboard that allowed volunteers to work remotely. Why head into a phone bank when you can make calls from home? (Siegel, November 12, 2012)

Again, the reference here is that social media and technology made a difference to the entire electorate and therefore, election. This is very different from the way technology is discussed when relating it to youth and social media. The same can be said when describing Mitt Romney's loss as a result of misusing polling technology and information, as in one article from NBC on November 8, 2012.

In conversations on Wednesday, aides were generally wistful, not angry, at how the campaign ended. Most, like their boss, truly believed the campaign's now almost comically inaccurate models, and that a victory was well within their grasp. (Haake, November 8, 2012)

This difference in the relationship depicted between youth and social media and the election and social media is important. Despite much of academic research that depicts the millennial generation as technological innovators, users, and propellers, the election news articles challenge this position and instead argue that young people's use of technology is far from politically important. By consistently featuring stories about millennials use of technology as anecdotal evidence or silly, the significance of this relationship is minimized and instead related to the larger electorate.

The Election Results

Despite being depicted as a troubled and inconsequential relationship to technology, the millennial generation was heavily discussed in the aftermath of the election. In one article featured in *The Huffington Post* on November 16, 2012,

Young voters, Romney said, were motivated by the administration's plan for partial forgiveness of college loan interest and being able to remain on their parents' health insurance plans. Young women had an additional incentive to vote for Obama because of free contraception coverage under the president's health care plan, he said. (November 16, 2012)

When discussing the groups responsible for the Obama victory (and the Romney failure), the Romney campaign identified young voters, as well as young women and Latinos, that connected with President' Obama's message more than their own. The Romney campaign went on to explain that it was President Obama's campaign tactic of framing the Governor as anti-immigration and anti-college debt forgiveness that alienated him from the youth. This article identifies youth as a critical reason for Romney's loss, thus suggesting that the demographic was capable of having influence and effect in the presidential election.

Other articles similarly suggest that it was youth who were largely responsible for the Obama victory. In an article published just three days after the election, CNN adamantly stated that it was the youth who inspired and created a dramatic turning point in American politics, where the minority electorate was finally in political power.

For generations, those who knew politics predicted this change would happen one day. On Tuesday, it did. For several election cycles now, women have represented more than half of the electorate yet have been an under-appreciated voting bloc. Add to that the explosive growth of and increased political activism among Latinos, many of whom are younger, under 35. Then there is the generations-long fight for political gains among African Americans, helping culminate in the re-election of the nation's first black president. The growing political power among other minority groups and vocal youth vote has meant that the party these groups largely back -- Democrats -- netted huge gains during this election cycle. (Abdullah, November 10, 2012).

Here, it is the youth who are identified as truly possessing power during this election, the power to elect a new president, the power to give historical minorities a decisive voice, and, ultimately, the power to give Democrats big political gains.

Other articles came to similar conclusions as well:

There was a fair amount of skepticism going into the presidential election as to whether President Obama could count on younger voters' support the way he did four years ago. But it's clear the youth vote once again made a critical difference, as a new Pew Research Center report helped document... As a matter of election analysis, this is certainly noteworthy data, which helps explain why the president was able to do as well as he did. (Benen, November 27, 2012)

However, not all articles reinforce this sentiment. There are several articles that cast the millennial generation and the young as power-less, and politically disengaged, even after it was revealed that the millennial generation had a 50.5% voter turnout rate. However, it is not to whom these articles attribute the victory and failure of each candidate, it is who they leave out of the conversation all together. Immediately after the

election, the Maddow Blog argued that it was the racial and ethnic diversity that led to Romney's (and the GOP's) failure during 2012, not the influx of youth.

The nation is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, and the GOP seems to be going out of its way to become whiter. Republicans seem to be discovering new ways to alienate women, while moving even further from the American mainstream on reproductive rights and women's health. (Benen, November 7, 2012)

Important in this consideration is the fact that the only way for a country to become more "racially and ethnically" diverse is for there to be a new younger populace of racially and ethnically diverse people. Similarly, The Huffington Post argued that it was fellow GOP member's comments on race and ethnicity that were to blame for Romney's loss.

The Republican party has steadily moved toward the fringe, not only in candidates (Mourdock, Akin, Bachmann), but in supporters. Whether conscientiously or not, the party has drawn racists, bigots, religious nuts, and those who use religion to justify anti-social, intolerant behavior. (Devin, November 7, 2012)

This article leaves out that it is not those comments that led to Romney's loss, but rather a younger electorate who negatively reacted to those comments that produced results. What is important here is not that there was widespread discussion of the reasons for Romney's loss (that was to be expected), but rather that the conversation often left the millennial generation out. Despite several stories that asserted the millennials had a significant impact on the election results, most articles failed to reflect on their role.

This coverage reflects a noteworthy disparity between the coverage of the millennials after the election. While some articles argued that the millennials were a huge part of the national election results, other articles downplayed and even ignored their contributions. For a reader, this leaves many questions about the true role of the millennial

generation in election 2012, such as what role did the millennial generation really have in election results? This question is further complicated when looking at the coverage of the millennial generation in other article categories such as political polling.

Millennials in Political Polling, Predictions, and Horse Race Coverage

Political polling, predictions, and horse race coverage was the largest coded category of the *NewsWhip* dataset. However, many articles also included references to the millennial generation, youth, young Americans, and 18-29 year-olds. This suggests that a deeper analysis of this category is even more important when considering the discourses surrounding the engagement of the millennial generation.

Referencing the Millennial Generation

An immediate observation made about these articles are the names given to the group. Most pollsters report their data in clusters, reporting each demographic groups' current opinion or voting preference. As a result, individual ages are combined into four or five categories to make the data clearer and more easily reported.

Primarily, the millennial generation was described as voters between the ages of 18-29. While this does incorporate the voting eligible members of the millennial generation, it fails to recognize the group as a generation or a cohesive group. Rather, it is just a collection of individuals who share an age range. Other age groups included, 30-49, 50-64, and 64+ (Pew, October 8, 2012). Also important, none of these groups were ever referred to as generations, despite their ages corresponding closely (but not exactly) with the age of each recognized generational group.

However, this identification of the ages was limited to the reporting of statistical findings. When there was more substantial descriptive information about the group of 18-

29 year olds, they were discussed as youth or young Americans. For example, in an article The Huffington Post on October 8, 2012, the author's described the enthusiasm and interest of the age group with Mitt Romney.

Romney, who for much of the campaign has been underwater on favorability, hit a 50 percent approval rating for the first time in a Pew survey, boosted by rising approval from women and voters younger than 50. (Blumenthal & Edwards-Levy, October 8, 2012)

What is also important here, is that the age groups are combined to now not just refer to Americans within the 18-29 year-old age group, but now also the under 50 age group. After reading the initial Pew Research Center for the People and the Press study, it would appear that the journalists, not the pollsters, combined the two categories of 18-29 and 30-49 year olds. This also happened in other articles (describing the same Pew study). This is important because it sets up the ability of the journalist to compare the 18-50 year old age group, with another, frequently discussed group, seniors. In a Huffington Post interview with Chuck Todd on October 7, 2012, senior enthusiasm was described as being at an all-time high, which was critically important to the strategy of candidate Romney. However, in the following paragraph, youth enthusiasm and engagement was described as on the decline, especially compared to the 2008 election.

Look at four years ago. It was a 13 point gap in favor of the Democrats. Let me go through some various voting groups. This is an important voting group. Seniors are an important voting group to Mitt Romney now. He leads them by about 10 points in our NBC Wall Street Journal poll. Look at this in engagement in the election. Four years ago was 81%, pretty higher. Even higher this time at 87%. And Romney's doing better among seniors than McCain did.

Let me go to an important voting group for the president, young voters. Look at this engagement level: 52% now they call themselves, voters 18 to 34, call themselves extremely interested in this election. Four years ago it was 72%. That 20 gap. The president wins young voters by huge margins. He's winning them by some 20-plus points. But if you don't have this kind

of enthusiasm, they're not going to show up to the polls. (Participant 14, Week 2)

Whereas seniors were largely defined as a group that was engaged and building momentum, youth were discussed as declining in their political enthusiasm and voting potential. This juxtaposition appears multiple times throughout the data set, encouraging the view that it is older, not younger Americans who are politically involved. This message is complicated when considering the language surrounding these findings; it is the youth, not seniors whose ages are identified. According to Gee (2008), the concreteness of the identity involved in a text is very important to understanding overall discourses. Because the ages of young voters are identified, and the age of seniors are concealed, it leads the reader to know exactly who these young American's are, but open to interpret what ages seniors might be. Without providing a concrete answer, the reader is left to guess and provide their own interpretation of who is a senior. Because, in articles that compare these two age groups, there is no mention of ages in-between 34 and senior, it is possible that the term senior can come to represent all other ages, or at least anyone who is not 18-34 years-old. This means that it is just the young voters who are losing engagement and enthusiasm, while the rest of the country (those older than 34) are actually gaining political momentum.

Further, what is important in this article is the relationship built between engagement, enthusiasm, and actual voting. Polls interpret the question, "how interested are you in the election?" as an indicator of engagement and enthusiasm. While this seems like an accurate interpretation of the questions' meaning, it is complicated by the assumption that a person who is highly interested is also highly likely to vote. According

to the Chuck Todd interview, this is an accurate conclusion, especially when the journalist comments on what this might mean for voter turnout for President Obama. However, what is left out of this discussion, is that it is possible for those who are uninterested in the election to also show up on election day to vote. In a Politico article from October 8, 2012, this relationship was again suggested between intensity and voting likelihood.

The head-to-head numbers have held remarkably steady through the past three weeks, but there's been a notable shift of intensity from the Democrats to the Republicans since the party conventions over a month ago. Most of the poll's calls were made before Romney's strong performance at the first presidential debate in Denver.

The percentages among key Democratic constituencies who say they are extremely likely to vote should cause concern in Chicago: While 82 percent of whites (who break for Romney by a 15-point margin) say they're "extremely likely" to vote, only 71 percent of African-Americans and 70 percent of Latinos do. And just 68 percent of 18-to-29-year-olds, another key Obama constituency, put themselves in the "extremely likely" to vote category.

The trend lines suggest that Obama will be forced to devote more time than he'd like in the final weeks toward motivating African-Americans, Latinos and college kids. (Hohmann, October 8, 2012)

The relationship between concepts is one element of a text Gee (2008) suggests researchers should consider in a discourse analysis. In examples where enthusiasm and intensity are portrayed as related to voter likelihood, it becomes clear that youth are less enthused, intense and likely to vote, especially compared to their senior counterparts.

This relationship was reinforced in a Guardian article from October 21, 2012.

They'll need it. Enthusiasm is important for two main reasons. The first is voters: people need to be energised enough to get to the polls. The second is volunteers: someone has to get them there. This is a much bigger issue for Democrats, whose base of young, black and Latino voters traditionally manage a lower turnout and have fared particularly badly under Obama. (Younge, October 21, 2012)

Other relationships are drawn in the polling, predictions, and horse race coverage articles. In particular, it is the relationship between youth and other minority groups that plays an important role in the discourse.

Minorities and Subgroups

In almost all instances of reporting on youth, young voters, or 18-29 year-olds, minority groups were also reported. In most cases, these group polling numbers were reported in the same paragraph and even sentence. For example,

One reason for this is because the automated polls used by Rasmussen and other outfits -- which NBC News don't report on -- are barred by law from contacting voters whose sole phone line is cellular. These voters are typically understood to skew younger and toward minorities, and thus, more Democratic. (O'Brien, October 6, 2012)

Romney also made major gains among two key elements of Obama's coalition — women and younger voters. The GOP candidate wiped out Obama's advantage among women voters. Last month, Obama led by 18 points among women, 56% to 38%; now they are even, 47% to 47%. And Romney's image improvement among voters under 30 (he now is viewed favorably by 42% of that group, compared with 32% in September) was his biggest improvement of any age demographic. (West, October 8, 2012)

The president has lost ground among independents (down 10 points from September), women (down eight points) and voters under age 35 (down six points). (Blanton, October 19, 2012)

In Ohio, for instance, the official said the campaign had hit its mark in terms of female, young or minority voters in the early-vote totals. And more offices, the official argued, has meant a "footprint" in the neighborhood so that people in more out-of-reach areas don't have to drive. (Haberman, November 3, 2012)

Here, the co-listing of these groups, or subgroups as many articles call them, refers to the millennial generation, young voters, and youth as a sub-category of the larger electorate. However, what is critically important, is that the other groups that are co-listed with them are the groups that have been traditionally politically suppressed or

disadvantaged. This includes, women, African Americans/ Black voters, and Latinos. Further, when considering the context of these articles, these same groups are referred to as minorities, not subgroups. In one article on polling conducted in primarily Spanish speaking counties, the Latino community is referred to as a minority community, especially when discussing the misinformation campaigns on the updated voter-identification laws.

“In Ohio and Wisconsin, billboards in mostly low-income and minority neighborhoods showed prisoners behind bars and warned of criminal penalties for voter fraud - an effort that voting rights groups say was designed to intimidate minority voters. (October 24, 2012)

These articles suggest that the political identity, ability, and agency of the young is similar to other minority groups, who were largely framed as victims of misinformation campaigns and, thus, politically disadvantaged in the 2012 election. These articles go beyond just suggesting that there is a connection between the traditional minority groups and youth, but instead assert that the youth political experience is similar to that of the minority groups.

The language surrounding these groups is also a consideration of discourse analysis. Many articles discussed the polling numbers as products of candidate action or inaction, rather than the political decision of individuals. For example,

Since September, Mitt Romney has made gains among women and younger voters, and has expanded his advantage among whites without a college degree... And Romney picked up nine points among voters with family incomes of \$75,000 or more. (Pew, October 8, 2012)

He's started losing female voters, treating women as no more than a constituency of sexual organs and then hiding behind his secretary of state's skirt. (Castellanos, October 16, 2012)

The president has lost ground among independents (down 10 points from September), women (down eight points) and voters under age 35 (down six points). (Blanton, October 19, 2012)

What the description of these polling reports assert, is that public opinion is in the control of the candidate, rather than a product of the group's impression and views. The phrases, "Romney picked up," "he's started losing," and "The President has lost ground" implies that the resulting polling data was a more a result of the candidate's action than the corresponding group's public opinion. These phrases take the control out of the hands of groups and instead give it to the candidate. Further, these phrases are mostly used when describing these minority groups or subgroups. When describing overall polling results of the entire electorate, the language is much different. Consider the following examples from reports of general or overall polling data.

But the near tie nationwide continues to translate into narrow but statistically meaningful advantages for Obama in a handful of states that will likely decide the outcome of the election. (Blumenthal, October 22, 2012)

ABC and the *Washington Post* recently conducted a survey asking registered voters who they prefer: President Obama or former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney. (Manetti, October 23, 2012)

And while polls show that Obama got the advantage on Romney when it comes to being to talk about the job of navigating a treacherous world, the same polls also showed that Romney was seen as a perfectly plausible commander in chief. (Stirewalt, October 23, 2012)

Here, the phrases, "a handful of states that will likely decide," "asking registered voters who they prefer," and "Romney was seen as" all demonstrate that when talking about the overall electorate, the control was taken out of the hands of the candidates and given over to the public. This is markedly different from the way that polling data is reported when referring to the minority or subgroups and has important implications for

the overall discourse surrounding these groups. The identity of the overall electorate is one that has control, power and influence, and ability to change the national election. Alternatively, the identity portrayed in the first set of articles suggests that the minority or subgroups are politically weak, and are influenced by the politicians and political process. This important differentiation between the descriptions of the two groups is even more important when considering the frequency of polling articles in the *NewsWhip* dataset.

Reflection on Polling Data

While articles about political polling, predictions, and horserace coverage were the most frequent type of article in the dataset, it is important to note that they appeared overwhelmingly in the days prior to the election. While some polling results were discussed after the election, 115 (73.7%) of the 156 articles appeared before November 6, 2012. There are two possible explanations for this. First, because the *NewsWhip* dataset was selected based on popularity with the millennial generation, it is possible that this type of article was more interesting and popular prior to the election. Second, and more likely, polling articles were more common or frequent in general in the days prior to the election. This would be especially true of horse-race coverage that focuses specifically on who's ahead and behind in the race, thus relying on the final victor to not yet be announced. Polling articles that appeared after the election primarily focused on the inaccurate polling data that candidate Romney was using to determine which states he needed to focus his campaign on.

No article in this dataset appeared after the election that gave a full breakdown of the election results by demographic information. Several articles discussed and “mapped” visually what states went Democratic or Republican (in the National, Senate, House, and

local elections), but no article fully analyzed the electorate breakdown demographically, as they had done in the articles prior to the election. In the articles prior, breaking down the electorate into subgroups or minorities was very common, appearing in nearly half of all polling articles. This was completely absent from the articles during and after the election, that instead focused on the wider electorate rather than these groups. Again, there are two possible explanations of this. First, it is possible the articles providing detailed breakdown of polling results existed, but they were unpopular with the millennial audience. Alternatively, these articles could have been rare, and journalists may have focused on the bigger picture rather than the individual subgroups or minorities.

Types, Formats, and Affordances

The third major finding of the discourse analysis of the online news content concerns the types of articles, the publications, and the format of each website. While the content of the articles suggests the issues, framing, and information that was of most interest to the millennial generation during election 2012, the design of the articles is also critically important to understand the form that popular online content takes. In this sense, looking at the presence of different types of articles, such as blog posts, op-eds, breaking-news coverage, position pieces, open letters of endorsements, and traditional news reporting is important to this analysis.

The Blog Style

First, although traditional news stories do appear in the *NewsWhip* dataset, the majority of articles are written similarly to a blog post. This is identified based on the article being published on the blog part of a news site (such as The Huffington Post *Blog*

or *MaddowBlog*) or because of the style of reporting. In addition to being marked as blog articles, they also feature a use of the reporter's personal account, the use of "I" or an open display or acknowledgement of bias.

For example, "Voting: Why Third Party Means Noting (For Now)" by "Joe the Nerd Ferraro" was featured on *The Huffington Post*, in *The Blog* section of the Politics page. This is both formally noted as a blog piece because of its inclusion on the blog section of the website, but also because of the style and tone used throughout the piece. This piece not only enacts the identity of the third party voter and candidate, but it also outwardly displays the identity of the author.

"All those sane people who left the GOP do not have a home now. They can return to fight for their old GOP apparatus or they can create a new one. I am sure there enough people disassociated with the current system that would come back if there was a legitimate path to victory." (Ferraro, October 8, 2012).

Quotes such as this demonstrate that "blog" articles often have both a formal classification by the news publication as a blog post as well as a blog-like style. Here, the use of "I," works to introduce the author's personal identity and opinion into the piece. Importantly, there is no attempt to conceal this as a type of traditional reporting where the reporter's personal opinions should be kept out, in favor of an objective lens. Instead, the subjectivity is embraced by both the publication and readers. This particular piece received just over 2,500 likes and tweets on Facebook and Twitter, and was the 17th most popular article posted and tweeted by Millennials on October 8, 2012.

Of the 1822 articles, 719 have a formal blog classification by the publication, such as in the example of "Joe the Nerd Ferraro." However, there are also pieces that adopt the blog-like style without the formal classification or being included in a blogging

section of a publication. For example, conservative Twitter curation site, *Twitchy.com* features stories framed as responses to previously tweeted content from other sources. In this example, *Twitchy* responds to a Tweet by the SEIU that supported fast-food employees striking.

“Fast food workers in New York City barely make enough to get by. Many of us make minimum wage — just \$7.25 an hour, or as little as \$11,000 a year. Meanwhile, the Goliath corporations we work for, like McDonalds, Wendy’s, Taco Bell, KFC, and Pizza Hut, are part of a \$200 billion industry. These corporations reap huge profits and shower CEOs with exorbitant compensation while most of their employees qualify for food stamps.” (Statement issued by SEIU and tweeted on November 29, 2012) Damn those greedy corporations that employ people! Good thing workers and strike advocates are giving those corporations what for. How better to lobby for more money for all the work you’re doing than by ceasing to work? (Twitchy Staff, November 29, 2012)

Unlike the previous example, *Twitchy* does not consider itself a blog, but rather a news site. Their slogan is “If it’s news, we’re on it. If it *should* be news, we’re ahead of it.” This presentation as news differs from other news sources that formally designate blog portions of their site. Despite this, the content on *Twitchy* uses many of the same characteristics as the blog posts featured on other sites. In this example from November 29, 2012, *Twitchy* issues a satirical response to the SEIU’s statement of support of worker protest. Again, this invokes the identity of creator of the article, by implying the workers who are protesting are flawed and showing support for the companies that employ them.

However, different from other blog posts where the author is prominently displayed, the majority of content on *Twitchy* is anonymous. Although there is a contributor page that features information about *Twitchy* editors, there is no byline on each article. Again, this differs from traditional news reporting where the reporter is usually identified as a means of ensuring journalistic credibility and accountability, thus

further suggesting *Twitchy* content is blog-like. This is clearly popular with millennials considering this post was the 13th most popular article on November 29, 2012, receiving over 200 likes and tweets.

Different from the blog authorship styles of *Huffington Post* and *Twitchy*, other sites restrict blog posting to one or two staff writers. The *MaddowBlog* is written by staff writers, Steve Benen, Sunita Sohoni and Tricia McKinney. Unlike the blog authors on The Huffington Post who are usually not formal journalists and not employed by the organization, these authors are members of the *MaddowBlog* staff and are paid by MSNBC.

Steve Benen's article "What Makes America Exceptional" written the morning after Obama's election night victory, is both formally classified as a blog post and continues to use the blog-style seen in other publications. For example,

In reality, Obama is the only president in American history to publicly use the magical phrase 'American exceptionalism,' but even that didn't seem to make the right happy.

Which is why I was delighted by this portion of Obama's speech last night -- he touted "what makes America exceptional," but then defined it *the way he wanted to*.

The right wants to talk about exceptionalism? Fine -- America's exceptional because of our progressive ideals, including our "obligations to one another" and our "responsibilities" to our country. The right doesn't own the principle of exceptionalism; this was the president's way of embracing it on his own terms.

It was vintage Obama, and the rhetoric soared." (Benen, November 7, 2012)

Aside from the use of "I," it is clear Benen is asserting his own opinion and is critiquing the conservative "American exceptionalism" argument. Further, he applauds President Obama's use of it in his victory speech. The identity of the writer is demonstrated

through his open critique and scolding of the right and their failure to appreciate Obama's speech.

Perhaps what makes Benen different from the other authors who write using a blog-like style is that he is employed and paid by MSNBC and the *MaddowBlog*. This is different from the blog authors on *The Huffington Post* who are not paid for their contributions. Further, *The Huffington Post* often notes each author's identity and professional affiliations in the author's byline on each article. "Joe the Nerd Ferraro's" byline reads "Dad, husband, computer nerd," clearly disassociating him with formal employment by *The Huffington Post*. Differently, Benen is one of only a handful of writers that are featured on the *MaddowBlog*. Of the 235 *MaddowBlog* articles included in the *NewsWhip* dataset, 186 of them were written by Steve Benen. Alternatively, "Joe the Nerd Ferraro," appears only once in the 911 articles from *The Huffington Post*.

Videos and Photographs

Beyond the format of the articles, the associated media content is also worth consideration. 879 of the 1822 articles included photos. Videos were also popular, appearing in 104 articles. More important than the sheer amount of photographs and videos included in the article's tweeted and posted, are the way that this content was integrated. For example, many articles that included embedded videos, only included a few sentences of text. On October 8, 2012, *Huffington Post* shared a video called "Mitt Romney Debates Himself." The video, generated by *The Daily Kos*, edited footage of Mitt Romney during the first Presidential Debate and his 2012 campaign to create a visual flip-flop of Romney's talking points (Stenovec, October 8, 2012). *The Huffington Post* provided little text to accompany this video, adding only a few sentences to the

space following the video to describe *The Daily Kos* and to link to their own election tracker dashboard. This particular article received over 2,000 likes and tweets by millennials on October 8, 2012 and was the 29th most popular article of the day. However, the video (originally uploaded to YouTube by *The Daily Kos*) received over 2 million views on YouTube over the course of the election.

The use of humor in video is also evidenced in this example. Like the “Romney debates himself” video, many of the viral videos from the election are humorous or are framed as humorous in the accompanying article. For example, “The Mitt Romney Rap” was a rap video created by a group of young white, midwestern rappers originally posted on YouTube (October 8, 2012). Despite the video being generated as a means to show support for candidate Romney, *The Huffington Post* framed the video as humorous, stating:

It starts off, "*His name Romney and he came to say / He's gonna fix all the problems in the USA,*" so, we might as well call off the election now.

Similarly, many of the videos included in the dataset were either designed to be funny or were framed as humorous by the supporting text. As a clear effort to report on viral and popular media being shared during the election, many of the included videos were viral, meaning they had over 1 million hits during a 3-7 day period (Socialtimes). *The Huffington Post* article on the “Mitt Romney Rap” generated around 75 likes and tweets on October 8, 2012, making it the 19th most popular article of the day. However, on YouTube, the video generated over 75,000 views during the course of the election.

Similarly, *Buzzfeed* revolutionized the way photographs were included and used in online news stories. Like the presentation of videos, images were often featured as the

main content on these articles, with just a few lines of text surrounding each image. Following the Vice Presidential Debate, *Buzzfeed* released an article comprised of 19 images of Vice President Joe Biden and Congressman Paul Ryan during the debate. The article titled, “The Many Gesticulations of Joe Biden” was created to capture the facial expressions of both candidates, while highlighting Vice President Biden’s humorous responses. The 19 images each received a title and nothing else, allowing the photographs to be the main materials of this article. For example, one image depicting Vice President Biden arguing with Ryan while pointing to a piece of paper is titled “The ‘Validate my Parking.’” This particular article was the 17th most common article to be tweeted and posted on October 13, 2012 (the day after the Vice Presidential debate), and received 18,000 Facebook likes and tweets (Laessig, October 11, 2012).

Again, similar to the use of videos, *Buzzfeed’s* articles are primarily humorous in nature, using images and a small amount of text to illustrate a point. Also similar to the blog-like style, *Buzzfeed* is not shy about inserting its views into each article. While the article depicts Biden as an “interpretive kabuki pantomime,” it simultaneously depicts Ryan as uptight and unenthused. This is further highlighted by other articles that humorously attacked Ryan’s work-out photo-shoot and soup kitchen mix-up. As in the case of the *MaddowBlog*, *Buzzfeed* pays its staff writers, such as Gavon Laessig, author of the Joe Biden piece. *Buzzfeed* further considers itself a news publication, calling itself:

BuzzFeed is the leading media company for the social age, intensely focused on delivering high-quality original reporting, insight, and viral content across a rapidly expanding array of subject areas.

Affordances and Barriers

The ability to embed video and photographs to news articles is one of the many affordances offered by online news content. While previous forms of media, such as newspapers and television have also been able to include videos and photographs, what is different is the way the video and photographs are included. Rarely will a newspaper or television show include a video or photograph without any explanation of the content. Differently, the video and photographs included in this dataset are often embedded in the articles with minimum surrounding text or explanation. Instead, these graphics act alone. The text, when included at all, often frames the embedded content as humorous or a joke. Thus, despite the small amount of text included, the reader is still instructed how to interpret the content.

The affordances side of Internet news media also extends beyond the scope of what content can be embedded into each article. The feasibility of sharing each article is also an aspect. It is clear that *The Huffington Post* was the most commonly tweeted and posted publication by millennials in the 2012 election. One possible reason for this was the ease with which a reader could share the content. Each article on *The Huffington Post* includes a set of buttons on the top and side of the article that allow for one-touch sharing on Facebook, Twitter, and a number of other social media sites. What makes the site even more unique is that as an individual scrolls down the page of a *Huffington Post* article, the side bar of sharing options also scrolls down, making it easy for a reader to share at any time. Once a reader clicks the share option, a ready-made tweet or post (including the text that would appear in the Tweet or Post) appears in a pop-up window. If the reader is already logged into their social media account, clicking “finalize” completes the process.

While other sites include a share bar that also allows for the individual to easily Tweet or Post the article, most do not have the scrolling bar option, meaning that if a reader wants to share content after reading part or the entirety of an article, they will need to scroll all the way up to the top. This may not seem like a huge inconvenience, but it is a barrier in the sharing design of other sites. Consider the *Buzzfeed* article about the gesticulations of Joe Biden. The 19 large images take up a lot of room, meaning that if after viewing all images the reader wants to share the content, they need to scroll a long distance up to the top to do so.

Many of the publications that only had a few articles included in the dataset, such as *The Nation*, similarly had barriers to sharing in their website design. For example, *The Nation*, only had two articles in the *NewsWhip* dataset possibly because when a reader clicked “share,” a pop-up advertisement would appear. This required readers to close the pop-up window in order to see the text box where they could add a message on Twitter or Facebook.

The affordances and barriers of each website are not the only reason some publications had more shared articles than others. The amount of millennial readers, the amount of articles published daily, the focus of the publication on other issues besides politics are all possible explanations for the frequency of shared publications. However, it is clear that the publications with the most shared content are the publications that are easiest to do so. When barriers are present in the sharing process, it serves as a quick reason for a reader to stop, reconsider, and close the window entirely. It should also be noted that the primary goal of all publications might not be shared content. Perhaps the barriers designed into some of these sources are less accidental and instead done on

purpose. However, the publications who do list sharing and disseminating information as a part of their “About us” page, such as *The Huffington Post* and *Buzzfeed* are the publications who received the most shared articles throughout the course of election 2012.

Humor, Satire, and Fake News

Also common in the dataset were articles that used humor to discuss important issues or frame the candidates. Of the 1822 articles in the dataset, 50 (2.7%) used humor, satire, or fake news to draw the reader’s attention to a specific issue. One of the common ways this was done was to incorporate video or pictures from other media into a news article. On October 7, 2012, *The Huffington Post* shared a clip from a NBC, Saturday Night Live (SNL) skit that includes a satire of Rachel Maddow, Chris Matthews, and Al Sharpton (all anchors on MSNBC). The satirical clip depicts the anchors debating each other in a segment “the words thing that ever happened” on President Obama’s first debate performance. Like other articles that use video clips, this article has only two paragraphs of text giving context to the skit. Further, the video is an opportunity for *The Huffington Post* to share commentary of the President’s performance during the first debate, while also referencing another media platform (SNL and MSNBC).

Buzzfeed, again, was one of the most common publications to incorporate humor. In one article from November 8, 2012, *Buzzfeed* reported:

Hank the Cat, a Maine coon who ran on a platform of “Jobs, Animal Rescue/Spay & Neuter programs, and Positive Campaign Reform” received 6,000 votes in Virginia’s Senate election. A purrrfect election result.” (Kaczynski, November 8, 2012).

Another *Buzzfeed* article includes a series of photographs of Josh Romney, Mitt Romney's son. The article, titled "Menacing Josh Romney," showed popular meme's that surfaced after Mitt Romney's performance in the third and final debate. Josh, who was photographed looking particularly angry, was then turned into a meme, with photo shopped words surrounding his face, such as "He shouldn't have told them... about the binders full of women" (Copyranter, October 18, 2012). These articles use humor to allow the authors to provide commentary on the political issues of the election. Rather than using a traditional blog format, where the author shares their interpretation of an event or issue, *Buzzfeed* uses humor to subtly introduce the author's position. The example of Hank the cat provides a humorous example of how election polling and candidates can be over-exaggerated or silly.

Meta-Media Coverage

Similar to the SNL clip on *The Huffington Post*, the articles in the dataset also included references to other forms of media, specifically newspaper and television coverage. Of the 1822 articles, 26 (1.4%) reflected on the media's coverage of the election. This meta-coverage was found mostly after the election, with 24 (1.3%) of the articles connecting the media's coverage to one possible reason for Romney's loss and President Obama's victory. For example, an LA Times article from November 19, 2012 accused the liberal television media of purposefully giving Romney negative coverage, thus ultimately biasing the audience against the candidate:

The survey of 59 news outlets found that Romney got considerably more negative coverage, both at the end of the campaign and in the period dating back to the nominating conventions, beginning in late August. (Rainey, November 19, 2012).

However, more common than blaming the news media for persuading the audience in favor of one candidate, were articles that described the general faults and effects of conservative media coverage. In one online NPR article from November 12, 2012, conservative media, mostly Fox News, was criticized for its coverage of election polls when they suggested that the polls were democratically biased:

On election night, Rove was in constant contact with Romney's people and proved so flustered by the results that he vigorously disputed the conclusion of Fox News' decision desk that Obama had won Ohio — and thereby won the election. A nonplused Megyn Kelly responded: "Is this just math that you do as a Republican to make yourself feel better, or is this real?" ... The backlash has only strengthened in the days since the election. Younger political right-of-center operatives and pundits told Politico's Jonathan Martin that the reliance on clearly conservative media outlets and pundits — such as *Newsmax*, Rush Limbaugh's radio program, and the opinion shows on Fox News — had undermined their understanding of where the campaign stood. (Folkenflik, November 12, 2012).

This is just one instance where the media started to blame or accuse each other for the election turnout. In one article on *The Huffington Post*, the online news publication blamed Fox News and conservative pundits for creating myths about the election that ultimately convinced Mitt Romney's campaign that they would win. These included, "young people would turn out less than in 2008" and "Obama cannot win with a bad economy" (Best & Krueger, November 12, 2012). These "lies and biases" which were repeated and propelled by the conservative television station depicted a Romney-win scenario that did not exist.

Other articles also focused on the role of conservative television hosts and shows in deciding the new direction of the Republican Party. A *Politico* article from November

11, 2012 argues that the failure of Romney in the presidential election has mandated that the party reform, but is divided in how it should do so:

But which path to take for the GOP toward broader appeal — doubling down on a core economic and family values conservative message that transcends identity politics or polishing the party's image by recruiting more women and minority candidates and adopting more moderate positions, particularly on immigration reform — has exposed a sharp rift in the conservative media. (Byers, November 11, 2012).

Analysis of Millennial Journals

Harvey (2011) identified diary entries as important tools qualitative researchers can use to understand a group's reactions and perceptions of a specific topic. Unlike interviews or focus groups, diaries allow for respondents to write reflections instantaneously, rather than waiting for an upcoming interaction with the researcher. To understand the nature of the decoding of the millennials in regard to political news media, journal entries from the eight-week, hot zone period of the election were collected from participants from October 6, 2012 until December 6, 2012. Each week members of the millennial generation were asked to read any ten stories from *NewsWhip.com* on a specific assigned day and watch one of the television programs identified by Pew.

Then, in journal form, respondents were asked to react individually to the news content. Assigning days to each participant ensured that each day of the eight weeks was covered equally with no articles receiving more or less attention or reaction than the others (see Appendix A). In total, each participant wrote a 100 word reaction to each news article and television program encountered during the 8 weeks, equaling eleven reactions per week. A total of 14 millennial participants were selected for inclusion in this study based on their enrollment in a special topics class titled "Political Media." While far from a generalizable number, using 14 students for this study ensured that a depth and breadth of information would be gained. The small sample size is justified when considering the depth of information, as suggested by Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg (1991). This work proposes that small samples are best for qualitative research because they allow for a more thoughtful and in-depth exploration of the relationship that forms between participant and researcher, as well as a deeper contextual understanding of the

data. Rentz (1999) similarly advocated for a small sample size when conducting journal research because of the depth of journal responses and its ability to offer a large variety of perspectives through multiple entries.

The class was offered as an upper-level elective for students interested in learning more about the presentation of politics in the media. Students enrolled in class were between 20 and 25 years old. In total, 1232 reactions (8 weeks x 14 students x 11 reactions/week) were estimated to be included in the study, although it was anticipated that some participants may not submit every week. At the end of data collection, several participants missed weekly responses, resulting in a total count of 1122 journal entries. A description of the amount of entries given per-week, as well as the individuals who provided them is located in Table G and H.

These 1122 reactions were then qualitatively analyzed for to look at how these millennial participants reacted to the political news. Additionally, the presence of the three decoding options identified by Hall (1997) were examined. This method was similarly used by Roberts et al. (2001) and Couldry, Livingstone, and Markham (2007) who collected weekly diary entries asking respondents to reflect on crime based newspaper articles and their sense of community safety.

Primarily, this study is focused on both the themes of the millennials in the reactions as well as their decoding. By identifying the themes first, a clearer understanding of what the millennial participants think of the media can be gained. Second, instances of decoding where the millennial generation “operates inside the dominant ideology,” “applies a negotiable code,” or “substitutes an oppositional code” will be identified (Hall, 1997). Although counting these options in a content analysis

format is nearly impossible due to the presence of other variables, qualitatively, the process of these three decoding options can be assessed. To do so, this discourse analysis requires looking for the same facets identified in the earlier discourse analysis of the television and online news sources. Specifically, are the language and discourses present in the online and television political news the same or different than the language and discourses present in the millennial journal reactions? If they are the same, then it would appear that the generation is operating inside the dominant code. If they are different, the group may be applying a negotiable code or substituting an oppositional one. This is identified based on the reaction of the millennials in their journal entry. Each entry is read in its entirety and then evaluated for the themes and presence of the decoding options (see Table B).

To identify themes in the journals, the entire set of entries was read. Common themes that appeared over and over again throughout the entire set of entries were listed and included a reaction to the objectivity and subjectivity of news stories, a reflection on the value of comedic news shows such as the *Daily Show* or *Colbert Report*, a reflection on youth as a segmented or minority group, defining characteristics of the millennial generation such as memes, social media, and political ideals, and a disinterest in foreign policy. As each theme appeared, an a-posteriori list of themes was identified and developed. This was done so that after the initial reading and development of open thematic categories, each entry could be identified as referencing one or more of the themes. This second reading and coding of each entry allowed for a count of each theme and a larger view of the dataset.

To identify each entry as a part of the theme, specific attention was paid to the language and critique levied at the news article or television show. Because the respondents were instructed to critique and analyze the media, the major theme of each entry was usually found in the arguments they presented for accepting, rejecting, or modifying the information in the source. For example, if a respondent disagreed with the way the media characterized Romney's Sesame Street comments from the first debate by saying:

Rush Limbaugh's show today hardly seemed like news at all. It's scary to think that people actually rely on ranting like this as a way to stay informed of the latest news (Participant 13, Week 2)

A reflection like this is characterized as a reflection on bias, credibility, and framing in news reporting. This process continued throughout all eight weeks of the 1122 entries. After reading the entries, three primary themes were identified on the basis of appearing the most frequently in the data. These were (1) reflection on bias, credibility, and frames (2) defining the millennial generation and (3) the reflection on political humor's effects and purpose in news). Other themes that comprised the remaining entries included: support of political parties and candidates, critique of political parties and candidates, reflection on non-election events (such as General Petraeus Scandal), and reflection on the personal lives of media personalities (see Table I).

Importantly, the open coding process also allowed for the use of Gee's (2011) seven questions (significance, practices, identities, relationships, politics, relationships, and signs, systems, and knowledge) to identify the major arguments of the discourses. Now that the first deep reading and open coding is complete, each of Gee's (2011) seven questions will be applied to the entries identified as each of the three major themes. This

will allow for a specific analysis of the discourses that make up each of the three primary themes. The open-coding process also allowed for the journal entries to be read fully as representations of the respondents. Rather than applying a previous set of codes, the process allowed for the emergence of themes and discourses as created by the millennial respondents.

Validity and reliability in the millennial journal analysis. A possible drawback to collecting journal reactions to political news media lies in the assumption that millennials fully read and reflect on the news content. As mentioned previously, this is a major source of debate in the field of communication. Drawing on Vidali's (2010) work, however, it is clear that while the millennial generation does not always buy into the messages of the mainstream political news, they do engage with them, if only through a process of active disengagement. This suggests that a journal reaction is an appropriate form of analysis on this topic due to the self-reflective nature of the millennial generation and their normal relationship to the news media. Using *NewsWhip* ensures that the articles included in the journal reactions would be regularly encountered by the millennial generation, thus eliminating opportunities for selection bias from either the researcher or the participant.

Alternatively, because participants were selected based on their enrollment in an upper-level communication class, it is possible that the sample of participants does not represent the entirety of the millennial generation. Rather than claiming to speak for all members of the millennial generation, this study allows members to speak for themselves. Further, concerns for validity can be dealt with when repeated reactions are found in the journal entries of the participants. Validity concerns are also addressed

through the triangulation of data. Because the reactions are to news articles included in the news discourse analysis, interpretations of the content can be monitored for both regularity and purpose. Other concerns for validity include the risk that respondents will be reacting to media in a general sense and not specifically to the articles included in the earlier news media discourse analysis. Harvey's (2011) work supports the idea that by collecting diary entries from participants immediately after they read the popular news articles posted on *NewsWhip*, the risk for influence by other news articles they may encounter will be minimized.

A further concern regards the intentions of respondents in their journal entries. To control for possible researcher effects that might influence the respondents to provide information that they think is desired, interactions with respondents were regulated and made consistent across all individuals. Feedback and instructions regarding weekly responses were formed around a standard assignment sheet given to all respondents (see Appendix A).

Finally, while the collective demographics of the participants are similar to general demographics of the wider millennial generation, the group represents a purposeful sample (Coyne, 2008). The respondents were included because of their interaction with the news articles from *NewsWhip*. This is important in the study because of the need for both researcher and respondents to be using the same news articles simultaneously as they appear in the media.

To address reliability in the thematic analysis, a 10% (112) random sample of the 1122 total journal entries was selected using a random number generator. A second coder was provided a description of each of the three major themes and asked to code each

entry as relating to one or more (up to three) of three possible themes or none (bias, credibility, and frames; political humor; millennial identity; no theme). The percent matched between the second coder and the researcher is described in the Table J.

Although the thematic count provides a big-picture view of the frequency of each theme, the results of the qualitative discourse analysis provides insight into the specific examples and processes demonstrated in the journal entries. Because this is a qualitative discourse analysis of the journal reactions, it relies on the connection of examples to support conclusions. Throughout the analysis, quotes will be used to connect the findings to the dataset and improve the reliability of the results. Further, through saturation or the finding of the same result repeatedly throughout the cases in the dataset, the study's validity will also be improved.

Thematic findings

The reactions of millennial respondents to popular television and online articles about the 2012 election demonstrate the means by which the generation interprets, contends, and reacts to political news. Immediately visible in the discourses surrounding the media's construction of youth and the millennial generation are three major themes. First, millennial's viewed the media as framing the generation as a minority group or in conjunction with other minority groups. The discourses found within the journal entries reflect that millennials, despite being the largest generational group in history view themselves as a small, segmented portion of the population, comparing themselves with other minority groups. Second, millennials reflected on the perception of bias, objectivity, and subjectivity in the media's portrayal of various election events, groups, and politicians. The millennial's discourses reflected a critical and dynamic view of the

goals of journalism (in particular the goals of online journalism) in the representation of an election. Finally, millennials described the use of comedy in journalism through reflections on *The Colbert Report*, *The Daily Show*, and online articles written with a humorous tone. Similar to the considerations of bias in the representation of the election, millennials grappled with the purpose and effect that comedy, satire, and parody may have on other youth viewers and the general public.

Reflection on Objectivity, Subjectivity, and Bias

As a part of the journal reflection assignment, students were asked to consider the nature of bias in the presentation of news. There has been numerous academic debates that grapple with the question, are millennials capable of recognizing and interpreting bias. Because of this, it was important to this study to ask millennials if they saw bias in the presentation of both digital and televised news. Millennial respondents clearly noted that not only could they see subjectivity in reporting, but they similarly struggled with the value of bias in the 21st century news environment.

The majority of responses that included a reflection on bias in news reporting, expressed concern that other readers may not be capable of sensing and interpreting the bias of journalists in the presentation of news.

Rush Limbaugh's show today hardly seemed like news at all. It's scary to think that people actually rely on ranting like this as a way to stay informed of the latest news (Participant 13, Week 2)

Regardless of political affiliation I find that this need to simplify politics, and the debates surrounding various perspectives and policies, to be one of the biggest downfalls of all political media. While much of the population might not understand a more in-depth and complex view of "why liberalism will ultimately fail." (Participant 11, Week 6)

This media is aimed at all political ads and for likely all parents in America. It begs the question “Just what effect is all of the campaigning having on the youth?” It hadn’t occurred to me that this could be that bad because I (like most people) can just block out the ads when they get to be too much. Small children lack the ability to do this. (Participant 9, Week 6)

Respondents also directly addressed news producers, journalists, and reporters in their responses, often characterizing extreme bias in reporting as unethical and against the public good.

It is hard for me to trust a news source with fact checking when the editors and journalist let basic errors like this slide. This punctuation error brings down Fox News’s credibility and confuses the reader about who said what. (Participant 4, Week 1)

I found this interesting because all of their comments begin with a complete misunderstanding blown out of proportion. This gives me a good view on how the media will take any small opportunity to rip someone to shreds. (Participant 8, Week 1)

“Is this even news? Should we air this?” is the question producers should be asking themselves. (Participant 9, Week 1)

The media is always acting like their against the two party system, but their actions make it incredibly hard for politicians to make bipartisan connections. (Participant 4, Week 3)

But there are other instances where millennial respondents expressed an understanding and acceptance of bias in reporting. In these responses, it is clear that the students grapple with the same dilemma as the reporters. “How can I present the news in an interesting manner so that I can maintain and even gain readers?”

But I don’t blame the writer’s judgment. I think statements like this are just symptomatic of how much journalists are expected to force such a huge wealth of essentially meaningless snippets into our political discussions. I expect to find stuff like this everywhere, from everyone, as I continue to read these articles. (Participant 1, Week 2)

Reuters should probably use headlines that more accurately reflect their stories, but then they might not show up in as many news feeds. (Participant 1, Week 1)

Maybe what becomes set as the main points in today's news climate is not even the product of actively biased writers and editors. Maybe it's just the product of people scrambling to get something out that has *some* point, even if that point isn't really a point at all. (Participant 1, Week 3)

I would like to congratulate the media producers on their boldness. The media is asking me to be more objective and I think that's what it should promote. (Participant 3, Week 2)

So Rush Limbaugh's suggestion seems to me to serve no rational purpose other than entertaining listeners. (Participant 5, Week 8)

When someone makes this kind of error, it's the media's job to put them on blast so everyone can see their incompetence. Public Officials sign up for this kind of transparency when they run in the first place. (Participant 8, Week 8)

In general, these responses seemingly accept bias as a part of the media environment, something that readers have come to both expect and work around. There is even nuance in the way millennial respondents understand the origin of bias. They suggest it is not just developing from the inner likes and dislikes of the individual journalist, but rather an environmental effect of the 24/7 news system that requires journalists to get information to the public quickly, and the institutional mandates large news organizations place on journalists to increase readership. Further, respondents often reflected that the media had a responsibility to present information that may seem sensationalized. Calling a part of the media's "job," respondents suggested that the media should present certain stories, events, and individuals in a way to critique (and perhaps even embarrass) them. In responding to the comments made by Representative Todd Akin on the female body's response to rape, respondents applauded the way the media put the story on blast, ultimately hurting Akin's chances at re-election.

In a different type of bias acceptance, there are also instances where respondents believe in the power of the reader to identify bias in reporting and look beyond it to understand critical information. Although rare, these responses often cite the “obviousness” of bias in their explanation.

Most reasonable people understand that Huffington Post is an openly “liberal” publication, so the obvious bias in this article is, of course, excusable. It can in fact be argued that the Huffington Post is obligated to serve this bias to satisfy the left-leaning reader base it has purposely developed. They aren’t fooling anybody, nor are they trying to fool anybody. (Participant 1, Week 1)

Of course though, the article’s headline is transparent and we can see that it was written with one clear idea in mind. That being said, the information was actually interesting, although I also feel as though it lacks in actual detail. (Participant 11, Week 1)

This media is just trying to add some humor to the presidential race which is extremely “dry”. Something funny happened and the public should get a good kick out of it. Will the election be effected in any way? I highly doubt it. Will this be remembered next week? I highly doubt that also. (Participant 9, Week 2)

Chris Matthews hosts “Hardball with Chris Matthews” on MSNBC. It is a Left leaning news broadcast which arguably has a Liberal agenda. He has a segment on his show called “This ‘Weak’ in Conspiracy” which is dedicated to calling out seemingly ridiculous claims by politicians. This last segment featured a Republican Congressmen who claimed the Obama administration had “ a bunch of Muslim Brotherhood members giving them advice.” Such radical assertions are made more frequently than most people think, but through TV segments like the one on Chris Matthews’s show; they are devalued and laughed at as they should be. (Participant 5, Week 8)

Importantly, these reflections suggest that bias is necessary in the contemporary news environment. For example, the Huffington Post fills the need for a liberal-leaning perspective on political news. Rather than viewing bias as a subtle effort made by the

journalist to sway the reader, bias is viewed as an obvious part of the news information environment.

However, not all news sources are perceived as obviously biasing their articles. Some news publications and articles were viewed by millennial respondents as objectively stating facts and leaving the interpretation up to the reader.

I agree with the contents of this article because it seems well researched and I trust NPR as an outlet that takes the maintenance of balance seriously. (Participant 2, Week 1)

I cannot agree or disagree with the media (NPR) because it mostly states facts from polls. (Participant 9, Week 1)

This article suggests that most Republicans were unaware of Romney's status in the race and internal polling is to blame. This media appeals to anyone interested in polling and it is successful because it talks about several ways it can be skewed. I agree with this media, samples are everything. I would ask the producers why Super PACs are conducting polls and not raising money. The media is asking me to think about what statistics really mean and it should do this. (Participant 3, Week 7)

NPR was the most frequently noted objective news sources, praised by its readers as standing between liberal and conservative view points, offering readers factual information, such as polls.

However, the reporting of polls was also an area of critique for millennial respondents. Many of them noted that even the presentation of statistics can be deceiving for readers.

For an organization looking for sound, irrefutable conclusions, these oversights would be unacceptable. But the Huffington Post isn't looking for sound, irrefutable conclusions. Instead it aims to hurt Romney's reputation, which it is within its right as an openly liberal news organization to do. However, I think it does a pretty mean disservice to the public by not mentioning any margins of error, miscalculations, or

oversights at all. I understand Huffington Post's bias; when you read the Huffington Post, you know what you're going to get. But promoting the rampant and dangerous belief that polls are infallible, by completely failing to mention a margin of error that could conceivably undermine the premise of an article, is irresponsible and damages the practice of using statistics for those who do it right. (Participant 1, Week 1)

But once polls and statistics come into play, I think a whole new standard comes into play. If a journalist decides to suddenly present a point with a statistician's hat on, he or she should be a good one. It's just good form, and publications should push good form as the standard, even when it's not. (Participant 1, Week 2)

Many excuses have been given as to why the Romney campaign numbers were so far off, such as a misunderstanding of how much momentum Romney really had, but nonetheless this incident just shows how misleading poll numbers can be prior to an election. (Participant 5, Week 8)

Millennial respondent's perception of bias strongly relates to their understanding and identification of media frames. When considering the way the media frames groups, many millennial respondents shared their agreement with the presentation of individuals, groups, and events.

This article rightfully paints the leader of the Trust Women Foundation, Julie Burkhart, as a brave person fighting a difficult battle against the opponents of abortion in Kansas. I personally believe that the Trust Women Foundation, Julie Burkhart, and the author are all in the right (Participant 1, Week 3)

It seems the media is encouraging the left to further distance themselves from conservatives because bipartisanship continues to be as far off as it has ever been. I don't fault the media for reporting this news, however, because I feel at least in the context that the frame is accurately depicting the story. (Participant 2, Week 1)

I was very happy to see this message in the media because not enough is being done to make voters aware of the flaws in our electorate's decision-making process that undermine democracy. (Participant 13, Week 2)

I think the only way this would be unethical is if the Huffington Post was trying to pass this article off as a comprehensive overview; but it should be understood that this article is just a single, tiny item in a bulleted list of

commonly understood arguments for why Romney can't deliver. (Participant 1, Week 2)

This media is appealing to anyone fed up with the insanity of elections and it is very successful because of the absurdity it is reporting on. I agree that this story is insane. I would thank the producers for exposing this CEO. This media is asking me to really consider my candidate of choice and why I am voting for them. (Participant 3, Week 3)

However, I worry that coverage like this is ultimately a detriment to small businesses. It almost openly admits that small businesses have nothing to provide other than the experience of shopping at small businesses. If we shop at small businesses on Small Business Saturday, is it okay for us to shuffle through the aisles of big-box stores every other day of the year? Pseudoholidays like this imply that it is. The fact that big companies and the media, endorsed by the President, have given Small Business Saturday a name just represents another minute to midnight for the small businesses themselves. (Participant 1, Week 8)

Most individuals noted they agreed with media framing when it corresponded to their own views. For example, the framing of the Trust Women Foundation was noted and accepted by a student who agreed with the pro-choice position of the group. Another respondent agreed with the Huffington Post's views of Mitt Romney because they matched their own views.

However, just because media frames were accepted, did not mean that millennial respondents were less critical or capable of identifying framing in general. Agreement was almost always noted at the end of a journal entry, only after the respondent clearly defined what frames were being invoked. Further, similar to the perception of bias in reporting, many respondents critiqued the use of frames and expressed general disagreement with the presentation of information.

I disagree with the way in which this story has been framed for the same reasons I disagree with the Huffington Post's article. If I had a chance to speak with the producers of Fox News they'd probably have security remove me from the building. (Participant 2, Week 1)

If given the chance, I'd probably tell the producers not to frame the story so much around Paul Ryan becoming flustered by difficult interview questions, and to focus more on analyzing the information is actually said. (Participant 2, Week 2)

They are appealing to the left side by citing Romney's plans to throw 'zingers' at Obama and previous quote saying that his team wouldn't be dictated by facts. The media is leaning you towards Obama as the 'good guy.' (Participant 7, Week 1)

The use of the words failure and excuse are powerful when in reference and really help illustrate how this media outlet views the Republican Party. (Participant 7, Week 3)

By now, "the fiscal cliff" is a legitimate news topic. It's been mentioned enough times and by enough high-profile people. However, I haven't seen any proof regarding the actual danger of any fiscal cliff. I'm sure it's out there, but the fact that news stories like this routinely mention it without justifying it at all indicates how standardized and accepted this highly abstract, highly speculated upon topic has become. (Participant 1, Week 8)

Millennial respondents provided many explanations for their disagreement with the framing of stories, such as their different political orientation, their desire to learn more about a different facet of the story, and the desire of the media to sensationalize coverage. However, missing from these reflections is an overall analysis of the value of framing. While providing specific examples of their agreement and disagreement with coverage, they did not reflect directly on the positive and negatives associated with media frames at all. Perhaps this relates best to previous reflections on the origin of bias. Similar to bias, perhaps frames are just viewed as a necessary and common part of the 21st century media environment. The millennial respondents showed evidence that as individuals they freely agree or disagree with the way a story is presented. Their willingness to do so suggests that they perceive frames and bias as an everyday occurrence and a new, but regular challenge in the interpretation of news.

Political Humor

Similar to their diverse perspectives to the role of objectivity, subjectivity and bias, the millennial respondents were far from homogenous in their view on the value of comedy in news reporting. While many of the responses reflected on the Daily Show and the Colbert Report, comedy appeared in other places, such as viral videos, satirical news articles, and parodies.

Several students reflected that the Daily Show, in particular, helps youth become and maintain interest in politics and current events.

John Stewart helps to make political events much more accessible to the youth of America. By prefacing this political discussion with comedy, Stewart draws in many youths who would never otherwise have serious conversations about the state of American and world politics. (Participant 4, Week 10)

While I try and watch Colbert's program with a "clean etch a sketch", no pun intended, it is quite clear who the target audience is. For someone like myself, who is not very political by any means, I enjoy the way Colbert parodies and, at times, mocks politics in this country. I almost feel like he brings the issues down to a basic level, so that the common American can understand and even visually see how certain political and public Figures appear to be, on a public level. (Participant 14, Week 2)

The media is asking me to consider my position (through the guise of humor). It should do this. (Participant 5, Week 2)

The function of this show is to call out journalist for sensationalized reporting and inform viewers about Colbert's take on current events. I really respect and enjoy the format of this show and *The Daily Show*. I believe it takes very educated people to be able to make jokes about politics and the media because any factual inaccuracies in their jokes would leave them open to criticism from those they are joking about. Not to say that these shows do not get criticism, but most of the criticism against is against their point of view and effect on the youth, not their factual accuracy. (Participant 13, Week 6)

Interestingly, in their analysis of the importance of the Daily Show, these respondents noted and addressed that this was not a view shared by all. Both statements are presented as arguments, as if they are responding to an opposing side.

Advocating that comedy can hurt overall political involvement and information, several respondents offered perspectives on the downside to comedy.

It's not as unethical as editorializing in an article presented as hard news, but it's nonetheless dangerous for comedy producers like this to encourage their predominantly young-adult audiences to trust them for political information. (Participant 13, Week 4)

This piece of media is targeted at younger voters looking for a quick laugh after all of the headaches of understanding the first Presidential Debate. I do not agree, or disagree with the media, it just makes me laugh. Different than the Samuel L. Jackson video which made me laugh, then called me to action, this list has no motive behind it other than comedy. It is a very quick read, and is very successful at giving readers a look into the mind of Snoop. Beyond comedy, there is no reason to pay attention to this article. (Participant 9, Week 2)

Although Stewart and Colbert are a huge part of the political media, they also serve to remind their viewers and the public of how misleading and simplistic the media can be. As I have said before, their usage of humor to prove this point is incredibly entertaining, and through that, it is effective. (Participant 11, Week 4)

Beyond suggesting that millennials respond to comedy, these respondents also suggest that comedy is not a valued means of giving information. While comedy gives viewers a laugh, it is not as valuable as traditional forms of news. Further, these respondents also question if comedy should be integrated into the news at all. The first respondent rhetorically asks, can you trust a comedic news source in the same way you can trust a traditional one? Despite this promising question, the respondent leaves the question open, without an answer.

Other respondents suggested that humor comes in many forms, recognizing and valuing the many forms of comedy differently.

Neither side seemed safe, which I think made for a particularly funny episode, and that's what I hope is most important for the Daily Show staff – writing jokes that are actually funny, not just “jokes” that people laugh at because they agree (Bill Maher jokes). I imagine it's a fine line when you work with humor like that. (Participant 1, Week 3)

Although at the same time I get the feeling that through comedy the information comes across as non bias in a way. John Stewart makes fun of both sides so its not as favorite one sided as other programs. (Participant 8, Week 1)

However, not all millennial respondent's agreed to the unbiased or “equal opportunity” nature of the comedy news sources, Some viewed the shows as liberally biased, and argued that the appeals used by the comedians increase the shows chances of viewers thinking favorably about the President.

By appealing to people through comedy, they are increasing the chances of keeping viewers interested and coming back for more, which can prove to increase Obama's chances of being reelected. (Participant 5, Week 1)

They like to talk about the biases we see in media today and laugh it off, but as they're making a joke about it, they're still pointing out flaws in the media. (Participant 14, Week 1)

Often times after making offensive jokes or sweeping statements the camera will cut to his guests laughing. I think this acts as a means of validating the humor, especially when we see guests laughing at jokes which are directed toward their affiliated party. (Participant 2, Week 3)

Chris Rock in a hilarious “Message for White People” targets young voters who relate well to comedy. This provides an outlet, nights before the election to remind voters that it's important for Obama. (Participant 10, Week 6)

Connecting the concepts of subjectivity, bias, and comedy, respondents like this one suggested that there is a way of using comedy without being overly biased. Using the

example of Bill Maher, this respondent suggests the Daily Show's humor is more critical, attacking both liberals and conservatives.

Defining the Millennial Generation

In their response to the media, many millennial respondents also offered a big picture view of precisely who the millennial generation was, and who they were not. Often conceptualized as "property," respondents discussed current events as they specifically addressed the group, focusing on several topics that the group owned or related closely to. For example, one respondent described Sesame Street as particularly relevant to the millennial generation.

I hope this march actually does happen and attracts a large crowd. PBS is a major factor in my generation and other's early childhood education.
(Participant 4, Week 4)

While recognizing the connection between PBS and other generation's besides her own, this respondent suggests that the connection between the popular education focused television station and the millennial generation is particularly close and meaningful. Similarly, after Mitt Romney's promise to cut funding to Sesame Street and PBS in his first national debate appearance, other respondents similarly described the effect Romney's promise would have.

PBS, being home to Sesame Street and the like are essentially where children of several years now learned their alphabet and numbers and even right from wrong (Participant 7, Week 2)

The images themselves are aimed at the younger generation, the generation who grew up learning with Sesame Street. (Participant 7, Week 2)

Important here is the language of significance, described by Gee. Significance relates to the way a discourse stresses one aspect, in this case the prevalence of early learning television shows provided by PBS to the millennial generation and youth. While PBS programming is funded primarily by donations (“by views like you”) and some federal assistance, respondents only noted the PBS programming tailored to early childhood and adolescence. Ignored are the other news and documentary style programming offered by PBS. Instead, respondents (like Romney) truncated PBS programming to one of its most popular shows, Sesame Street. As noted by respondents, cutting funding to PBS would mean cutting funding to Sesame Street, something that would significantly hinder and impact youth specifically. While PBS offers programming to people of all ages, in the millennial respondent’s journals, the impact was primarily noted as pertaining to their specific generation, despite the show being created in 1972, well before the generation was born.

Digital content was also specifically described as pertaining to the millennial generation. For example, when politicians used social media, it was assumed by respondents to be an appeal to the millennial generation and youth. In one instance after the election, President Obama took a photograph with Olympic gymnast McKayla Maroney, mimicking her iconic “McKayla is not happy” grimace. A photo of Maroney pursing her lips went viral after she received silver in the vault exercises at the 2012 London Olympics.

The presentation on *Millennial Makeover* pointed out the saliency of the Internet among the millennial generation, and with the prevalence of memes following every debate, we are seeing this theory come to life.

The Internet is changing the way politics is run, and in turn, how the campaigns are run. Neuman makes a good point in saying that campaigns are going to want to start hiring more staff to focus on social media. As the Millennials are becoming the generation of today's voters, staff focused on social media could only benefit a campaign. (Participant 11, Week 5)

This picture of Obama and McKayla Maroney is a visual depiction of why most young people relate to Obama. This shows that Obama is in touch with the millennial culture and thus our values. While understanding pop culture references is not something that should be on Obama's main agenda, the occasional picture like this one serves as a reminder that Obama is a president for the millennials. On a personal note, I made this picture my cover photo on Facebook right after seeing it. I hold a lot of respect for people who can make fun of their image, and both Obama and Maroney are showing that trait in this photo. (Participant 4, Week 8)

I like for my president to seem like a human being... I believe that social media is effective at showing the President has a soft side, and may even be aimed at Romney supporters who need to see that our President cares for his people. (Participant 9, Week 7)

Not only are these noted as appeals to the millennial generation, but the successful use of social media was applauded by respondents. When this respondent saw the image of President Obama and Maroney, she embraced it and re-posted the image. While respondents noted the successful use of social media by the Obama campaign, they equated Romney's loss with his misuse and failure to properly embrace the digital. After reading an article discussing Romney's poor use of social media, one respondent suggested that the next Republican presidential candidate will need to better integrate into digital culture to compete with the Democratic edge.

It appeals to Republicans who are unhappy with the election and it is successful because it discusses strategies for turning the party around. I agree with the media but I would ask them why Romney is still relevant. (Participant 5, Week 8)

Importantly, in reflections such as this one, not only was Romney's social media strategy discredited, but the millennial reader agreed that it was a reflection on the entire Republican Party. While Romney's relevancy is questioned, it more widely implies a questioning of the relevancy of the Republican Party, especially considering their outdated technological outreach.

This was common in millennial's reflections immediately post the election. Focusing on the use of social media was not limited to analyzing how social media use influenced the election outcome. After reading an article about the declining number of Facebook friends on Romney's digital profile, one respondent suggested that ongoing social media use after Romney's loss would affect his relevancy and popularity in the future.

Since Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney conceded the election to Incumbent President Barack Obama, he's lost 50,000 Facebook friends. Through Tuesday evening both Romney and Obama were steadily gaining fans on Social Media Networks, but even then Obama was gleaning connections at a rate five times that of Mitt Romney. This guy is done. (Participant 8, Week 7)

Even foul language and crude role models were deemed as a millennial trait. Respondents suggested that using foul language and swearing was one means by which media producers got the attention of youth and the millennial generation. After viewing Samuel L. Jackson's "wake the f**k up" and Snoop Lion's (formerly known as Snoop Dogg) Obama endorsement, one respondent noted,

Just like Samuel L. Jackson did last week in his profanity-laced video, Snoop exerts his power as a role model by utilizing a crude kind of humor to which millennials have been desensitized. (Participant 13, Week 2)

Rather than simply reflecting that these videos were popular with the millennial generation because of the spokespeople and language, this respondent questioned the appeal by suggesting the generation is “desensitized” to crude humor.

Respondents frequently noted the way the media described or addressed the millennial generation in their writing. Many respondents suggested that when writing for or attracting a youth audience, many journalists often tied the millennial generation in with other minority groups. For example,

This article is attempting to appeal to young and minority Massachusetts voters with a liberal bias. They appeal to minority voters by discussing the issue of race. They then appeal to young voters by using an online forum and by keeping the article short. (Participant 4, Week 1)

The article is trying to attract the younger generation as well as the liberals and parents. (Participant 7, Week 2)

The media itself is trying to appeal to the younger, more liberal generation, while discussing women’s rights and comparing voting for the first time to losing your virginity. (Participant 7, Week 5)

It seems like it’s targeted mainly toward the millennial generation, which embraces party identification more so than its predecessors. (Participant 2, Week 6)

Further, respondents observed that journalists equated being a millennial to being a minority. It was not just that articles were tailored to more than one demographic, respondents reflected that journalists and politicians assumed the experience of being young was similar, if not inseparable from the experience of being a minority.

Obama has been able to get a variety of supporters, from young people and minorities to educated white professionals. This mixture of supporters is valuable in the Electoral College, as the states with most electoral votes consist of voters that fit into these demographics. These voters are also reflective of the future America is going towards and by pandering to

these people, Obama has set up a coalition that will prove to be successful for years to come. (Participant 5, Week 7)

This article is saying that Romney believes he lost because his appeal was too wide, while Obama appealed to minorities and young people. (Participant 3, Week 8)

Importantly, these respondents did not seem to directly contradict the connection between youth and minority, but rather left their reflection as observations. Respondent's reflected on the ontological assumptions of the journalists' when they wrote about the millennial generation.

Considering that this study was done in a state contemplating mandating voters provide identification for participation, it is not surprising that many respondents reflected on the controversy surrounding this issue.

Prior to this election, I never fully grasped how partisan the issue of voting is. I figured that voter ID laws were much more republican supported due to their ability to deter young and minority voters, but I had never thought of the length of early voting as a partisan issue. It is shocking how partisan this issue is. (Participant 4, Week 6)

It isn't shocking that this is happening right when many republicans are calling for voters to have state-issued identification cards, when most of us know that this creates problems for many younger and older people, as well as many impoverished people; many of whom tend to vote democratically (Participant 6, Week 1)

Reflections about the laws requiring voter identification are similar to the connections made between the millennial generation and youth. Millennial respondents suggested that voter identification laws were designed to disenfranchise youth voters, many of whom may not own a state-issued license or passport. While they acknowledge

these laws can potentially impact many other groups, the effects of these laws are primarily focused on youth and the millennial generation, rather than wider society.

Synthesis, Analysis, and Research Questions

The analysis of television and online news combined with the analysis of Millennial journal entries suggests that there is a complicated and multifaceted relationship between the millennial generation and political news media. One advantage of this study is it uses the discourses of these two groups in an effort to further understand the way each group positions, describes, and defines the other.

Starting with the television news coverage collected and analyzed in this study, several conclusions can be drawn. First, there is a statistically significant difference between the amount of segments about the millennial generation before and after the 2012 election. In the 30 days prior to the election, 63 segments of coverage focused on the millennial generation, as opposed to the 78 segments following the election. This difference is emphasized when looking at the differences between the number of segments per episode and the individual shows.

The difference between before and after coverage of the millennials was underscored by the discourses found within the media itself. Television hosts such as Matthews and O'Reilly reflected that they were surprised (and even shocked) by the millennial voter turnout. Among the other discourses, reflections on the demographic shifts of the country and the hosts' own surprise by these shifts was a major focus. The media also discursively connected the millennial generation to other demographic groups, such as African Americans, Latinos, women, and Asian Americans. This group became quickly referred to as a "coalition" that was responsible for the re-election of President Obama. The coalition also became recognized and widely discussed as possibly being manipulated into these pro-Democratic votes through promises of gifts and the

widespread (according to Fox News) entitlement culture. Despite the frequency of discussions among hosts and guests about the millennial generation, only a few millennials were ever actually included on the shows, and when they were interviewed, it was often used as a punch line to a joke or used for an anecdotal evidence of the host's point of view.

However, most noticeable about the coverage of millennials in the television news is that multiple perspectives and discourses are used. While some hosts applauded the millennial participation in the election, others blamed the generation for potential problems that may occur in the future. Through discourses of gifts and entitlements, shows such as *Hannity* and *The O'Reilly Factor* accused the generation of being near-sighted, brainwashed, and unintelligent. The effect of this was to differentiate the "real" Americans from the members of the coalition, arguing that it is the rest of America (the new minority) that will be victims in the next four years. However, other television shows such as *Hardball* and *The Colbert Report* argued just the opposite. They too recognized changing demographic shifts in America (especially among those voting) but also recognized that these shifts were to the benefit of the entire country or were at the very least a normal part of the American experiment. Instead, they termed members of the coalition as victims. It was the coalition that was now being picked on by other television shows and media personalities.

This is an important shift that will be described in detail in the synthesis chapter. Both the recognition of changing demographics as well as the description of the coalition suggests that the view of the control culture or the control culture itself may be changing. This is also recognized in the analysis of online news articles collected in this study.

Similar to the television news content, online news referred to the millennial generation as a minority or connected to other minority groups. In articles about polling, the millennial generation specifically is described in conjunction with other demographic groups, such as Latinos, African Americans, and young women.

The language used by the online media to reference the millennial generation similarly reflects multiple discourses. The generation is called “nones” in one article, and “future party leaders” in another. As found in the television news coverage, millennial participation was often cited as a reason for the Obama victory and Romney loss. This was emphasized when the online news media covered the Romney phone call accusing the President of offering gifts to potential voters.

These many and oftentimes confounding discourses were not ignored by the millennial generation. Their weekly journal entries recognized that media employ many discourses when referring to their generation as well as other groups and issues. Perhaps this is most visible in the millennial journal discourses surrounding the presence of bias, credibility and frames. Not only did millennial participants view these multiple discourses as problematic for audience members, they also saw them as a sign of bias in news reporting. While this bias was viewed as a normal part of the news, they did see it as a potential problem for other viewers who may not be able to recognize or “fight off” its effects. This discourse was continued when millennial participants reflected on the use of humor in political news. While some saw it as a good way to share political information with individuals who may not be otherwise interested, others saw it as a hindrance to ensuring the best possible information is given and received. Similar to the media, the millennials also offered multiple discourses of the media.

The remainder of this chapter is focused on answering the initial research questions set forth in earlier chapters. Each of the seven questions are answered in full, using examples from the media and journals to support the conclusions. In some cases, new information is presented that is gained from a combination of the data collected for this study. First, questions about the political news will be addressed, followed by questions about the millennial journal entries.

Answering Research Questions

Discourse Analysis of Political News Media

1. What *discourses* are present in media (television and Internet news articles) coverage of the millennials in the 2012 election?

After reading and watching the news coverage collected from the month before and month after the 2012 Presidential election, discourses were identified from both the television and online news. Each discourse was identified and detailed in earlier chapters, but will be reviewed here for larger occurring themes across the two media (see Table K).

While each media and its news coverage presented different discourses, some major similarities occur in both. For example, the connection of minority groups and the millennial generation was prevalent in both the televised news coverage and the online news content. This discourse was presented through the co-listing of the millennial generation or youth with other groups, such as African Americans, Latinos, and women. Often, these groups were referred to as “minorities” or “the coalition,” terms of reference used in both types of news content. The frequency and consistency with which these groups were referred to collectively indicates that there is a perception that these groups share at least part of their identity. Because they all become implicated in segments and

articles that reference each group, their identity becomes wrapped up in each other. This is what Gee (2010) identified as the “identity” focus of discourse. The repeated referring to these groups as a collective or cohesive mega-group means that they share interests, ability, and agency.

In particular, linking the millennial generation or youth to this mega-group is important because of the history these other groups have with voting and electoral ability. Women, African Americans, and Latinos have a history of being denied the right to vote and participate in politics. As a result, linking young people in with these groups that are historically politically disadvantaged implies that the millennial generation must have a similar identity. This discourse is further propelled by the frequency of news stories devoted to the voting suppression efforts in the 2012 election, many of which were described by journalists as specifically targeting these same groups. The overall message in this news coverage becomes not just focused on the millennial generation, but rather also on the collective identity of this group of minorities or coalition that is featured.

Also consistent in the two media analyzed here are that the groups are referred to as youth or young people. While terms of reference will be a much larger consideration in question five, this term underlies the importance of considering the similarities between the two datasets.

There were major differences between the television and online news analyzed when it came to the content they reported on. First, the discussion of gifts and entitlements was almost exclusively found in the television news coverage. While both media spent significant time considering the reasons for the Romney campaigns loss, the topic of gifts and entitlements was almost completely limited to the television news

coverage. Instead online news focused on the failures of Romney's polling data. Comments by Romney after the election that suggested the President's campaign manipulated voters with promises of gifts and entitlements (such as healthcare, student loans, and food stamps) were largely absent from the online coverage, but heavily present in television news. This will be fully analyzed in the synthesis chapter.

What this indicates is that there is a difference in content between the two media. This may be traced back to the way that the data was collected for this study. Although both the television and online news were identified and collected based on their popularity with the millennial generation, the way popularity is defined in each media makes a big difference. Television news' popularity was indicated based on the amount of millennials who tune into each show on weekdays, rather than segments or topics of the show. While each show comes with its own host, set of general topics, and segment styles, millennials identified them based on the show, not the content featured. Whereas online news coverage was collected based upon the frequency of re-tweets and posts on facebook. This selection difference may be the reason why some topics were more popular within each media. In this form of data collection, viewers who identified a show are locked into the topics dictated by the show's producers. Rather than being asked what topics or segments each viewer most often watched, the content of the show was entirely recorded. However, within the online news dataset, millennials had more control over the topics tweeted and posed on social media. Rather than being asked to select an entire news source, journalist, or publication, millennials could select articles based on topic. Although it is possible that a millennial lists one of the television shows as their most watched based on the topics that are regularly featured on the show, the content of the

shows is still primarily dictated by the news organization and producers rather than by the audience. Therefore, there could be segments of the show's that were unpopular with viewing, but because of the way we define show popularity, they are still included in this dataset.

2. How are *civic* and *political engagement* addressed by media (television and Internet news articles)?

There are several instances where the millennial generation's engagement is discussed and implicated in relation to election 2012. Prior to the election, the media (analyzed in this study) questioned the dedication of the group to the political process and election. Within the television news coverage, Chris Matthews was the most frequent in his addressing the engagement in young adults. On his October 16, 2012 show, he asked:

I'm worried about people my kid's age, you know? Kids who never saw a President like Obama, and they sorta take it for granted, to be honest about it. They think he's just another President maybe. There is a big difference between him and what the other guys offering. Do they know the choices involved here? (*Hardball*, October 16, 2012)

Importantly, the term "engagement" appears rarely in either the television or online news analyzed here. Other terms, such as enthusiasm, dedication, and effort are used instead, challenging the clarity of differentiating civic from political engagement behaviors. This means that the discourses of civic and political engagement can only be differentiated based upon their context rather than the language itself. Based upon the contextual factors, such as story content, visuals, and polling data used in these stories, it appears that political engagement is a more prevalent topic prior to the election, while a

combination of civic and political engagement becomes featured in post-election coverage.

This is evidenced by the frequency of polling stories featured prior to the election in both online and television news. In the online news analysis, 156 articles focused on polls and polling results prior to the election. As noted in the analysis of digital news chapter, these polling articles featured the millennial generation in conjunction with other groups such as Latinos, African Americans, and Democrats. Although polls can be used to report and quantify both civic as well as political engagement practices, all 156 of the articles that reporting polling results used them to draw conclusions exclusively about political engagement practices. This means that all 156 articles reporting polling results that focused on voting and voters support of a specific candidate or party. Rather than report on civic engagement practices such as volunteerism, fundraising, or protesting, these articles only focused on voting, the hallmark indicator of political engagement.

Similarly, stories before the election about millennials in this dataset of television news also focused on voting and candidate support. Although there were two noTable exceptions to this coverage, all television news content analyzed in this study focused on voting and voter support before the election. The problem with this focus is not that these articles and shows ignored civic engagement practices before the election, but rather this political polling information is used to inform commentary on the millennial generation's civic behaviors. Due to many of the polling issues outlined in the analysis of digital news, such as faulty likely-voter models, pre-election polling predictions inaccurately reflected both the intentions of millennial voters as well as their potential impact on the election. In both online and television news coverage, polling data that suggested the millennial

generation was going to be politically disengaged in election 2012 (particularly on the national vote for President) was used to support commentators disengaged discourses that the millennial generation was overall unengaged on both the civic and political scale. For example,

But NBC News' Chuck Todd, appearing on "Meet the Press" Sunday, talked about a trend in polling that has perhaps been overlooked a bit. Republicans have an "across the board" [referring to age and ethnic groups] enthusiasm advantage over Democrats in NBC's polls that is the opposite of how the electorate looked four years ago... Look at this engagement level: 52% now they call themselves, voters 18 to 34, call themselves extremely interested in this election. Four years ago it was 72%. That 20 gap. The president wins young voters by huge margins. He's winning them by some 20-plus points. But if you don't have this kind of enthusiasm, they're not going to show up to the polls (Participant 14, Week 1)

They'll need it. Enthusiasm is important for two main reasons. The first is voters: people need to be energised enough to get to the polls. The second is volunteers: someone has to get them there. This is a much bigger issue for Democrats, whose base of young, black and Latino voters traditionally manage a lower turnout and have fared particularly badly under Obama. (Younge, October 21, 2012)

There is significantly less enthusiasm,' said Roan. 'I think there's sort of grim determination on the part of some people, more than enthusiasm. ... And it shows up in our volunteers. ... We don't have the number of young people volunteering like we did last time.' (Haberma, November 3, 2012)

What these examples show is that polling data (usually reported in terms such as voter enthusiasm) becomes conflated with representing both civic and political behaviors. Volunteerism, one of the central behavioral indicators of civic engagement, becomes linked to the polling outcomes of voter enthusiasm. Although the two behaviors are linked in the context of election enthusiasm, the enthusiasm measured in these polls relates to voter-likelihood, not volunteerism. Therefore, a false connection is drawn

between the polling data that suggested millennials had low levels of political engagement and civic engagement practices.

However, the media's invocation of civic and political engagement changed in the post-election coverage analyzed in this study. Instead of focusing on civic engagement through the political engagement findings, civic and political engagement, although still tied to electoral politics, were recognized by the media as two different sets of behaviors. This could perhaps be a result of the change in focus on polling articles to electoral results. Unlike the pre-election coverage that relied upon polls and speculation to determine what behaviors and participation the millennial generation would have during the election, post-election coverage was more specific in its references to civic and political behaviors. However, despite the recognition that civic engagement and political engagement are different, the media focused primarily on the fervor and intensity with which the millennial generation voted. Especially in the few days following the election, renewed energy and emphasis was placed on the impact the generation had on the outcome of the election. As detailed in earlier chapters, political engagement through voting was recognized as fundamentally important to the elections outcome. Many articles suggested that without the millennial generation (as well as other members of the "coalition"), President Obama might not have won the election.

However, civic engagement was also recognized, this time as separate from political engagement. Rather than rely on voter turnout and polls to inform conversations on civic engagement, online and television news identified specific examples of civic engagement such as protests, fundraising, and activism. Online news coverage in particular emphasized civic engagement behaviors as prevalent and important in the

millennial generation. For example, following the election, a group of college students rioted and protested the re-election of President Obama.

Officials say about 40 students at a small all-men's college in Virginia shouted racial slurs, threw bottles and set off fireworks outside the Minority Student Union within hours after President Barack Obama's re-election. (Szkotak, November 8, 2012)

A disturbance broke out on the University of Mississippi's campus early Wednesday, after students angry at the reelection of president Barack Obama took to the streets to vent their displeasure. WMCTV reports that students interacted initially on social media, which resulted in 300-400 young people participating in the disturbance. Pictures posted on Twitter showed people burning Obama campaign signs. The *Clarion Ledger* reports that some students were heard shouting racial epithets about Obama and African Americans in general. (Hanrahan, November 7, 2012)

Add to that the explosive growth of and increased political activism among Latinos, many of whom are younger, under 35. (Abdullah, November 10, 2012)

In this online news content, it is clear that while still talking about the aftermath of the 2012 election, other forms of engagement beyond voting are identified and acknowledged as being important to the future of the country. While the racially charged protests covered by the online news media may be socially shamed, the recognition of the protests begins to change the way the media presents civic engagement. Prior to the election, the generation was identified in the media as civically disengaged. However, this conclusion was later critiqued because it resulted from faulty analyses drawn from polling data. However, after the election, this discourse changes, and civic engagement practices are not only recognized by sometimes even applauded. During a November 12, 2012 episode of *The Rachel Maddow Show*, Rachel Maddow described the efforts of a group of teens from Arizona.

But some people don't like it, and this year a group of high school kids in the county decided that they were going to take on Sheriff Joe Arpaio in his re-election bid this year. These hundred or so teenagers set up a voter registration drive that they called "Adios Arpaio." Adios Arpaio had a goal of registering more than 30,000 people in the county, which is a lot of people for a county race. In October they announced they had beaten their goal, they were aiming at 30,000 registrations, they got over 34,000. Just a triumph of civic activism for these kids! Until the realities of democracy in Maricopa County started to take hold. Maricopa is the same county that this year told Spanish-speaking voters that Election Day is November 8th, which is two days after the election. Maricopa County said that that was just an accident. Then we found out the county made the same exact Spanish-speaking accident on a bookmark that was set out to voters, telling them when to vote. Arizona also reduced the amount of polling places this year. In Maricopa, they closed a third of the polling places that had been open in 2008, when they had long lines too. So when voters got to the polls this year, they likely would have encountered big long lines just because there were fewer places to vote. And then, what many of the new voters, voting this time found specifically, that their names were not on the voter rolls, even though they registered. As a result, those new voters got forced into voting in a far from reliable way, known as a provisional ballot. And that's how Arizona found itself in the national headlines. Days after the election, Arizona still having a mountain of ballots to count, that pile including a mini-mountain of these provisional ballots, many of them cast by first time minority voters, like the 30,000 plus people who were signed up by the high school kids in Adios Arpaio. Those kids have been marching in the streets of Phoenix ever since. A core group sitting in in the Maricopa clerk's office, they say they will stay there until every single vote in that office is counted. Meanwhile activists in Phoenix are actively working a phone bank, they are trying to reach all the voters they reached before the election, so they can figure out who got forced into filling out one of these provisional ballots. Because if they made you vote that way, you only have until Wednesday of this week to go back to the county election office, and prove that you voted rightfully, otherwise your ballot, your provisional ballot, that they made you vote that way, that ballot will get thrown out." (*The Rachel Maddow Show*, November 12, 2012)

Here, Maddow not only applauds the civic engagement of the high school students, but she also emphasizes that their civic engagement practices were effective and potentially could have made a big difference if only the county had supported their endeavors. This is a new discourse found within the post-election coverage. The millennial generation is not only a politically engaged group, but also a civically engaged one. Rather than finding evidence to support claims on civic engagement in political engagement polling info, other stories and evidence are brought forward to support this view. However, what is added to this post-election discourse is the addition that there are forces that oppose this civic engagement found in the government and political process itself. As in the case of Adios Arpaio, civic engagement is identified as a common behavior of millennials and youth; however, these behaviors are recognized as being suppressed or opposed by primarily republican governments and politicians. This characterization of the struggle between civic engagement of the millennial generation and the opposition of the Republican Party is detailed in the numerous online articles and television segments dedicated to identifying the weaknesses of the Republican Party and making suggestions for its improvement. Of the articles analyzed after the election, 69 of them focused on the reasons why the Republican party lost, specifically proposing that the relationship between the millennial generation and the party was to blame.

The nation is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, and the GOP seems to be going out of its way to become whiter. Republicans seem to be discovering new ways to alienate women, while moving even further from the American mainstream on reproductive rights and women's health. The GOP apparently isn't familiar with actuarial Tables, either, choosing to be heavily reliant on older voters. (Benen, November 7, 2012)

Following Tuesday's result, retiring Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas) channeled Romney's infamous comments that almost half the nation are government-dependent "victims" who support Obama because they feel entitled to food, health care and housing. "The majority dictates against the minority. So, right now the majority are receiving a check," Paul said. "That is why people were sort of surprised with these conditions that this president can get reelected." Of course, exit polls show the president collected his votes from a populace that found his policies more favorable toward the middle class, and his election was boosted by turnout among Latinos, women and youth. (Siddiqui, November 9, 2012)

West Virginia Rep. Shelley Moore Capito, who's considering a Senate bid in 2014, said Republicans had to confront the reality that they're 'not diversified like the country' and risked losing women voters and minorities in future cycles. 'It's a broader issue than women just being concerned about abortion. There's a concern that people in the Republican Party want to intervene in the choices women have,' Capito said. 'The candidates reflect the predominant members of our party. If we're going to be a party of a big tent, we can't keep leaving people out. We're not diversified like the country.' She cited her 27-year-old daughter, saying that women that age just don't accept 'any limitation of their choices.' (Burns & Martin, November 8, 2012)

Here, the Republican Party's failure in 2012 is summarized as resulting from the party's failure to not just to connect with young voters, but also its active attempts to oppose issues that young voters favor, such as women's access to birth control. Civic engagement behaviors of youth are blended into the beliefs and interests of the group. In the same way the Republican state government of Arizona tried to block the attempts of the Adios Arpaio group, Republican's similarly tried to oppose ethnic and gender diversity, access to birth control, and other "entitlements." It is for these reasons, the media analyzed here asserted the Republican Party failed in the 2012 Presidential Election.

3. How are *duty-based citizenship* and *engaged citizenship* models addressed by media (television and Internet news articles)?

Citizenship was not largely an explicit consideration in the online and televised news coverage considered in this study. Unlike political and civic participation which were often directly analyzed and discussed, topics of citizenship rarely became the center of attention. Instead, citizenship was invoked in larger conversations of civic and political participation. The duty-based and engaged citizenship models argue that the way groups of people think about their citizenship is changing rapidly with the introduction of the millennial generation. Traditional models of citizenship (used by all generational groups prior to the millennial generation) argue that there are duties that citizens must perform and are bound to perform because they see themselves as necessary to the functioning of democracy. Usually, this is singularly characterized through voting. However, the engaged citizenship models (argued to be popular with the millennial generation) argues that political involvement can take on many shapes such as volunteerism, campaigning, and social protest movements. Whereas the traditional duty-based model argues that voting is something people need to do to be a part of the country, the engaged-citizenship model argues that citizenship and participation should be enacted when the group's feel a need to create social change to better their country.

However, the differentiation in behavior between the two models is complicated in this dataset of online and television news. Voting, which is traditionally associated with the duty-based model, begins to be conceptualized as a part of the engaged citizenship model. Similar to the findings about civic and political participation, the generation is recognizes for both its voting and its civic involvement. While the

motivation for this participation is challenged (as detailed in the next section), the identification of both sets of practices suggests that there is not one singular model that fits this generation's behaviors. This co-use of both the duty-based and engaged models of citizenship is supported by other research findings (Novak, 2014; Dalton, 2008). This co-use implies that the generation does not affix itself to one form of citizenship, but instead often conceptualizes the good citizen as one who both votes because of a sense of duty, but also engages civically in an effort to make the country a better place.

Integrated into this consideration of citizenship are discourses surrounding the "American Experiment," which appeared throughout the post-election coverage on television. In an interview with Andrew Napolitano, Jon Stewart asks about the role of generations in the future of the country.

Andrew Napolitano: Listen, I candidly salute you for the history of the country you gave, because the establishment always fears the next generation. And if the establishment stopped the next generation from coming in, you and I wouldn't be here.

Stewart: And we pretend that the next generation is not a virtuous, but does not understand the American experiment as well as they do.

Napolitano: But the country is big enough to expand and absorb one out of many. The many come here and form a wonderful mosaic. (*The Daily Show*, November 15, 2012)

The concept of the "American Experiment" is traced back to Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, who suggested that the creation and role of America would be to see if a country can truly be founded and executed on the principles of freedom, individual rights, and power with the people (NCCS, 2014). The idea of citizenship is wrapped up in the debate over the American Experiment. To be successful, as Stewart and Napolitano argue, Americans must participate in electoral politics and enact their personal power.

However, they must also understand the reasons why such participation is necessary. This conversation points out that different forms of political participation and power are not always recognized or accepted by the dominant political establishment. However, this conversation also suggests that the enactment of voting and other civic behaviors is done by the millennial generation to react to this lack of recognition and acceptance. Invoking the engaged citizenship model, which says participation is done because millennials feel they need to make the country a better place, engaged citizenship behaviors are done to react to the false establishment and correct the perception of the generation. Although the discussion of the American Experiment makes clear one set of motivations for engaged citizen behaviors, the motivation for all forms of engagement is greatly challenged and questioned by other discourses detailed in the following section.

4. How do media (television and Internet news articles) refer to the group as *disengaged, actively disengaged, or totally engaged?*

Similar to the findings regarding civic and political engagement, there were differences in the way the millennial generation was discussed in the pre and post-election coverage. Before the election, most news coverage questioned the overall engagement of the generation, using early polling results to suggest the generation did not care about politics or civic responsibilities. However, after the election, many online articles and television segments changed this discourse of engagement, identifying both civic and political engagement practices, and arguing their importance in the 2012 election.

This is not to say that all news sources agreed with this. Particularly in the television news content analyzed here, there were several segments that questioned the overall engagement and ability of the generation. Rather than concentrating this

commentary on civic or political behaviors, these discourses were presented as critiques of the millennials' engagement with other things, such as information, technology, and the ability to think of long-term consequences.

This was especially true of the coverage given to young Americans by Fox News Channel after the election. The shows *Hannity* and *The O'Reilly Factor* analyzed in this study spent many segments dedicated to the way young people participated in the 2012 election. Both shows agreed that young people's votes had a noticeable effect on the outcome of the election; however, they critiqued the intentionality and understanding of this outcome.

O'Reilly in particular identifies that young people's voting was not the result of being engaged in the political process, but rather argues that it was the efforts of the two presidential campaigns that resulted in this group's participation.

One of the reasons I couldn't win was I couldn't get over the entitlement society, now that was my analysis as well, when you get a tremendous amount of money flowing out of Washington into certain hands, the hands that are receiving the money, are not going to want it to stop. So therefore, they are going to devote, which they did, all the stats show they did, income under 30,000 dollars overwhelmingly broke for Barack Obama, so I don't think the governors analysis was wrong, whereas Governor Jindal does think he's wrong. I think he's right on the money... It's very difficult to overcome a voting block that's getting money." (*The O'Reilly Factor*, November 15, 2012)

(clip of O'Reilly on Election Night) It's a changing country the demographics are changing, its not a traditional America anymore. And there are fifty percent of the voting public who want stuff. They want things. And who is going to give them things? President Obama. He knows it, and he ran on it. (back to show)

O'Reilly: Now that's the truth, and there's no denying the statistics and exit polling. However, some liberal American's were outraged that I would actually say the truth and I'll tell you why in a moment. Eight days after

the vote, Mitt Romney held a conference call with his donors and pretty much said, what I said.

(audio clip of Romney): What the President- president's campaign did was focus on certain members of his base coalition, give them extraordinary financial gifts from the government, and then work very aggressively to turn them out to vote."

O'Reilly: again, that's the truth, and here's the back up: 20% of those who voted on Election Day made under \$30,000 a year. (*The O'Reilly Factor*, November 15, 2012)

Rasmussen: But the story here, is, they did show up in bigger numbers, and seniors did not. Seniors were much more favorable to Mitt Romney. Basically, the Obama campaign knew who they had to get to the polls, O'Reilly: and they got them out.

Rasmussen: and they got them out. (*The O'Reilly Factor*, November 7, 2012)

As O'Reilly describes the way in which millennials came to support the President in 2012, he begins to argue that their votes were a result of promises of gifts. The decision to support the President was less of a decision, and more of a manipulation by the Obama campaign. The desire to be a part of the political process, to be engaged, and to vote results from the efforts of others, not the millennials themselves. They may have had an effect in the result of the election, but they only had this effect because of the efforts of other people and groups. It was not an original motivation, but instead the result of the "tremendous efforts" of the Obama campaign. This discourse suggests that the millennial generation lack agency in the political process. Even though other news sources advocate that the millennials were largely responsible for the Obama victory, there is this other discourse that suggests the millennials were manipulated into doing so, giving the power in this explanation to the campaigners, rather than the millennials. And so, even though there is an acknowledgement of civic and political participation, the group is partially

described as disengaged like empty vessels that can be moved and manipulated by outside forces.

However, it is not just *The O'Reilly Factor* that suggests the millennials lack agency and original efforts; this discourse is found throughout the post-election coverage. Even those who argued for the millennial generation being politically and civically engaged after the election sometimes referred to the group as being “won” or “lost” by the Obama and Romney campaigns.

Let's put the shoe where it belongs, here, on the President's foot. Leaders have to lead, he did get everybody to go vote. He got, he inspired people with the, he gave enough good speeches, but I think, anybody says it's his policies that got the vote going. (*Hardball*, November 26, 2012)

This election made it clear that if the Republican Party continues its war on minorities, it is destined for political irrelevancy.” (Creamer, November 7, 2012)

The reason that so many of those who would vote for the incumbent president did not bother to turn out to see him as he toured the country was that they were largely untouched by the campaign: their voting allegiance was always a certainty. It was not about political ideas at all. It was about identity: about who and what you were in the most visceral and personal sense – about race, about class, about being the kind of person you believed it was necessary to be. (Daley, November 10, 2012)

What happens to the political machine that created the two largest grassroots campaigns in history, that elected and reelected Obama in 2008 and 2012? ‘We don't know,’ Messina said, noting that per Federal Election Commission law, the campaign itself has to shut down. ‘Some of it will absolutely live on,’ he added, pointing to the social tools that defined the OFA operation's technological strategy. That infrastructure includes Dashboard, the social network built by the Obama campaign to connect and organize over one million volunteers across the country, and tracking models that enabled staff to monitor support in critical swing states. Their models, Messina said, estimated the president would win Florida by 0.2

percentage points and accurately predicted early voting within a percentage point. (Siddiqui, November 20, 2012)

There is little doubt among media sources, however, that the generation had an effect on the election outcome. It is the reason for this effect that is up for debate. While questions of civic and political engagement look at the outcome and output of an individual or group, questions regarding engagement, disengagement, and active disengagement also concern motivation. This is particularly true when conceptualizing active disengagement, which results from an internalized state of reflecting on one's lack of engagement. This means that while the media all agree on the civic and political engagement of the millennial generation, there is a variety of perspectives on larger considerations of overall engagement, disengagement and active disengagement.

While there are discourses of both engagement and disengagement in the media surrounding the 2012 election, there were no instances of media conceptualizing the generation as actively disengaged. In fact, there was little consideration of the internal mindset of millennials. Active disengagement is characterized by an individual reflecting and rationalizing why they are not engaged in a particular topic or process. The only time the media did this was when they suggested the millennials were too young to fully think about the implications of a

Democratic vote. As noted in the analysis of television content, several commentators argued that the reason for young people voting Democratically was because they were young, but soon that they would grow out of it. This was one of the only reflections on the internalized mindset that produces engagement and disengagement. Rather than interviewing millennials for the articles or television shows, the commentary about

millennials was done by political analysts, writers, and hosts. When millennials did appear in the articles and the shows, they were almost always interviewed humorously, such as in the “Watters World” segments or in the *Huffington Posts* coverage of the “Romney Rap.” These interviews reflected an opportunity to directly talk to millennials and ask them why or why not they participated civically or politically in the election- to gain real insight into the internal process of engagement. However, as detailed in the analysis of television news content, these portions of millennial interviews were instead used to support the commentary and perspectives of the writers and hosts.

This discourse was spurred on by the comments made by Romney and his campaign before and after the election. Romney’s original “47%” comments created the impression that he believed a certain portion of the electorate could not be reached or reasoned with due to pressures by current economic conditions. After the election, Romney referred to the President as giving gifts in exchange for votes. Romney also suggested that the Obama campaign was pulling voters “out of their apartments” and sending them to the voting booths. Because these comments became so well-known, there were many instances where news commentary addressed them and the discourses they represented directly.

Jonathan Chait: “That's right, the franchise is a thing that's evolved through American history and once upon a time you had to be white and male and own property, and I think there still is an embedded mentality among some people that those are the only people who at least make considerate decisions. Right, maybe the others should be allowed to vote, but they're not thinking for themselves, so they're being pulled out of their apartments. Others are making the decision to vote for them, and they're just kind of going along in a way that isn't quite the same way as you and I would make a decision. That's the mentality.” (*Hardball*, December 2, 2012)

Bob Shrum: Well, what drove a lot of them was that Mitt Romney said he didn't care about tax fairness, that he would have let the auto industry go bankrupt, ah basically alienated Latinos and Hispanics, and obviously offered nothing to black people and unmarried women. Now over time, and Jonathan is absolutely right about this, we've expanded the franchise in this country. There's always been a plutocratic resistance to that.”
(*Hardball*, December 2, 2012)

This is really where the tensions between engagement and disengagement discourses are most visible. In the post-election online and television news coverage, there is a frequent and common argument that the millennial generation is both politically and civically engaged. Not only did this group turn out and vote in unprecedented numbers, they also volunteered for local campaigns, became advocates of specific issues, and protested unfair election results. However, at the same time, there is a second discourse that argues this group of people only voted for the President and cared about the election because they grew up expecting entitlements and were manipulated by promises of gifts by the Democratic Party. These two discourses present two very different perspectives on the engagement of the generation.

These two discourses are not even compartmentalized by political leanings of the media or by media type. Discourses of engagement and disengagement are presented sometimes in the same article or show segment. They are woven throughout all shows, online articles, and authors.

These findings also complicate the way engagement, and in particular disengagement, is conceptualized. It is clear that there are two levels of engagement going on simultaneously. First, political and civic engagement are routed around the concepts of turn-out and actual physical participation. However, the larger concepts of

engagement, disengagement, and active disengagement are caught up in other considerations of agency, motivation, and influence. So while a group can be civically and politically engaged, they can simultaneously be found to be disengaged because of the media's explanation of reasoning behind their behavior and participation.

The tensions between engagement and disengagement discourses places the millennial generation in a precarious and unclear position. While consistency and exclusivity are rarely found when the media describes a group, the way in which these two discourses can appear simultaneously has specific results. This will be the consideration of the next section.

5. Based on the discourses present, what perspective is used to describe the millennial generation's involvement in the 2012 campaign?

There is an omni-present feeling of uncertainty that develops from the discourses identified in the online and television news. Both online and television news suggested that the millennial generation was (at least in part) responsible for the outcome of the Presidential election. Across the board, the millennial generation was identified as one of the groups who re-elected President Obama. However, it is the way that this group was identified and the process of this identification that ultimately suggests that the group's future is uncertain.

For example, consider the discourse found in the television news coverage that suggested young people change as they get older, and the political preferences of the generation will evolve. Immediately following the election, rather than focusing on the participation of the generation, the discourse turned to the question of what this means for the future. Even though the 2008 and 2012 Presidential elections demonstrated high

amounts of political and civic involvement, their efforts were immediately dismissed or questioned when larger trends were questioned. For example, in a conversation with Joy Reid after the election, Chris Matthews questions the political participation of the generation in future elections.

Joy Reid: And even going back further than what Nera was saying, if you lived in Florida or Ohio or in some of these states from 2008 to 2012, organizing for America never left, they were still there, they were embedded and they had this system where they were neighbors convincing neighbors and it really was an impressive machine. Now the trick is going to be if the ah, president and his team can solve this conundrum for Democrats: where their base comes out strong in presidential years, and then fades away. Which leaves the opening for mid-term elections.

Matthews: yeah, I don't like that. You don't like that either, do you?

Reid: It's a long time problem, It's a big bug-a-boo for me, that we just see that younger voters, minority voters, just go away. (*Hardball*, November 26, 2012)

What is also invoked in this conversation is the language of political machinery and power. As identified in the analysis of television news content, it was the efforts of the Obama campaign and the political machinery that they designed that resulted in the young and minority voter turnout. Even within their questioning of the future of the generation, they suggest that the future of the group's political involvement is not going to be a result of the group, but rather their involvement will be decided by the politically powerful. It is important to note that this discourse is not bound by the political orientation of the journalists, networks, or publications, but can rather be found across the board. This will be further explained in the following section.

Terms of reference are critically important in a discourse analysis. Similar to describing the millennial generation as a minority group or member of a coalition, there

were other terms of reference that were used by both television and online news content (see Table L).

The language used to describe the millennial generation paints many, different pictures of the group. Rather than there being a consistent narrative or tone to the language, there is evidence of many different descriptions taking place, even within each media. For example, both online and television news analyzed in this study used the terms winners and losers to characterize the generation. The diversity and difference among the terms suggests that there is something greater happening with the description of the millennials. There is a lack of consistency in the terms of reference, suggesting that the group has many discourses, rather than one consistent one.

This inconsistency is supported by other parts of the discourse analysis. Because many of these terms are also adjectives, this also suggests the group is framed in many ways. What is clear, however, is that these terms represent something greater happening in the coverage of the millennial generation. There is an uncertainty in the way the media describes them. The diversity in these terms of reference and discourses suggest that the media is uncertain about the value, ability, and future of this group. Even in the aftermath of the election, when demographic information showed the millennial generation heavily voted and predicted civically and politically, the group was still called, “nones,” “nobodies,” and “the underclass.” However, simultaneously, other journalists describe the generation as “winners,” “energized,” and “important.” The description of this group was also not limited to certain journalists, shows, or media. Even in the same article where the millennial members of the coalition were applauded for their efforts during the campaign, they could simultaneously be referred to “disenfranchised.” The diversity and

co-occurrence of these discourses truly reflects the uncertainty with which this group was described.

These were the words and discourses used to describe the millennial generation in the 2012 election. The discourses vary in topic, tone, and ontology, failing to present one consistent image of a millennial even within publication, shows, or media. As a result of this discrepancy, the understanding of these discourses by members of the millennial generation becomes even more important. What parts of the discourses are recognized and intergraded into millennials reactions, as well as what parts are rejected, will be the major focus of the next section.

Discourse Analysis of Journal Reactions

6. How does the millennial generation react to the discourses present in political news media?

There are two major sets of reflection that occurred simultaneously throughout the journals collected for this project. First, millennial respondents offered their interpretation of the political events, news stories, and issues occurring throughout the election. The second reflection focused on the way the media conceptualized the millennial generation. While the first was very extroverted and explicit in the journals, the second reflection was more commonly implied through reactions and the sharing of personal stories and perspectives.

Reflections on news media

In their consideration of the news media, the millennial participants in the study found a number of ways to describe, critique, and summarize online and television news. Embedded in their reactions to specific news content were discourses surrounding the

way millennials felt about news producers, organizations, and structures. It is these discourses that will be first presented in this section.

The millennial participants used a number of terms of reference to describe the news media throughout the election coverage. Just as the news media used a variety of terms of reference for the millennial generation, the millennial generation integrated many terms focused on the news media (see Table M).

Perhaps most obvious from this list of terms is its overall negative. While the terms of reference used by the online and television news for the millennial generation represented multiple vantage points, it is clear this list of term is primarily focused on the negative aspects of news coverage. Terms such as “exacerbating,” “behaving badly,” “insulting,” “sobering,” and lying particularly characterize the news media as a problematic force. Even the term paparazzi was used to describe the vicious nature of the news media when trying to cover salacious personal stories of political candidates, such as the publicized images of Mitt Romney looking disheveled and purchasing gas for his car a week after the election.

Another popular term used in the reflections was “bias,” which was used by millennial participants when describing the ethical boundaries and guidelines of the news media. The millennial respondents were not shy about their belief that the majority of the online and television news analyzed here was presented in a biased manner as a result of the hosts, producers, and networks’ subjectivity. This became a common theme throughout the journals and was dominant in 18% of the journal articles. Millennial respondents suggested that bias was a normal part of the political news experience, something that expect rather than are surprised by.

However, while bias was viewed as normal by nearly all millennial participants, it was the cause and effects of bias in political news media that was questioned and debated throughout the study. For example, consider the way the millennial participants reacted to the online polling news articles described in the analysis of digital news content. Because polling articles appeared in 8.6% of the online news sampled in this study, but were commonly discussed in the 18% of journal articles discussing bias, credibility, and subjectivity in reporting. The reporting of political polling information became critiqued by the millennial participants because it was viewed as a way to sway voters to and from actually voting. Consider this response written to an article from *The Huffington Post* about Obama's early lead among early voters.

This media is saying that despite all of the opinion polls that are thrown around, the actual early voters are favoring Obama. It seems to say "wait for the real evidence to make your decision." This media is mostly appealing to anyone who cares about who the next president is. It's successful because Romney supporters will want to vote more than ever and Obama supporters will want to maintain the lead. I agree with the media contents. Real votes are more telling than opinion polls. I would ask the media producers why they are allowed to disclose early votes. The media is asking me to support my candidate. It should say this, I suppose, but if I supported a third party candidate there seems to be no place for me here. (Participant 3, Week 3)

Other journals supported the view that polling data was not only biased but was used to persuade viewers in their political participation.

According to ABC News polls, Americans overall are split 45-47 percent in positive vs. negative views of the 2012 election. Perhaps even more important, ABC News polls revealed that 62% of independents view the 2012 election in an unfavorable manner, and only 35% of moderates see the election positively. I believe this says a lot about not only the campaigns of this election, but also the political media. While I am not nearly as well versed on previous elections as I have become on this one, I

have read and heard from multiple sources that this is perhaps one of the most negative elections to date. The nation is polarized, and the media seems to only serve to make that polarization even more extreme. The focus on gaffes and missteps and attacks of character have shown this election to be cutthroat, and that isn't always what Americans want as this article proves. My question then becomes, will the campaigns and media take this unfavorable opinion into account or will this information just fall on deaf ears? (Participant 11, Week 4)

On the surface, this looks like a pretty fair report. Several recent polls favoring both Obama and Romney are mentioned, and it looks like there's a sincere effort to explain how some of the polls might be biased. There's one part where it suggests that pollsters that call both landlines and cell phones (which one may think would provide more accurate results because more people primarily use cell phones today) got the most favorable results for Obama, but even this possibly biased statement is identified as only a possibility and not a fact. The worst thing that can be said about this article is that it reflects American culture's obsession with keeping track of who's winning, especially with the use of quantitative data. That's not a problem this article could help to alleviate on its own because it would be less beneficial to the publication's readership (and revenue) if it focused instead on the issues that ought to guide voting decisions. (Participant 13, Week 4)

While the millennial participants were divided in their view on what causes such an intense fixation on polling results, it is clear that they view the use of polls in political news reporting as a negative. These millennial participants were at the very least, aware of the use of polls to pander to specific audiences. This seemingly opposes previous research that suggests millennials were oblivious or uncritical of bias in news reporting. When prompted to discuss why they thought the media covered the topics they did, millennials in this study unanimously agreed that the polling reports in the news were a result of journalistic attempts to attract and maintain certain audiences.

The appearance of bias critique in journal entries is particularly intriguing, as previous research has identified that millennials are not critical enough to recognize bias

in news reporting (Mindich, 2007). However, this sample of students seemingly all recognized bias as a normal part of news reporting. Despite the journal instructions never listing bias, all 14 participants reflected on bias and subjectivity. There is a possibility, however, that this discussion of bias was inadvertently prompted by the nature of the instructions. By asking participants to be critical and consider information left out and the causes for coverage, it does imply that bias may be a part of the media landscape, without it organically developing in participant's responses. This possibility will need more study in the future to determine if bias recognition is truly a millennial observation or an unintended consequence of the prompt.

This finding is even more substantial when considering the history of a perception of media bias, and indicated by previous generational groups. Kuypers (2013) notes that the American press system and journalism has always had some elements of bias. These develop from the original purpose of American journalism which was to fight a pervasive British Government. Even in its infancy, American journalism struggled between an objective-reporter aim, and realistic restraints of resources and ability. Despite this presence, bias has not always been recognized by every generational group over the 250 years of American journalism. Sheppard (2008) notes that there are time periods in recent history where the American public viewed journalism as being more "objective, authentic, and of a higher quality" (p. 114). Even though bias persists during these periods, he argues that the American public has not always been as critical of the press as they are today (in 2008), and as a result saw journalism as being less biased than it is now. Although, Sheppard (2008) stops short at describing why critique and

acknowledgement of bias might be higher now, he does argue today's public as being more critical and judgmental of the press.

This re-asserts the importance of the reflection on bias in participant journals. While there is little research comparing millennial views of bias to other generational groups, it is clear that the group recognizes and critiques the bias nonetheless. This is fundamentally important to understanding the millennial's relationship with the media because this is one of the first studies that both recognizes and explores this perception of bias. This finding negates Mindich's (2007) argument that the generation fails to critically engage with the media, and as a result is blinded to the presence of bias in reporting. Further, it offers an insight into Sheppard's (2008) conclusions that this is a time period denoted by high-critique of journalism. Sheppard's (2008) work primarily studied adults' perceptions of bias, however, this study recognizes that is also an important feature for Millennials. More research comparing generational groups will be needed to descriptively explore how the perception of bias is different or remains the same.

This view that polls, especially early polling predictions, could be skewed was not just present in the millennial reactions, but it was also an active part of the media's narrative as well. For example, after the election, television news focused on the inaccuracies of the pre-polling data, especially in the way that it misestimated the millennial generation's political participation. While millennial reactions to television sources in this project did not focus specifically on this coverage, it is interesting to note that the millennial participants were questioning the validity and accuracy of these polls long before the television news media did. In fact, all reflection on polls in the journal

articles occurred prior to the election. The millennial participants did not even mention the word “polls” after the election. This is further evidenced by the strong presence of polling articles in the NewsWhip dataset prior to the election, and near-absence of them after. Because the millennial generation was able to select the articles included in the NewsWhip dataset (via posts and tweets), the lack of articles about polling suggests that they were a less popular topic in the aftermath of the election. It could also be the reason why the millennial participants did not include polling as a topic in their post-election reflections.

Reflecting on humor in political news was also a common topic of reflection for the millennial participants. Of the journal entries, 16.4% were devoted to consider the value, purpose, and implications of using humor in political coverage. Humor was also a common topic for the television and the online news. Two of the six most popular political television shows with the millennial generation are *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*. However, humor was not a singular feature of these two shows, other television shows, such as *Hardball* included humor segments such as “the sideshow” which devotes the middle segment to funny news clips and current events. Even *The O’Reilly Factor* included humor by regularly featuring comedian Dennis Miller and correspondent Jesse Watters. There was plenty of humorous coverage for the millennials to react to in their journal entries about the online news as well. While only 2.7% of the articles were coded as singularly being about humor, satire, or fake news, humor was present in other articles, such as articles about millennial pro-Romney rappers (Huffington post cite).

It is not surprising that the millennial participants frequently included humor in their analysis of the articles because it was a common theme in both online and television news. However, the millennial journals did not just reflect on the frequency of humor, they instead questioned its place in the political news system. As noted in the analysis millennial journals, it is clear that millennials differ in their acceptance and view of using humor to deliver information about the election. While some thought it was an effective means of getting all segments of the American population involved and informed about politics, others felt that this type of coverage did not stress the importance of all topics and had a tendency to simplify political issues.

The topic of bias and subjectivity was again integrated into this critique of humorous news in the way that millennial participants observed and hypothesized that political humor being used mostly as a tactic of left-leaning journalists and publications.

Chris Matthews hosts “Hardball with Chris Matthews” on MSNBC. It is a Left leaning news broadcast which arguably has a Liberal agenda. He has a segment on his show called “This ‘Weak’ in Conspiracy” which is dedicated to calling out seemingly ridiculous claims by politicians. This last segment featured a Republican Congressmen who claimed the Obama administration had “ a bunch of Muslim Brotherhood members giving them advice.” Such radical assertions are made more frequently than most people think, but through TV segments like the one on Chris Matthews’s show; they are devalued and laughed at as they should be. (Participant 5, Week 8)

The video is on a page littered with distractions, which speaks towards the way my generation retains information. Having watched The Daily Show for years, and also after watching the O’Reilly/Stewart debate, I can finally see how Jon Stewart as a host is in character. The subtext of the title says, “For Fox News, the war on Christmas has become a rote observance devoid of all its original meaning.” If this weren’t in the context of a comedy show, it would be seen as a direct attack on Fox

News, but because it is framed as parody, its material is unbound.
(Participant 2, Week 10)

Humors was viewed as a means of even devaluing certain topics that were deemed irrelevant or irrational. In a tactic that was identified as a leftist, using humor to attack the right was observed as normal and even desired. It is not that all forms of humor and satire in political news was identified as being a positive, but when it was used the correct way, it would overall help the electorate.

Reflections on millennials

Outside the reflections about specific political topics (polls) or news techniques (humor), the millennial participants also reflected on the way their own generation was described, identified, and invoked in the media coverage. Again, these reflections often discussed how the millennials were being treated in the election. Terms of reference are again important when considering the way that the millennial generation thought about itself. When referencing other members of the millennial generation (either specifically or generally), participants used the words found in Table N.

Important in this description is the complicated nature of the terms of reference. First, it is clear that the participants in the study self-identified as millennials. This was evidenced when they referenced the group as “us” and “our.” This is an important feature because previous research has identified that millennials are reluctant to self-identify generational identity (Twenge, 2006). While all writers identified as millennial members, it was the nature of that identity that suggested confusion or diversity in point of view. This will be further analyzed in the following section.

The use of the term “our” is also important when considering the characterization of issues and topics of interest and importance to the millennial generation. As described in the analysis of journals, the way the millennial generation characterized some issues was through a language of property or ownership. The debate surrounding funding of *Sesame Street* and PBS during the first presidential debate brought the topic to the media’s attention. However, it was in the millennial participants’ journals that it became clear they viewed the educational programming as related to their childhood and being particularly important in the generation. Despite *Sesame Street’s* long history dating back to the late 1960s, the millennial participants viewed the program as being critically important to their own childhood development as well as today’s children. *Sesame Street* was something that “meant a lot to us” and was a part “of our childhood.” Rather than reflecting that Sesame Street was a part of everyone who grew up since the 1960s, the use of “us” and “our” suggest that it was of particular importance to people like them. Although in this instance the millennial participants did not describe what they meant by “us” or “our,” it is clear from other topical reflections that this has to do with age.

In particular, millennial participants related the topic of technology to their age group. Articles about technology were common in the online news media’s reflection on campaign strategies, and even more common as a part of media reflection on the millennial generation. Technology, specifically the use of social media, was identified in the journal entries as being something particularly relevant to the millennial generation. For example, when President Obama released a meme of him posing with Olympic gymnast McKayla Maroney, the millennial participants suggested this was done specifically as a comedic appeal to young people. Social media was something that the

candidates and campaigns engaged in to specifically target and reach the millennial generation. Although social media is used and accessed by people of all ages, the millennial participants reflected the use of memes that showcased other millennials (like Maroney) they were demographically targeted efforts.

Specifically, it is the language of ownership and property that is particularly important in these reflections. The broader category of technology is not just linked to the generation, but a feature and a value. After the election, online and television news reflected that one possible reason Romney lost was because of his poor use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The millennial participants agreed with this perspective, praising Obama's sophisticated use of the social media (such as the Maroney meme) and critiquing Romney's poor social media outreach. Social media, the participants reflected, became a part of the appeal of President Obama and the failure of Romney.

Finally, it is through reflection on humor in political news that millennial participants offered their own view of the media's description of the group. They also offered their own interpretation of the group. As noted in earlier chapters, using humor in political news coverage was a controversial topic for the participants. This was especially true in the way they reflected on viewers ability to understand the difference between satire and "real-news." There was concern voiced by some participants that some viewers, specifically younger viewers, would not be able to understand that *The Colbert Report* was meant as a satire, and that the ultra-conservative bias offered by host Steven Colbert was done to mock and criticize other political commentary. While all participants demonstrated that they understood it was meant as a satire, they voiced concern that other

members of the millennial generation may not have the same awareness. This is known as the third-person effect, where a person believes that while they are smart or strong or literate enough to see the news for what it really is, others may not have the same skills. It is through this reflection on the third-person effect that these participants were concerned about the nature of satire and humor in political news. They viewed other members of the millennial generation as helpless against the powerful media styles, producers, and hosts.

For example:

It's not as unethical as editorializing in an article presented as hard news, but it's nonetheless dangerous for comedy producers like this to encourage their predominantly young-adult audiences to trust them for political information. (Participant 13, Week 4)

However, not all millennial participants invoked the third-person effect in their entries. Other participants felt that the humor and satire used in these political news outlets were a good break from the monotonous styles of other media. Satire and humor were a good way to attract a younger audience and help them understand and learn more about significant political issues. For example

While I try and watch Colbert's program with a "clean etch a sketch", no pun intended, it is quite clear who the target audience is. For someone like myself, who is not very political by any means, I enjoy the way Colbert parodies and, at times, mocks politics in this country. I almost feel like he brings the issues down to a basic level, so that the common American can understand and even visually see how certain political and public Figures appear to be, on a public level. (Participant 14, Week 2)

There is a prevalent dichotomy in the view these millennial participants had about their wider generation. They were either too weak to think independently, and thus they were prey for the media's biased stories, or they were strong enough to understand the stories for what they were. While all participants reflected that they were fully able to interpret

the news stories, understand the subjectivity of reporting, and think independently about the media, there was prevalent diversity in the way they described other members of the millennial generation. It is in this that the undecided nature of the generation is again invoked through discourse. However, it is not just the media who express confusion over the generation; it is the members of the generation itself that questions its own abilities, values, and potential.

7. How does the millennial generation accept, reject, or negotiate the discourses of the news and what do they use to justify their reactions?

In an effort to fully understand the way the millennial generation engages with online and television news, evidence of Hall's (year) forms of engagement were investigated.

Although a statistical overview where each journal entry was coded for acceptance, rejection, and negotiation of discourses would be helpful in identifying a primary reaction of the millennial participants to the online and television news, coding each entry for one reaction is incredibly difficult. This is because these discourses, just like the journal entries, do not exist in a vacuum. There are too many confounding variables, such as other news sources accessed, previous experience with the topic, and personal interaction with the journalism profession that cannot be taken into account. Thus, a qualitative coding approach using the contextual information provided throughout each participants journal entries will be used here.

First, when an individual operates inside a dominant code, they both agree and adopt the position of the media source. To do this, individuals: agree with the media's message, do not levy any criticism of the media's message, adopt some or all of the media's language, or rationalizes their approval/agreement by citing examples of useful

or interesting information. This was the decoding option that was the most pronounced and explicit (see Table O).

From these examples, it is clear that millennial participants outwardly stated when they agreed with the article. They also integrated several of the decoding indicators together. In this following example, the millennial stated the agreement, justified it using examples, and also used the language of the article.

Obamacare, which Obama spent a year and half of his first term working on, has been a consistent issue between Democrats and Republicans. The healthcare reform had to survive a Supreme Court challenge and without president Obama being reelected, it would have been repealed by Romney. Now that Obama is reelected, the full effects of Obamacare will be put into place in 2014, and as this article says once the law is fully implemented it is likely to last for years to come. We will now be able to see the full impact of the reformed healthcare, and, in my opinion, the potential benefits of it. (Participant 5, Week 7)

This reaction was written to a November 7th MSNBC article titled “Obamacare is the law of the land.” The journal entry states the writer’s opinion of the media as well as of the topic, and even integrates the language of the article using language such as “benefits,” “years to come,” and “full effects.” What is also visible from this example is that noting when a participant is agreeing with the media or the topic can be difficult. It is possible that the participant agreed with the article not because of the style of reporting or a story’s accuracy, but rather because they were excited to see Obamacare implemented. The conflation of a response to the media and the topic is problematic within the “operating inside the dominant code” decoding option. However, other decoding options were more easily differentiated.

Easily the most common of the decoding options in the millennial participant reactions was applying a negotiable code. This can be identified when: The reactor partially agrees with the media's message and partially disagrees, the reactor critiques the media for its position or the presentation of the information (news format, style, or type), the reactor adopts some of the media's language, the reactor may agree with the contents of this specific article, but still levies criticism against generalized media, the reactor attempts to explain the rationale behind the article's publication, or the reactor does not respond or does not have anything to say to the producers.

There were several journal entries that particularly showcased the negotiable code (See Table P). What is identified in these reactions is that the millennial participants used many techniques to negotiate the dominant code and begin to critique the media presenting it. This is done more subtlety than in the operating inside the dominant code option. These decoding options often read as if the participant is re-stating the facts and positions of the article. However, it is the use of language that differentiates this from the other decoding options. Both examples contain language that was adopted from the news article. Words such as "division," "actions against," and "heartless" are all adopted from the articles themselves. Further, these reactions also suggest that while journal entries summarize the role of bias in the media (and how it is used), they do not outwardly critique or oppose this bias. It is being stated as a summary of the article rather than a critique of the practice. This is what ultimately differentiates this code from the final one, substituting an oppositional code. Summary, not critique, is the means by which millennial participants demonstrated their applying a negotiable code.

Finally, substituting an oppositional code was indicated by: The reactor disagrees with the media's message and corrects it or proposes another message, the reactor proposes an alternative message or corrects the media's message, the reactor doesn't adopt any of the media's language, the reactor critiques both the specific article and generalized news media, the reactor provides examples from article about the places where they disagree with media's perspective, style, or format, the reactor questions the ethics of publishing the article, or the reactor questions and criticizes the bias or issue salience of the contents of the article and the rationale behind its publication (see Table Q).

Once again, there is not a single discourse or reaction adopted by the millennial participants, but many reactions and forms of reacting to the media. This understates that the millennial generation is far from homogeneous in its views of the media. As these participants demonstrated, it is not just that the millennials identified different themes such as bias, identity, and humor, but they also used different forms of reaction, such as operating inside the dominant code, applying a negotiable code, or substituting an oppositional code.

Discussion

There are many issues at play in this consideration of the millennial generation and the media from the election of 2012. The millennial generation is coming of age in the political system; moreover they are, by far, the largest generational group in history. Harnessing the millennial generation's power by any political group could result in political dominance. It is possible this is one reason for the many discourses found in media content following the 2012 election. New, powerful, and active groups are nearly always the center of critique and discussion in a news system. This is precisely the tension that Stuart Hall (1997) detailed his work. However, this supposition is not without its problems, specifically when one considers the lack of coverage given to the millennials prior to the election. If there is an element of natural or normal concern over the presence of a new, large generational group, then why were they not discussed heavily, or even considered as part of the political landscape in the 30 days prior to the election?

This issue can be answered by looking at the lack of coverage on millennials prior to the election. It was not just the television and online media that did not account for the millennial generation prior to the election, it was also the political polls. Lost in its own cycle of self-representation, the polls positioning and ignoring the millennial generation informed the media's lack of coverage, while the lack of media coverage informed the political polls. This resulted in dramatic and significant differences in the amount and type of coverage the millennial generation (and other groups) received before and after the election. It is almost as if this cycle of representation between the polls and media was thrown an epic curveball when 50% of the generation showed up on Election Day.

What is most important, then, is to look at the way the various media groups dealt with this event. To whom then did they turn to inform their coverage of this new millennial engagement discourse? If they didn't change discourses, why not?

The cycle of representation

While the foci of this study were age and generational identity, it is clear that there are many other cultural groups invoked in the discourses of the media and millennial participants. These groups have roots in socio-economic levels, race, and gender. Because the "coalition" and other explanations for Obama's victory were described as made up of these demographic indicators, the consideration of age cannot be isolated from these other groups.

Hall and Jefferson's (2006) work, in particular, emphasizes the need to consider socio-economic levels as a prominent feature of the representation cycle. Control culture is not just described as being "older" but also as being dominant because of the power associated with wealth. In addition, the control culture is primarily comprised of white men, also traditionally associated as being more powerful in society. Because Hall and Jefferson (2006) draw a connection between those with societal power and those in control of media industries and production, control culture is primarily comprised of older, white, wealthy, men. This was perhaps most visible in the way the television media described the changing demographics of the American electorate and the deviation from the traditional voting public. As noted on all six analyzed television shows, President Obama's re-election was seen as a result of new/different groups participating and voting. The increased voting-turnout percentages from African Americans, Latinos, women and

young people were used as indicators in the media that these other demographic groups were replacing the once powerful older, wealthy, white, male.

However, it is the way the media reacted to this change that particularly fits with Hall and Jefferson's (2006) cycle of representation. Hall and Jefferson (2006) asserts that a deviant event, such as minority groups' voting and influencing a national election will not simply be accepted by the control culture, but instead will be positioned in a way to reassert that the deviant behavior is unwelcome or potentially harmful. By doing this, the control culture's own behavior is reaffirmed and dominance is reinforced. Because the media then adopt and project the control culture's discourse and behavior, the control culture's dominant position is again reinforced.

However, the representation cycle identified by Hall and Jefferson (2006), is limited in the consideration of the way the media described members of the coalition after the election. While reactions from the Romney campaign and other Republican groups suggest the control culture belittled the efforts of the coalition members in order to reassert the media's own dominance (especially after the lost election), the media's reaction to these statements indicates a problem. As described in earlier chapters, there were many cases where the media accepted and reinforced the position of the Romney campaign's gift and entitlement analysis. Hosts Bill O'Reilly and Sean Hannity accepted this analysis, and devoted 12 segments (and one entire show) to proving it was the "gifts" promised by the Obama campaign to minorities that led them to vote. This closely matched the analysis by Romney and Congressman Ryan in their post-election conversations with donors and members of the media. Online news articles similarly

promoted this explanation, arguing that the turnout by members of the coalition resulted from financial promises by the Obama campaign.

This is the traditional path of Hall and Jefferson's (2006) representation cycle. The deviant voting of the coalition is recognized and opposed by the discourses of the control culture, the media reinforces the control cultures' position, the control culture uses the media's coverage as to suggest it is correct, and the media reproduces the enthusiasm of the control culture in its content. This cycle continues again and again, ultimately reinforcing the dominance and power of the control culture and belittling the behaviors of the coalition. As Hall and Jefferson (2006) state, it is nearly impossible to identify where this cycle begins and ends, but it is clear what the implications are.

However, this was not the same cycle adopted by all media outlets analyzed in this study. In fact, although those adopting the cycle described above were outspoken and relentless in their representation of the control culture as correct, an alternative cycle lingered. Particularly found in the coverage of MSNBC and Comedy Central programming, the control culture's explanation of the Obama victory was challenged, critiqued, and even outwardly rejected. Instead, these news programs began to identify and reinforce the discourse of the coalition itself, even outwardly reflecting a shift in who they believe to be the controlling culture in the United States. In contradiction to Hall's (1997) model, some media began to listen and reinforce the position of those committing the deviant event (in this case voting in the election). In addition to finding alternative explanations for the coalition's participation and engagement, they argued against the gift and entitlement analysis. Consider the full exchange by Chris Matthews following Tom

Davis, a former Representative from Virginia calling members of the coalition, “underclass.”

Matthews: Were going to talk about the nobodies, that’s what they call the people who voted for Obama, pulled this one off...Well let’s look a little more comprehensively at this, this comes from a good guy, a Republican, Tom Davis, but look at how he talks here. He’s a former congressman from North Virginia. He talked about the Democratic turnout efforts among the quote “underclass” minorities, and his words, or his choice of words were corrected by Salon’s Joan Walsh in an interesting give and take last week, and we want to go beyond that. Watch it.

(clip of Tom Davis and Walsh on the underclass).

Matthews: Pulled out of the apartments, haha, by the way, a phrase used by Governor Romney as well. Pulled out of their apartments. Given what is at stake, why exactly were Republicans surprised that the fifth so called or the so called 47% voted heavily this year, showed up.... I find it that I keep trying to figure through the mindset that we were hearing, that’s called the mainstream media, where we kept hearing Romney has a really good chance of winning this thing, and you kept hearing it among the establishment types, and then wait a minute, there was an election. And all of a sudden, this other America, this real America is heard from. I actually some of it was other America the old sanative, the book, but ah, your thoughts John on still using terms that diminish or separate poor people minorities from being of the American electorate, like it’s that, over there, that’s that.

Jonathan Chait: That’s right, the franchise is a thing that’s evolved through American history and once upon a time you had to be white and male and own property, and I think there still is an embedded mentality among some people that those are the only people who at least make considerate decisions. Right, maybe the others should be allowed to vote, but they’re not thinking for themselves, so they’re being pulled out of their apartments. Others are making the decision to vote for them, and they’re just kind of going along in a way that isn’t quite the same way as you and I would make a decision. That’s the mentality. (*Hardball*, December 3, 2012)

Here, the discourse of the Romney campaign, which is so clearly viewed as the control culture in other media, is dismantled and critiqued. However, Matthews and Chait take their analysis a step further, calling the “mainstream media” into the fight and suggesting

their reinforcement and support of the view of the coalition as underclass is a problem. It is in this critique that it becomes clear Matthews and Chait are no longer associating the control culture with those who are older, white, and male. By identifying this group in the past tense and as a part of history, it is clear that this media does not accept the same control culture as demonstrated on Fox News.

However, Matthews' and Chait's analysis stops short of identifying a new control culture. As noted in previous chapters, neither the online or television news make a regular practice of interviewing members of the coalition, in particular, youth. While these media reject older white males as the control culture, and invoke the coalition as a new dominant force, by not turning to members of the coalition itself it does not truly reflect a new version of Hall and Jefferson's (2006) cycle of representation (in which the coalition would be the control culture).

As indicated here, it is clear that there is some debate in the media about who is the control culture, and the place of the coalition in the 2012 election. However, this indecisiveness is powerful in that it reflects the possibility of multiple discourses surrounding who media accepts as controlling the 2012 political process and future. This disparity also suggests that there may be a change in the control culture of the United States. The media were quick to pick up on the surprise showing by the coalition after the election, recognizing that it was these groups that affected the electoral outcome. Based on the evidence from these discourse analyses, a new model of representation may be possible. This new model would need to take into account that because of the generational lifecycle, the perception of the control culture must change to account for new generational groups growing up. While the race and gender of the control culture can

remain the same, a new generational group must take over as other generations die off. This election represented one such moment of this change in generational control culture (see Figure R).

This new model recognizes an alternative path in the representation cycle, one that appears during times of generational shift in the control culture. Hall and Jefferson (2006) identify the path on the right, but it is clear from the discourses found in the online and television media that the path on the left co-occurs. Both routes still identify the coalition's political engagement as deviant. Even those who critique the control cultures discourse remark that they were surprised by the coalition's presence in the election outcome. Further, by recognizing the historical dominance of the older, white, male control culture, they continue to identify the coalition as deviant. It is not that the coalition becomes recognized as the control culture (although this transition begins to be proposed), but rather that the discourse provided by the traditional control culture sources are no longer replicated and enforced by all media. The coalition's behavior and identity is still deviant, and the white older male is still recognized as the control culture. What changes is that some media outlets began to critique the discourse and dominance of the control culture.

In this model, the media can follow two paths. Do the media use the control culture as the primary definer of their representation, or the deviant group as the primary definer? Evidenced in this analysis, both the control culture and those who are deviant were used by the media in election 2012. What remains to be seen is if choosing both groups will continue to be represented, or if one group will again become a single control culture.

Further, more research should be conducted to look how and why the media outlets follow one path over the other. A cursory look at this would suggest that liberally biased media favored the deviant group as definers while conservative media favored the control culture. This could be because the re-election of a Democratic president resulted from the deviant behaviors of the coalition, but there are likely other explanations as well.

Despite these remaining questions, it is clear that the two paths of the media create or reinforce a tension between the control culture and those who deviated from it. This is fully exhibited in the terms of reference used by the media to describe the millennial generation and the terms used by the millennial participants to describe the media. Neither set of terms depicts a clear relationship (positive or negative in nature) between the millennial generation and the media. Instead, these terms have both positive and negative tones, perhaps reflecting the uncertain nature of who is the control culture.

Representation and crisis

Other scholars have identified that the cycle of representation evolves or changes overtime to account for new groups, political processes, and technological shifts. In particular, Barnhurst (2011) suggests that the concept of representation has reached a dramatic and unprecedented moment due to two decades of poor performance-driven crises in the media industry. Technological changes such as the development and popularity of the Internet for disseminating information has changed the roles and speed at which newspaper, radio, and television journalists must work. The introduction of this new medium for news gathering has altered the profession and caused an “affect” crisis that produces a state of anxiety and uncertainty in the industry. This anxiety has produced institutional changes that have altered the expectations of journalists to interact with the

public. Barnhurst adds “the institutional changes illustrate how interactivity has become central to the representation of how to generate public knowledge” (p. 576).

A further crisis that influences representation in the media stems from economic tensions and problems in the U.S. As advertisers left traditional news outlets such as radio, newspapers, and television for the Internet in the early 2000s, these traditional news outlets were left with falling profits and looming anxiety of long-term economic failure. Barnhurst proposes that this also resulted in news outlets laying off journalists, a trend that began even before the 2006 “Great Recession.” It was the combination of these four motivations (technology, audience, economic, and labor forces) that has resulted in anxiety in the news industry and launched it into a state of crisis.

Romero and Walker (2010) similarly study the crisis occurring in media representation; they add that the introduction of digital and multi-modal content has altered the way information is disseminated and produced. The growing popularity of digital technologies has placed an increased strain on the duties and abilities of traditional news sources. “Digital technologies offer greater flexibility, increased audio-visual quality, and enhanced portability, facilitating data storage, replication, and dissemination” (p. 212). These advantages of digital news outlets over television, radio and print sources has facilitated growing anxieties over how these traditional sources can keep up or maintain their audiences.

Other scholars have suggested that the idea of media crisis originates with the media itself (Cooper & Marx, 2014). Rather than accepting that the media is reacting to an outside crisis evolving from changes in technology and information gathering, Cooper and Marx suggest that the media proliferates the idea of being in crisis to draw attention

to itself and increase viewership. As major crises such as unethical political practices and international foreign policy debates bring in viewers, the media system also recognizes that if they exaggerate their own crises, this too will bring in viewers (Cooper & Marx 2014). For example, while the media may have in fact found itself in an employment crisis a few years ago, today, hiring numbers are on the increase (Cooper & Marx, 2014). Yet, the media crisis narrative goes on, and potentially has a difficult time identifying when the crisis is actually over. While Cooper and Marx (2014) deny that the idea of a crisis is a total construction by the media, they do argue that today's narrative is more of a manifestation of that earlier tension, rather than an actual reaction to a contemporary problem.

However, what is more critically important in this study is what this crisis means for the representation of the millennial generation by the media. As the crisis has developed over the past thirty years, there has been a subtle need to find a scapegoat, or at the very least, a cause for these problems. Reid-Brinkley (2012) suggests that one place in which this search has manifested is the way the media describes and represents youth-black youth in particular. In a case study looking at media coverage of the Urban Debate League, a group servicing and educating black youth, she found the media repeatedly ignored and "othered" inner-city youth. Further, throughout the 1990s and 2000s, when the media did cover these youth, they were often framed as troubled, crime-driven, and poor. For example, when a youth spokesperson (a teenager) of the group was interviewed, the final news reports often deviated from the actual transcript, taking quotes out of context, and selectively using examples that reinforced the negative representation of the group. She writes "what I intuitively understood to be happening was ignored by

the news producer and every other media representative I encountered. I am ‘an outsider within’” (p. 79). Reid-Brinkley’s work further supports the analysis that the media has a history of finding minority groups, on which to blame society’s problems on. It’s not just that these groups are falsely represented in the media, but their stories are used by the media as a scapegoat for other issues such as drugs in schools or high crime rates.

What she adds, however, is this framing is not ignored or unrecognized by the groups it claims to represent. In her case study, black youth viewers were aware of these techniques and grew skeptical of the overall media system as a result. “Viewers are trained to make sense of the verbal and visual cues in newscasts and news stories that suggest a particular perspective or view point from which the media event should be understood” (p. 82). In this way, the public performs an informal critical analysis of the news, particularly when they feel that the representations found within are far from accurate. This finding in particular sheds light on the depth of the journal entries used in this study. The skepticism of the general news media found in these entries and the quality of the connections and analyses is supported by Reid-Brinkley’s (2012) work. When a group feels as if it is not being accurately or fairly represented in the media, they become critical and draw conclusions about what they encounter as well as about other news outlets and media. Reid-Brinkley (2012) notes this skepticism becomes a normal part of the media experience for these groups. They begin to see and expect misrepresentation in the news as a product of the media system. Rather than be alarmed or surprised by their own analysis of the news, they accept it as normal feature. This was clearly visible in the millennial journal entries included in this study. Bias, subjectivity, and inaccuracy were not only routinely recognized, but also expected by the participants.

This has also been found in earlier studies looking at the way young people see themselves represented in the media. Kelly's (2006) work finds that youth often view their representation as flawed and inaccurate. "Repeatedly they say they have been misrepresented and placed in a bad light in the media coverage that supposedly reflects their lives. Of course, complaints by any group about being represented in the media, even those with power and privilege in society, are not uncommon. But, because of the age of these youth groups and other aspects of their lives or social locations, they have very little pull with the media or access to the media production process" (p. 28). This again invokes Hall and Jefferson's (2006) model of representation. Youth are often viewed as deviant and misrepresented in the media because they do not have the access to media producers or the production process. The lack of interviews between media producers and millennials (and the poor quality of the interviews that were conducted) reinforce this as a complication in the media-youth relationship. There is no room to correct misrepresentations, no interactions that would have changed the way the media treated millennials. Perhaps this also accounts for why many of the television hosts and journalists reflected that they were surprised when a high percentage of millennials voted.

Kelly's (2006) work also adds to our understanding of how unlikely it would be that prior to the elections, discourses surrounding youth engagement would change. Without interactions, interviews, or detailed investigation of youth, there was very little to challenge the false perception that the generation was not going to participate in either the 2008 or 2012 election. The frames used by the media to describe youth "serve 'an ideological function when the frames reinforce unequal social relations by those institutionally empowered to do so,'" she explains (p. 29). Like the findings of Reid-

Brinkley (2012), the media's traditional representation of youth (like that seen the 30 days before the 2012 election) serves as a way to reinforce the impression of them as deviant, and reinforce other groups as having societal power.

This crisis in the media industry is coupled with the popularity and prominence of stories of moral panic. Welsh, Price, and Yankey (2002) argued that throughout the late 1980s and 1990s the media placed increased attention on "youth problems" such as drugs and crime. Moral panic is described as occurring when a "person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interest; and its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media" (Cohen, 1972, p. 9-, quote in Welsh Price & Yankey). The idea of moral panic is invoked particularly when looking at the discourses that emerged from *The O'Reilly Factor* and *Hannity* after the election. These two hosts adamantly argued the members of the coalition were a societal problem because they felt entitled to the gifts offered by the Obama campaign, an anti-American sentiment. By identifying these groups as being "lesser," they equate them and their motivations for voting as a societal problem. This sentiment was supported by members of the Romney campaign who similarly accused the coalition voters of being manipulated into voting, rather than doing it based on sound-judgment and reasoning.

Moral panic, an element of media crises, is a frequent theme of the media, in that they describe groups that work against the media's goals or challenge their positions as a "threat." This was supported by the findings of Kelly (2006) who identified youth as one such target of moral panic. This also helps to explain why some media did not take on the traditional representation cycle identified by Hall and Jefferson (2006), and instead challenged the position of the control culture. Because the millennial generation and

other members of the coalition supported the aims of some media (such as Matthews, Maddow, and Stewart), describing this voting participation through the lens of moral panic would actually hinder their overall position. Thus, instead they took the alternative path and used the deviant group as definers. Further, as shown by the Matthews-Chait interview, these news sources started to identify the other media sources through the lens of moral panic, arguing that it was those other media who were hindering society.

Saewyc et al. (2013) similarly found that media can invoke multiple discourses when there is overwhelming evidence that challenges the dominance of one group over another. In their case study of media coverage of youth sexual exploitation, they found that media can use multiple discourses to describe incidences and stories partially based on the way they have described the issue previously. When possible, journalists frame subsequent stories in a way that supports their earlier portrayal. However, there are times when the evidence presented in a news story is overwhelming, and a journalist must change their position to integrate or fit the story. The ability to do so is rare and usually only reserved for stories that present new information, cause new policy, or require long-term coverage. While their findings suggest that there are times when new discourses or cycles of representation occur, the authors do not identify or model an alternative cycle of representation during these times. Nonetheless, they assert “the news media wield the power of words to catch the attention of the community, and their word choices can create or challenge stereotypes about young people” (p. 97).

Millennials and the media

From this study, it is clear that discourses shifted dramatically and quickly following the 2012 election. It is important to look at how these changes were observed

and reacted to by the millennial generation themselves, the very subjects of the change. Few studies have previously looked at how a group reacts to these changes.

It is clear from the discourses found within the millennial journal entries that the relationship between the media and the generation is strained. This is clear in the millennial participant reactions and reflections on the presence of bias in news reporting. Not only did the millennials often reflect that they saw the media's interpretation of issues and events as biased, but they saw that bias as a flaw of the media system. However, they also saw this as a normal part of the media system. The flaw happened everywhere, on every television network, website, and by every journalist. This conclusion is an important feature of these journals because they detect something that can potentially be misinterpreted in other arenas. Other researchers have identified the potential to misinterpret individuals' reactions to media as "polysemy" (Wilkenfeld, 2013; Divjak, 2013). The normalcy by which bias was discussed and identified suggested that these millennials interpreted all media as biased, and therefore all information gained from the news was potentially biased in nature. Even when millennial participants stated that they agreed with the point of view put forth in the news coverage, they still recognized that it was probably a biased perspective of a journalist.

Previous research has identified the millennial generation as lazy, apathetic, and uncritical of the media. However, this research finds just the opposite. The journal entries revealed that not only is bias recognized in reporting, millennials also offer explanations of why this bias exists. These explanations range from time pressures, to institutional structures that encourage and discourage certain types of news stories; explanations that are echoed in academic research. However, it is the millennial lack of alarm over the

presence of bias that is most at risk for being misinterpreted. The view of bias as a normal part of the media environment is often a source of academic anxiety. However, when asked to reflect on bias in media reporting, the millennial participants showed little concern. It is possible that this lack of concern over bias can be misinterpreted as being apathetic or uncritical, when in fact it is a product of the millennials critique of the media. By continuously seeing bias in the news media they encounter, millennials have begun to see it as normal. It is likely this finding is not the result of collusion or the study asking millennial participants to reflect on bias in the media weekly because of the appearance of this attitude in the first journal entries. If bias was not normally recognized by the participants, then the bias found within the news articles in this study would have been reported as shocking or surprising.

It is clear that this perception of bias and subjectivity in news reporting appears across multiple media. Traditional and new forms of media are critiqued equally. Millennials identified possible bias and critiqued television and online news media similarly, suggesting that the understanding of bias is not limited towards one form of news.

The reflection on bias reflects another important trend: the lack of trust the millennial participants had in the political news media. Because they viewed nearly all media sources as biased, they did not trust the news to give them an accurate depiction of what was really going on in the electorate. This becomes even more relevant when the participants reflected that they not only did not trust the media for themselves, but also for other people. The third-person effect suggests that we view ourselves to be impenetrable by the media, but see others as weaker and potentially more vulnerable to

media effects. This was a common discourse of the millennial participants, especially as they reflected that the bias in the news may be problematic for the way other audience members react and interpret current events.

This media is aimed at all political ads and for likely all parents in America. It begs the question “Just what effect is all of the campaigning having on the youth?” It hadn’t occurred to me that this could be that bad because I (like most people) can just block out the ads when they get to be too much. Small children lack the ability to do this. (Participant 9, Week 6)

It’s not as unethical as editorializing in an article presented as hard news, but it’s nonetheless dangerous for comedy producers like this to encourage their predominantly young-adult audiences to trust them for political information. (Participant 13, Week 4)

This skepticism is an important finding of this study because it reflects the challenges in the relationships between the millennials and the media. The millennial participants saw bias and subjectivity as a normal part of the media environment. It is unclear if they thought this was a problem that needed to be fixed, but rather a problem that was nearly impossible to fix due to the causes of this bias. These perceptions of bias lead the millennial participants to have less trust in the media sources, particularly when they considered their influence on other people.

The conclusions also reveals that although new digital forms of news production have been applauded for their potentials of objective and quick reporting, millennials do not recognize this as something that has actually been executed. Television and online news were equally critiqued for the presence of bias, thus suggesting that the relationship is not singularly dependent on medium. More research is needed to determine other factors that might influence the lack of trust exhibited by millennials toward the media.

The Millennial Generation and Engagement

As discussed previously, many researchers have sought to identify the millennial generation as seemingly entirely engaged or disengaged in both media and politics. Few scholars, such as Vidali, have explored the generation outside of this binary and even fewer have given consideration to new forms of engagement that may not be recognized through the binary at all.

Researchers such as Huntley (2006), Montgomery (2007), and Winograd and Hais (2011) have proposed the millennial generation as one of the most civically and politically engaged generation's in America's history. They write, that engagement is now enacted not just through the traditional means of voting, but also through political protesting, volunteering, and online activism (such as buy-cotts). As a result, the media and older generations have been slow to recognize the generation as engaged, because their new forms of participation are less-visible to an election-centered audience.

While the conceptualization and recognition of the millennial generation as engaged is definitely supported in this study (through the journal entries as well as later media discourses), the clear conceptualization of engagement is also challenged. Part of the engagement argument is that millennial's participation in the political process goes unrecognized because it is done through untraditional means. While millennial's participated in the 2012 election in many ways, their voting presence was record-shattering. Thus, even though the millennial generation voted, which is considered the traditional route to engagement and citizenship, they still were critiqued and viewed by some media outlets as a disengaged generation. This suggests that there may be other reasons' media failed to discursively describe the generation as engaged; and supports an alternative model of representation.

Further, in the election aftermath, the millennial's votes were described as being illegitimate because they were the product of the Obama' campaigns brainwashing, manipulation, or evidence of an entitled generation (referred to as un-American). Traditional theories on both citizenship and political engagement suggest that voting (particularly in a presidential election) is the bedrock of American culture (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Dalton, 2009). Traditionally, when a group has voted, they have enacted their citizenship and are viewed as politically engaged. In many ways, the act of voting legitimizes the citizenship, as it is considered a duty of a good citizen to politically participate in elections (Dalton, 2009). However, the millennial vote (and other groups) are critiqued for their participation. Their votes do not legitimize them as good citizens or individuals engaged in the political process. Instead, they are used as a source of critique by the news media, as described in the discourses on youth voter turnout.

What is important about this, is its relationship to previous literature that suggests that the notions of citizenship and engagement are changing because of the actions of the millennials. While the millennials are in fact performing their citizenship and engagement in new ways, it is also the media who has challenged the traditional notions of good citizenship and engagement. While citizenship and engagement are changing as the millennial generation come of age, it is also the media system that is changing its view of these behaviors, as noted by the way the actual votes were accepted or critiqued.

There is also an overwhelming amount of scholarship that proposes the millennial generation is entirely politically disengaged (Mindich, 2005; Twenge, 2006; Bauerlein, 2009). These researchers' often cite voting turnout as a predominant indicator of political disengagement. However, as noted previously, the millennial generation voted in record

numbers, becoming the largest generational voting group in America's history. This is one challenge to the declaration of millennial engagement found in this study.

It is also important to recognize that studies of millennial disengagement do recognize the presence of civic engagement. However, they often argue political engagement, the more traditional means of performing citizenship and political involvement, is superior or more necessary to the health and vitality of American culture. It is not that civic indicators such as volunteerism and protesting are not valuable, rather these studies propose voting as being more important (Bauerlein, 2009). While this study did not expressively investigate the full range or frequency of civic engagement by millennials, it does conclude civic engagement as continuing to be critical to millennials.

Often, studies like this one suggest that a group of people, such as a generation, are either politically or civically engaged, but rarely both (Zukin et al., 2006). It is difficult to image that a group of people would have the time to focus on voting and political engagement, as well as volunteering and protesting. This divide between views is even more extreme when looking at literature on citizenship. Groups can be either duty-based or engaged, but never both (Dalton, 2009). It would be difficult to view your citizenship as solely dependent on where you are allowed to vote and are legally recognized, as well as to the place that you feel you belong culturally. While they may be the same nation, it is difficult to image that a group of people could feel that both those performances of citizenship are equally important. However, this project, as well as others completed exploring millennial's citizenship views support that this dual-view is in-fact what is happening (Novak, 2014). Millennials recognize that citizenship and

political engagement can be enacted in many ways, and are seemingly comfortable with their group's identification of both options.

Generation Undecided

It is likely that the relationship between the millennial generation and media will continue to evolve. However, because this study only examined at the hot zone period of election coverage, more will be needed to look at how this relationship continues to change after the election cycle. However, there is strength in just looking at this eight week period. It would appear from this study that the 2012 election reflected a moment of change in the media's perception of the millennial generation. By looking at just this period of time, it is possible to see how the change is instantly reacted to by the millennials. What is revealed by the analysis of the news media and the millennial generation is a sense of anxiety and uncertainty about the future of the relationship. The many different discourses used to describe the media and millennials reflects that there are many possible relationships co-occurring and possible relationships anticipated in the future. The lack of trust displayed by the media (in the gifts and entitlements discourse) and by the millennials (in the bias discourse) suggest that both groups went through a phase of "sizing each other up" during the 2012 election. Many discourses were employed in this process to attempt to truly understand each other, thus causing the appearance of an undecided quality exhibited by both groups.

The "undecided" title of this study reflects both the media's uncertainty of the future of the generation and American politics, as well as the millennial generation's uncertainty of the future of its relationship and use of the media. The sense of anxiety

first introduced by Hall and Jefferson (2006) is found not only within the media, but also within the group itself.

Conclusion

Imagine that 50% of the millennial generation did not vote in the 2012 election. Imagine the number was 75% or 99%. What then would the media say? How would their discourses change? Evidenced by the discourses found in the media, the cycle of representation changed during the eight week hot zone of the election. The 50% of the millennial generation that did vote in the election was enough to challenge the established control culture and media's relationship. The news analyzed in this study suggests that a second representation cycle co-occurs when a generational group comes of age and participates in a major election. This second cycle requires some in the media to turn to those who commit a deviant act and then use them as a definer of who is in control.

What is not clear is how long the second cycle lasts, or how it evolves. The speed and constant appearance of new generational groups (and the dying out of other generational groups) means that the generation viewed as the control culture by the media has to change, and must do so frequently. However, does this change occur more or less frequently for generational groups than cultures such as race and gender? History and the generational life cycle predicts that the millennial generation will eventually be viewed as the control culture by most media sources. This study reflects one of the first efforts to understand how this change occurs, and what happens in the media when it does. The political participation of the millennial generation in 2012, as well as 2008 suggests that this change is well underway. This can be identified by the way the media depicted the millennial generation in the post-2012 coverage. What is important to note is that other groups are similarly being recognized as coming of age in the political system at the same time as the millennials. The linking together of African Americans, Latinos, and women

with the millennial generation suggests that the 2012 change in control culture may include more than just the one age group.

More research must be conducted on the relationship between these four groups, especially in future election cycles. It will also be important to look at the media's consideration of the millennial generation during midterm elections in 2014. In 2012, the media used the low turnout rates of 2010 to dictate who they believed to be an important and noteworthy part of the electorate. Because of the "surprise" showing of the millennial generation in 2012, it is likely change will happen again.

The myriad of discourses in the media were used to position the millennial generation in a variety of places throughout the 2012 election. While multiple discourses are always possible, the change in discourses following the election is particularly important as it reflects a possible change, or the beginning of a change in the control culture. In the current study, these many discourses were reflected and reacted to by the millennial generation who presented their own variety of reflections and discourses on the value of political news media. The lack of a single discourse or term of reference presented by both suggests that the groups have failed to totally make up their mind about each other.

Television and online news coverage of the 2012 Election differed in their content and representation of the millennial generation. Television coverage focused on the youth as a targeted demographic of the Obama victory, linking them together as a coalition of other voters such as Latinos, African Americans, and women. In doing so, broadcast journalists referred to the millennial generation (and the other members of the coalition) with a myriad of terms that failed to depict the group through one singular dialogue.

Millennial voters were both “underclass” and “ascendants,” “patriots” and “parasites,” and “future party leaders” and “nobodies.” Through these terms of reference, discourses appeared in the television coverage that reinforced the undecided position of the millennial generation in the eyes of television news media. While some hosts like O’Reilly and Hannity “lamented” the millennials and accused them of only voting because they felt entitled and were promised gifts, other hosts such as Matthews and Stewart reflected on their surprise at the group’s participation and applauded the millennial voter turnout as a sign of the future of American politics.

Similarly, the online political news sampled in this study revealed the variety of positions digital news media took on the millennial generation. The terms of reference revealed the many ways in which millennials were discussed, including: future, embarrassing, hopeful, diverse, and supportive. It is for this reason there is an undecided quality to both the media and the millennial generation. The many terms of reference and discourses used by both reflect a lack of certainty when it comes to the way they value, trust, and identify each other. This is emblematic of the process of the millennial generation coming of age in the political system, and is showcased in the way the media describes its development.

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Appendix A

Journal Prompt

In place of regular reading assignments, for this class you will be selecting ten news articles a week and one half hour television show to reflect and respond to. Each student will be assigned a different day of the week which you will go online to <http://www.newswhip.com/U.S./Election%202012> and select ten articles that interest you. NewsWhip is an online service that aggregates the most popular news stories on the web and links to them daily. Therefore, the stories you read will be the most popular online stories from each day regarding the election. After you have read each article, you will write 100 word responses to each article (10/week). You will also select from the following television and radio shows (*The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*, *Glenn Beck*, *Rush Limbaugh*, *Rachel Maddow*, *O'Reilly Factor*, *Hardball*, and *Hannity*) and write a 100 word response to that program (1/week). Throughout the term you need to watch each of these programs at least 1 time. The point is to engage with media that you both agree and disagree with. Thus, you should write 11 reflections of 100 words each week.

The Daily Show, 11pm, Comedy Central

The Colbert Report, 11:30pm, Comedy Central

Rachel Maddow, 9pm, MSNBC

O'Reilly Factor, 8pm or 11pm, Fox News Channel

Hardball, 7pm, MSNBC

Hannity, 9pm, Fox News Channel

If you are assigned a weekend due date for your reflection, you should read the news articles as usual but respond to the Friday showings of the television and radio shows.

The purpose of these reflections is to think critically about the role of the media in politics. Your reflections should include the following questions:

- What is this media saying about the state of American politics?
- Who is this media attempting to appeal to? Are they being successful? Why?
- Do you agree or disagree with the contents of the media? (try to go beyond just liberal and conservative standpoints)
- What would you like to say to the media producers?
- What is it the media is asking you to do?
- What should the media be saying?

Each week, I will be collecting your reflections and grading them for their critical insight, not their position on specific issues. The media articles you read for these assignments will help inform class discussions, so be prepared to share your insights and findings. If the reactions are used in future research, your names and any identifying information will be removed leaving them completely anonymous and I will follow the protocol set forth by Drexel's Institutional Review Board. If at any time you have questions regarding the reflections, please do not hesitate to ask.

Appendix B

Online News Code Frequencies

1. Campaign and Voter Issues
2. Campaign Strategies and Efforts
 3. Money/Finance
4. Reflections on Wins and Losses
 5. Voting Populations
6. Polling, Predictions, and Horse Race Coverage
 7. Military and National Security
 8. Humor, Satire, Fake News
 9. Meta-Media Coverage
 10. Hurricane Sandy

Code: CAMPAIGN & VOTER ISSUES 501/1822 (27.5%)	Pre-Election Coverage	Election Day Coverage	Post-Election Coverage	Total
Science, Evolution, Biology	12	0	6	18
Role of Religion in Govt.	19	0	15	34
Repealing everything Obama/ Succeeding from the Country	11	0	12	23
Taxes, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau & Unions	7	0	37	44
Voter Rights and Voter ID laws	113	13	29	155
Equal Pay for Women, Lilly Ledbetter Act	9	0	1	10
DOMA, Same Sex Unions, Gay Marriage, Gay Rights	17	1	22	40
Women's Reproductive Rights, Abortion, Rape, Planned Parenthood, Women Candidates	61	0	9	70
Pot legalization	11	0	15	26
Foreign Policy, Military, Terrorism (outside of Libya)	8	0	33	41
Gun Control	1	0	8	9

Obamacare/ Universal Healthcare	0	0	18	18
Immigration legislation	3	0	10	13

Code: CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES & EFFORTS 352/1822 (19.3%)	Pre-Election Coverage	Election Day Coverage	Post-Election Coverage	Total
Third Party Candidates	9	0	0	9
Campaign and Political Lies	70	3	10	83
Campaign Misunderstandings, Goofs, and Oops	43	0	0	43
Endorsements	71	0	1	72
Debates	58	0	0	58
The Human or Personal Side of Politicians	33	1	31	65
Using Technology	11	0	11	22

Code: MONEY/FINANCE 218/18222 (12.0%)	Pre-Election Coverage	Election Day Coverage	Post-Election Coverage	Total
Ethics of donations, salary, bonus, fundraising	16	0	5	21
Fundraising Techniques	11	0	2	13
Jobs and Employment	22	1	5	28
Fundraising through PACs and SuperPACs	20	0	12	32
General Financial System	26	0	9	35
Fiscal Cliff	0	0	89	89

Code: REFLECTION ON WINS AND LOSSES 210/1822 (11.5%)	Pre-Election Coverage	Election Day Coverage	Post-Election Coverage	Total
Calls for Recalls & Recounts	1	0	10	11
Explaining the Romney Loss, GOP failure, casting blame	1	0	69	70
GOP	0	0	27	27

Senate/HoR/Gubernatorial/ Local				
Democratic Senate/HoR/Gubernatorial/ Local	0	0	25	25
The meaning of Obama Victory, explaining how Obama won, Obama plans for future	1	0	57	58
Future Election Candidates and Predictions	1	0	18	19

Code: VOTING POPULATIONS 161/1822 (8.8%)	Pre-Election Coverage	Election Day Coverage	Post-Election Coverage	Tota l
White Men	4	0	6	10
Latinos & Hispanics	8	0	7	15
Old, Ageing, Elderly	1	0	0	1
Muslims, Islamic Culture	1	0	0	1
Women (voters, not candidates)	4	1	5	10
Christian Fundamentalists	1	0	0	1
Veterans and Veteran Families	11	0	4	15
Natural Law Party?/White Supremacists	6	0	0	6
Southerners	2	0	0	2
Midwesterners	1	0	0	1
Extreme Conservatives, Tea Party Patriots	3	0	0	3
Poor (Poverty)	3	0	0	10
Workers & Union Representatives	7	0	3	8
Minorities (general)	5	1	2	5
Immigrants	5	0	0	1
Disabled	1	0	0	2
Birthers	1	0	1	2
Israelis	1	0	1	1
Catholics	1	0	0	1

Independents	1	0	0	1
Artists	1	0	0	1
African Americans	1	0	0	4
Asian Americans	0	1	3	2
Middle Class	0	0	2	1
Millennials, College Students, Young Adults, Young "Nones"	12	0	11	23
Children and Youth	25	0	7	32

Code: POLLING, PREDICTIONS, AND HORSE RACE COVERAGE 156/1822 (8.6%)	Pre-Election Coverage	Election Day Coverage	Post-Election Coverage	Total
Polling, Predictions, and Horse Race Coverage	115	11	30	156

Code: MILITARY AND NATIONAL SECURITY 100/1822 (5.5%)	Pre-Election Coverage	Election Day Coverage	Post-Election Coverage	Total
General Petraeus	0	0	15	15
Susan Rice & Libya	39	0	46	85

Code: HUMOR, SATIRE, FAKE NEWS 50/1822 (2.7%)	Pre-Election Coverage	Election Day Coverage	Post-Election Coverage	Total
Humor	35	0	15	50

Code: HURRICANE SANDY 49/1822 (2.7%)	Pre-Election Coverage	Election Day Coverage	Post-Election Coverage	Total
Hurricane Sandy	44	1	4	49

Code: META-MEDIA COVERAGE 26/1822 (1.4%)	Pre-Election Coverage	Election Day Coverage	Post-Election Coverage	Total
Media Coverage	2	0	24	26

Table A

Brief Definitions of Key Terms

Discourses	“An interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception that brings an object into being” (Philips & Hardy, 2002, p. 3).
Civic Engagement	The effort to create a range of political and social changes, not a specific action such as voting (Bowman, 2011).
Political Engagement	“Activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action” (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995, p. 38).
Duty-Based Citizenship	“What people think is expected of them as participants in the political system, along with their expectations of government and the political process” (Dalton, 2009, p. 5).
Engaged Citizenship	A new type of citizenship emphasizing the role of the citizen in social and welfare movements through volunteerism, consumer protest, and issue-targeted reform (Dalton, 2009).
Disengaged	Complete participation in civic and political endeavors (Huntley, 2006).
Actively Disengaged	Self-reflection on individual engagement, suggesting a relationship between the individual and another entity, such as politics or media (Eliasoph, 1998)
Engaged	Lack of any participation or engagement in civic and political endeavors (Twenge, 2006).

Table B

Three Decoding Options and Their Indicators

	Operating inside the dominant code	Applying a negotiable code	Substituting an oppositional code
Indicators	<p>The reactor agrees with the media's message</p> <p>The reactor does not levy any criticism of the media's message</p> <p>The reactor adopts some or all of the media's language</p> <p>The reactor rationalizes their approval/agreement by citing examples of useful or interesting information</p>	<p>The reactor partially agrees with the media's message and partially disagrees</p> <p>The reactor critiques the media for its position or the presentation of the information (news format, style, or type)</p> <p>The reactor adopts some of the media's language</p> <p>Reactor may agree with the contents of this specific article, but still levies criticism against generalized media</p> <p>Reactor attempts to explain the rationale behind the article's publication</p> <p>Reactor does not respond or does not have anything to say to the producers</p>	<p>The reactor disagrees with the media's message and corrects it or proposes another message</p> <p>The reactor proposes an alternative message or corrects the media's message</p> <p>The reactor doesn't adopt any of the media's language</p> <p>Reactor critiques both the specific article and generalized news media</p> <p>Reactor provides examples from article about the places where they disagree with media's perspective, style, or format</p> <p>Reactor questions the ethics of publishing the article</p> <p>Reactor questions and criticizes the bias, issue salience, or rationale of the article</p>

Table C

Television Show Airtime and Content

Television Show	Nightly air-time	Number of new episodes prior to election	Number of recorded hours of content prior to the election	Number of new episodes after the election	Number of recorded hours of content after the election
<i>Hardball</i> (MSNBC)	7:00pm-8:00pm EST	21	21	19	19
<i>The O'Reilly Factor</i> (Fox News Channel)	8:00pm-9:00pm EST	19	19	22	22
<i>The Rachel Maddow Show</i> (MSNBC)	9:00pm-10:00pm EST	19	19	21	21
<i>Hannity</i> (Fox News Channel)	9:00pm-10:00pm EST	13	13	13	13
<i>The Daily Show</i> (Comedy Central)	11:00pm-11:30pm EST	14	7.5	12	6
<i>The Colbert Report</i> (Comedy Central)	11:30pm - 12:00am EST	14	7.5	12	6
Total		100	86	99	93

Table D
Television Segment Data

Relevant Segments * Day * TV Show Crosstabulation

TV Show		Time		Total	
		Pre	Post		
		Election	Election		
	1	14	14	28	
Matthews	Number of Segments	2	0	5	5
		3	0	1	1
	Total		14	20	34
Maddow	Number of Segments	1	9	8	17
		2	1	6	7
	Total		10	14	24
O'Reilly	Number of Segments	1	12	10	22
		2	2	5	7
		3	0	3	3
	Total		14	18	32
Daily Show	Number of Segments	1	8	9	17
	Total		8	9	17
Colbert Report	Number of Segments	1	8	7	15
	Total		8	7	15
Hannity	Number of Segments	1	9	4	13
		2	0	5	5
		3	0	1	1
	Total		9	10	19
Total	Relevant Segments	1	60	52	112
		2	3	21	24
		3	0	5	5
	Total		63	78	141

Table E
Chi-Square Results from Television Segment Data

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17.676 ^a	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	21.091	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	16.677	1	.000
McNemar-Bowker Test	.	.	. ^b
N of Valid Cases	141		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.23.

b. Computed only for a PxP Table, where P must be greater than 1.

Table F

Number of Articles from Each Source

Publication Name	Number of Articles	Percent
The Huffington Post	911	43.50%
Maddow	235	11.20%
ABC	202	9.60%
Fox News	156	7.40%
BuzzFeed	110	5.20%
NPR Online	100	4.80%
Twitchy	93	4.40%
<i>All Other Sources</i>	93	4.40%
NBC	47	2.20%
Politico	42	2.00%
LA Times	41	1.95%
Guardian	34	1.60%
Time	25	1.20%
Slate	5	0.20%
The Nation	2	0.10%

Table G
Participant Contributions and Descriptions

Participant Identifier (anonymized)	Number of Contributions	Identifier Information
1	88	Political Science major, 3 rd year of school
2	88	Journalism major, 5 th year
3	88	Business major, 2 nd year
4	88	Public Relations major, 4 th year
5	88	Business major, 4 th year
6	44 (missing week 4,5,6,8)	Journalism major, 4 th year
7	88	Public Health major, 3 rd year
8	77 (missing week 2)	Public Relations major, 4 th year
9	88	Political Science major, 4 th year
10	77 (missing week 1)	Game Studies major, 3 rd year
11	88	Public Relations major, 3 rd year
12	88	Business major, 4 th year
13	88	Journalism major, 4 th year
14	44 (missing week 1,2,3,6)	Information Science major, 4 th year

Table H

Number of Entries from Each Week of Data Collection

Week	Number of Entries
Week 1 October 6-12, 2012	132
Week 2 October 13-19, 2012	132
Week 3 October 20-26, 2012	143
Week 4 October 27- November 2, 2012	143
Week 5 November 3-9, 2012 (Election Week)	143
Week 6 November 10-16, 2012	143
Week 7 November 17-23, 2012	154
Week 8 November 24-30, 2012	143

Table I

Frequency of Themes from Journals

Theme	Count and Percentage
Bias, Credibility, and Frames	192 entries (18%)
Millennial Identity	185 entries (16.4%)
Political Humor	124 entries (12%)
Support of Political Parties and Candidates	44 entries (3.9%)
Critique of Political Parties and Candidates	35 entries (3.1%)
Reflection on Non-Election Events	30 entries (2.6%)
Reflection on Personal Lives of Media Personalities	8 entries (.7%)

Table J

Second Coder Reliability in Journal Entry Coding

Theme	Second Coder Percent Match (Cohen's Kappa)
Bias, credibility, and frames	89%
Political humor	90%
Millennial identity	85%
No theme	71%

Table K

Overview of Discourses from Television and Online News

Discourses from Television News	Discourses from Online News
Connecting minority groups to each other- the coalition	Articles about Millennials- Referencing Millennials, technology, and the election results
Reflecting on youth voting turnout and demographic shifts	Articles about Polling- Referencing millennials, minorities and subgroups, and reflection on polling data
Youth, entitlements, and gifts	Types, formats and affordances- the blog style, videos and photographs, affordances and barriers to sharing, humor, satire, and fake news, and meta-media coverage
Interactions on interviewing youth	

Table L

Media Terms of Reference for Millennials

Terms of Reference in only Television Coverage	Terms of Reference in both Television and Online Coverage	Terms of Reference in only Online Coverage
Inexperienced, 10-years old, fresh faced, future party leaders, new Americans, underclass, ascendants, willing, scared, nobodies, non-real, fake, moochers, takers, parasites, ethnics, urban, minors, patriots	Coalition, minorities, College students, young, youth, kids, lazy, high school, millennials, undecided, new voters, idealists, lost, losers, winners, important, non-traditional,	Future, nones, diverse, ethnically accepting, accepting, hopeful, depraved, embarrassing, energized, inconsequential, supportive, disenfranchised

Table M

Millennial Terms of Reference for Media

Millennial participants' terms of reference for the media
Monotonous, biased, dry, humorous, funny, satire, shocking, exacerbating, dominating, paparazzi, caricature, behaving badly, gifted, insulting, public watchdog, sobering, infotainment, lying

Table N

Millennial Terms of Reference for Millennials

Millennial participants' terms of reference for other millennials
Youth, young, millennials, millennial generation, us, our, leaders, college-students, poor, unforgiving, loan-ridden, others

Table O

Examples Operating Inside the Dominant Code

The reactor agrees with the media's message	The media is asking me to examine my opinion on the Libya attack and it should do this. (Participant 3, Week 4)
The reactor does not levy any criticism of the media's message	The media is trying to make the Republican Party look like bad guys to which I agree because they haven't been instrumental in any progress and really, have only halted it. (Participant 7, Week 6)
The reactor adopts some or all of the media's language	Now that Obama is reelected, the full effects of Obamacare will be put into place in 2014, and as this article says once the law is fully implemented it is likely to last for years to come. We will now be able to see the full impact of the reformed healthcare, and, in my opinion, the potential benefits of it. (Gant 7.2)
The reactor rationalizes their approval/agreement by citing examples of useful or interesting information	The main purpose of this article seems really to simply embellish the subtle endorsement Christie had made, whether it was intended to be seen as such or not. It's also worth noting that all details and opinions on Christie are in fact based on information that has been filtered through the media. (Participant 2, Week 3)

Table P

Examples of Negotiating with the Code

<p>The reactor partially agrees with the media's message and partially disagrees</p>	<p>While it is good to see that Romney is taking his loss well, this kind of story makes me worried that politicians are starting to be treated more like celebrities by the media and paparazzi. Other photos of Mitt Romney buying groceries and pumping gas have gotten press coverage. While entertaining, these stories distract from the real issues that should be discussed in politics. (Participant 4, Week 8)</p>
<p>The reactor critiques the media for its position or the presentation of the information (news format, style, or type)</p>	<p>Commenting on past events and compiling a bunch of old facts to prove a point is an important job, but it is the job of editorial. What can you accept as reality in this zany world of ours when you're never quite sure whether you're reading news or editorial? (Participant 1, Week 6)</p>
<p>The reactor adopts some of the media's language</p>	<p>The media is clearly trying to appeal to liberals but really anyone that is for equal rights. It cites Romney's past actions against gays adopting and quotes his stance on it saying, "it's not right on paper. It's not right in fact." The rhetoric and examples used in the media illustrate Romney as someone who has no empathy for children of same-sex marriages. This article is trying to show you that Romney is a 'heartless' individual and that it is a terrifying thought</p>

	<p>to have such a man as the President of the United States of America. The media is pushing you away from voting for him by slamming him with his own words. (Participant 7, Week 5)</p>
<p>Reactor may agree with the contents of this specific article, but still levies criticism against generalized media</p>	<p>Clearly, Matthews said these things to appeal to his liberal audience (who probably agreed with his statements), but Fox News reported these statements because they found them to be outrageous and felt that their conservative audience would feel the same. It is interesting that Fox News reports this story as news because I really don't find it to be noteworthy, but I'm sure some people do. This article just speaks to the divide of the nation, and the way in which the media plays to that division. (Participant 11, Week 4)</p>
<p>Reactor attempts to explain the rationale behind the article's publication</p>	<p>However, since it is a blog, it is obviously opinionated, with the author going so far as to say that while she is in favor of a bigger deficit, she knows that most Americans would not agree. Readers will either love or hate this article, because it is so riddled with bias, similar again to the Fox News articles. (Participant 8, Week 3)</p>
<p>Reactor does not respond or does not have anything to say to the producers</p>	<p>As someone who has experienced miscarriage, you would think Romney would be more understanding. I wouldn't say anything to the producers. (Participant 2, Week 6)</p>

Table Q

Examples of Substituting an Oppositional Code

<p>The reactor disagrees with the media's message and corrects it or proposes another message</p>	<p>This article does not properly convey what Ann Coulter is said. If you watch the video she is not exactly saying that she thinks the GOP should give in on Obama's tax plan. She instead is saying that there should be a compromise in which taxes are raised for the super wealthy, like Warren Buffet. While this is still a shocker coming from Ann Coulter, The Huffington Post is over exaggerating her statement. This is especially odd due to the video of her statement being in the article and if one watches it, the article would be an obvious exaggeration. (Participant 4, Week 8)</p>
<p>The reactor doesn't adopt any of the media's language</p>	<p>I think that's to the article's detriment as this false sense of optimism might prevent some people from voting. The author should have included a graph stressing the importance to vote despite what the prospects may look like, as, without votes, they mean nothing. (Participant 10, Week 5)</p>
<p>Reactor critiques both the specific article and generalized news media</p>	<p>Drew Westen in <i>The Political Brain</i> says that candidates must discuss what is wrong with the opposing campaign, because if we don't then people won't understand the flaws of the other side. At the same time though, constant negativity during debates and in ads is fairly exhausting and that can even be seen in the polls of voters' feelings towards the election. It is also interesting to see The Huffington Post publish an article such as this, when I feel that the political media feeds into much of the negativity of the campaigns. (Participant 11, Week 5)</p>
<p>Reactor provides</p>	<p>Written by the creator of "Funny or Die" is hopefully read</p>

<p>examples from article about the places where they disagree with media's perspective, style, or format</p>	<p>by most people before they read this article. It is clear anti-Romney for the reason that he is "Bush part 2" and is very pro-Obama because of the progress he has made with the situation he was presented with. At numerous points the article begs upon itself and attempts to make the decision too clear-cut for the readers. It even makes the claim that if you cast a vote for Romney, you are in the company of Trump, Beck, Hannity, Palin, and a few others. I disagree with media like this because it steps out of its element and I believe it does more harm than good when it is presented to the voting public in the incorrect light. I would ask the producer to stick to "Funny or Die" (Participant 9, Week 7)</p>
<p>Reactor questions the ethics of publishing the article</p>	<p>Evangelical Christian's lost this election. Maybe now they'll realize that Jesus wanted us to love all people, and that equality matters. The article talks again about the growing minority population in the United States. Interestingly the article draws comparison between the minority groups growing interest in politics and their added interest in religion. The interviewed person, discussed the importance of attracting these groups. However the article failed to discuss the Christian left, which believes in equality for all and gathering as a community to help those less fortunate. (Sparrevonn 7.3)</p>
<p>Reactor questions and criticizes the bias or issue salience of the contents of the article- the rationale behind is publication</p>	<p>So, she has a weird video game hobby... so what? To be honest, I feel that that is less threatening than someone who collects guns as a hobby, or someone who hunts on a regular basis. However, that is <i>my</i> opinion. It is also my opinion that that is the last thing I need to find out about a candidate. When it comes down to it, it is the public service, and proof of what someone can do for a community that matters, not these articles. (Participant 6, Week 4)</p>

Figure A

Hall's Media Representation Cycle



(e.g. 'The newspapers have made it known that sentences for attacks on the open highway will no longer be light.' Mr. Justice Caulfield, at Leicester Crown Court, quoted in the *Daily Express*, 21st March, 1973.)

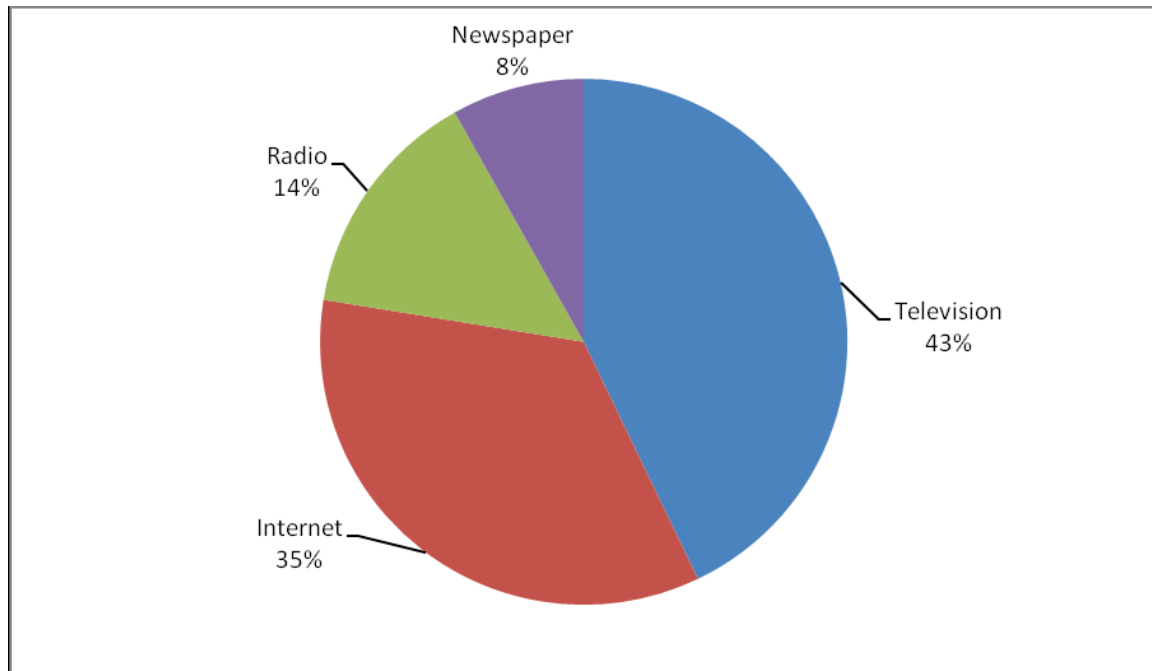
Note:

Once the media have spoken in their voice, on behalf of the inaudible public, the primary definers can then use the media's statements and claims as legitimations (magically, without any visible connection) for their actions and statements, by claiming press – and via the press, public – support. In turn, the ever attentive media reproduce the Control Culture statements, thus completing the magical circle, with such effect that it is no longer possible to tell who first began the process; each legitimates the other in turn.

(Hall & Jefferson, 2006, p. 61)

Figure B

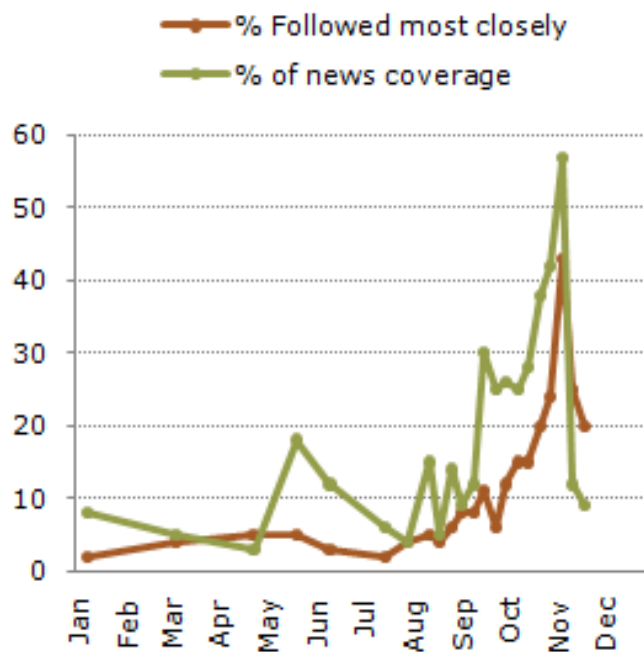
Primary Sources of News in the Millennial Generation



(Graybeal & Sindik, 2012, p. 38)

Figure C

Midterm Election News Consumption 2010

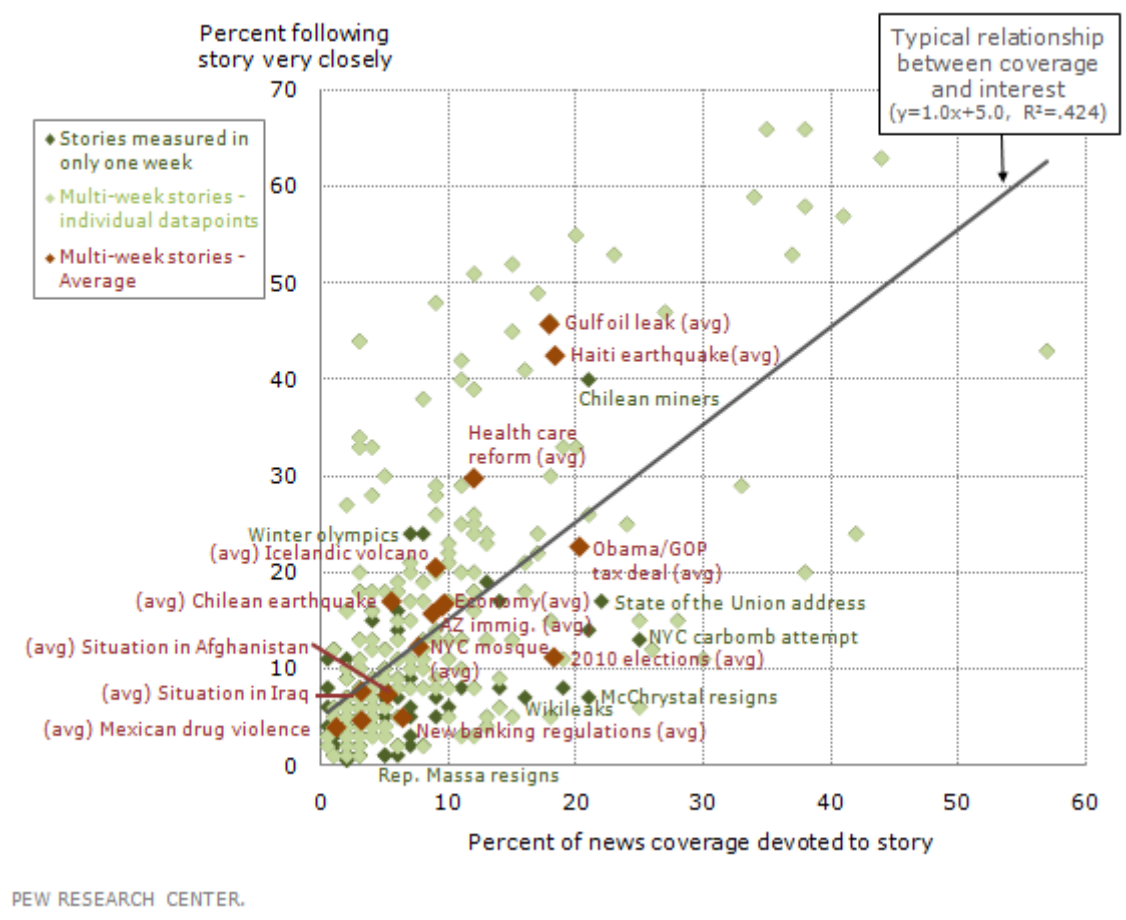
Elections: Interest and CoveragePEW RESEARCH CENTER.

(Pew: *Press Coverage and Public Interest*, 2011, p. 67)

Appendix D

News Coverage and News Interest Correlation in 2010

The Relationship Between News Coverage and News Interest



(Pew: Press Coverage and Public Interest, 2011, p. 67)

Figure E

Seeking Campaign Information from Cable News

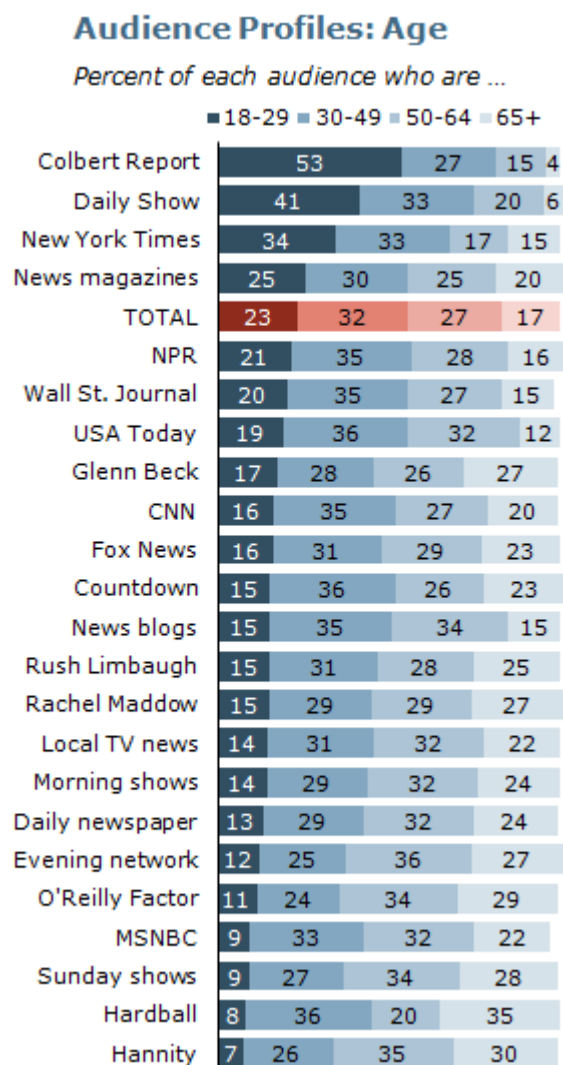
Where the Public Learns about the Campaign				
	Jan 2000	Jan 2004	Dec 2007	Jan 2012
<i>Regularly learn something about presidential campaign from...</i>	%	%	%	%
Cable news networks	34	38	38	36
Local TV news	48	42	40	32
National nightly network news	45	35	32	26
The internet	9	13	24	25
Your local daily newspaper*	40	31	31	20
Websites or apps of news orgs.	--	--	--	20
Morning TV news shows	18	20	22	16
Talk radio shows	15	17	16	16
Cable news talk shows	14	14	15	15
Online-only websites or apps	--	--	--	12
Sunday morning talk shows	15	13	14	12
NPR	12	14	18	12
Late night comedy shows, such as Jay Leno, SNL, Daily Show*	6	8	8	9
National newspapers	--	--	--	8
Religious television or radio*	7	5	9	8
News shows on PBS	12	11	12	7
Facebook	--	--	--	6
YouTube videos	--	--	--	3
Twitter	--	--	--	2

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Jan. 4-8, 2012. Q45-46.
 * 2000-2007 "Your daily newspaper."
 * 2000-2007 "Comedy shows such as SNL and Daily Show."
 * 2000-2007 "Religious radio shows."

(Pew: *Cable leads the pack as campaign news source: Twitter, Facebook play very modest roles*, 2012, p. 7)

Figure F

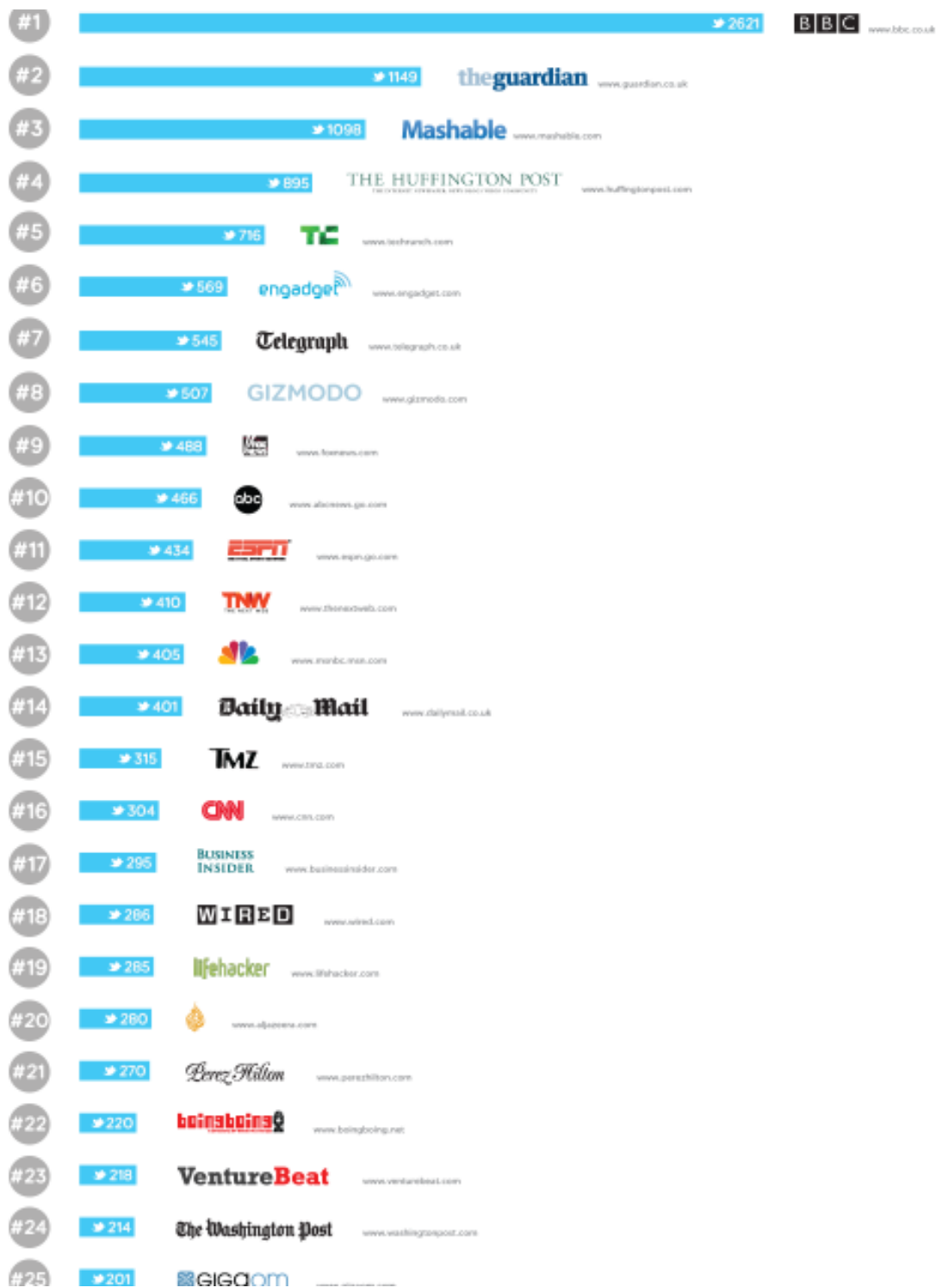
Sources of Campaign News for Various Age Groups



(Pew: *Ideological news sources: Who watches and why: Americans spending more time following the news, 2010, p. 67*)

Figure G

Most Popular News on Facebook and Twitter



(Indvik, 2012)

Figure H

Graph of Segment Data by Show, Before and After Election

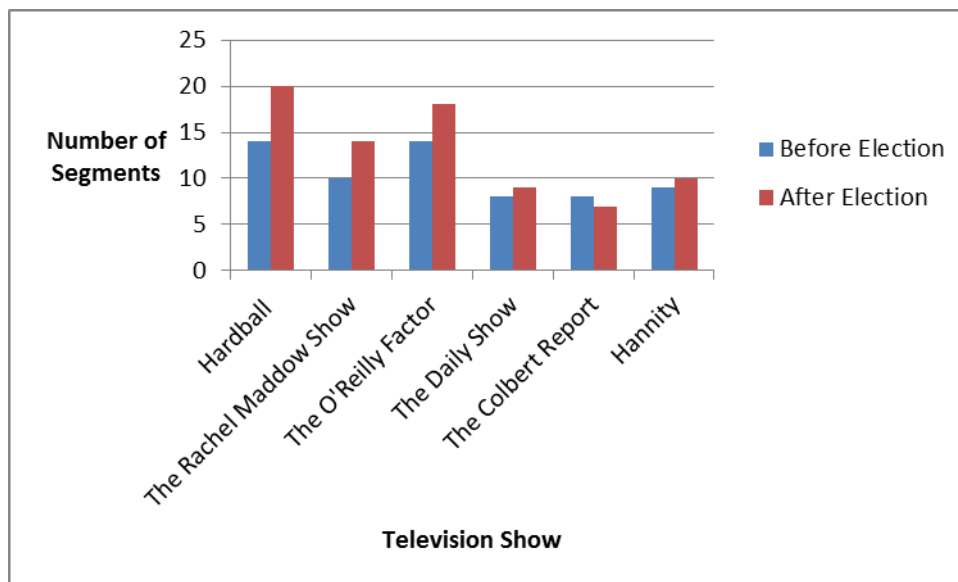
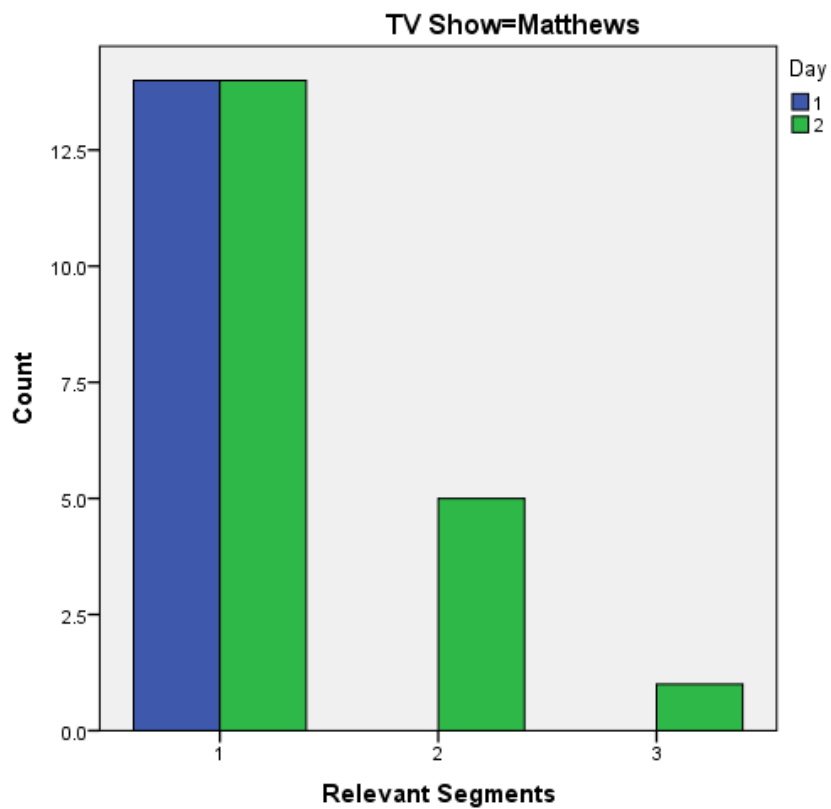


Figure I

Segments from *Hardball with Chris Matthews*

1 = Before the Election

2 = After the Election



See Figure J

Segments from *The O'Reilly Factor*

1 = Before the Election

2 = After the Election

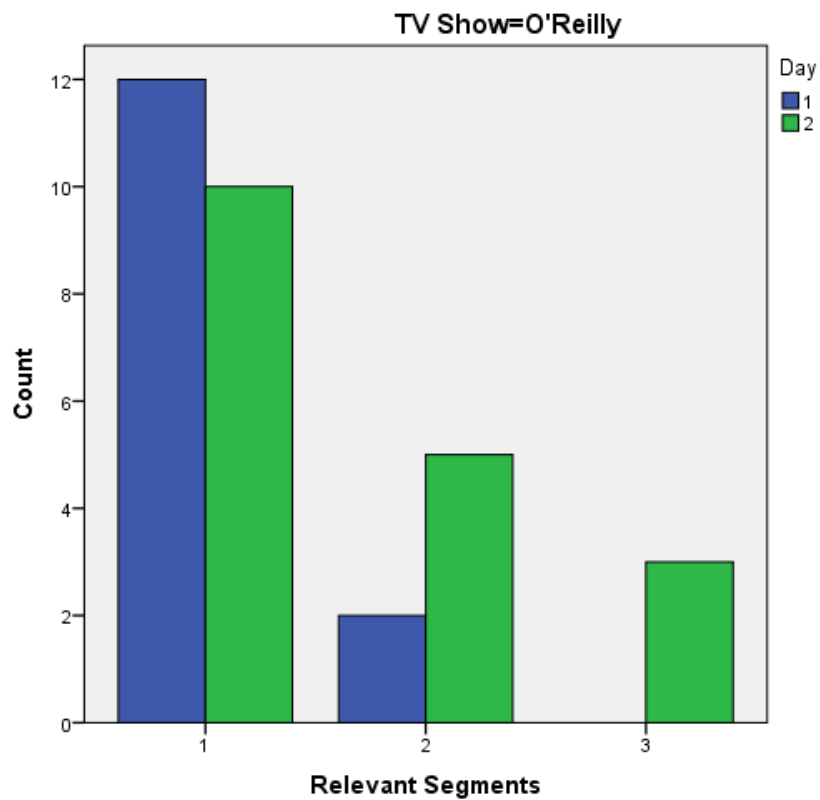


Figure K

Segments from *The Rachel Maddow Show*

1 = Before the Election

2 = After the Election

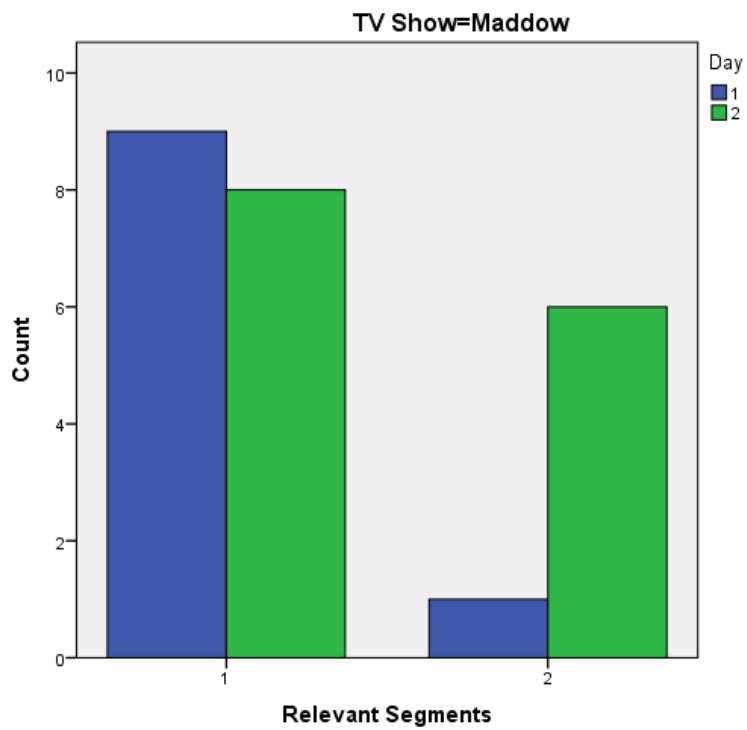


Figure L

Segments from *Hannity*

1 = Before the Election

2 = After the Election

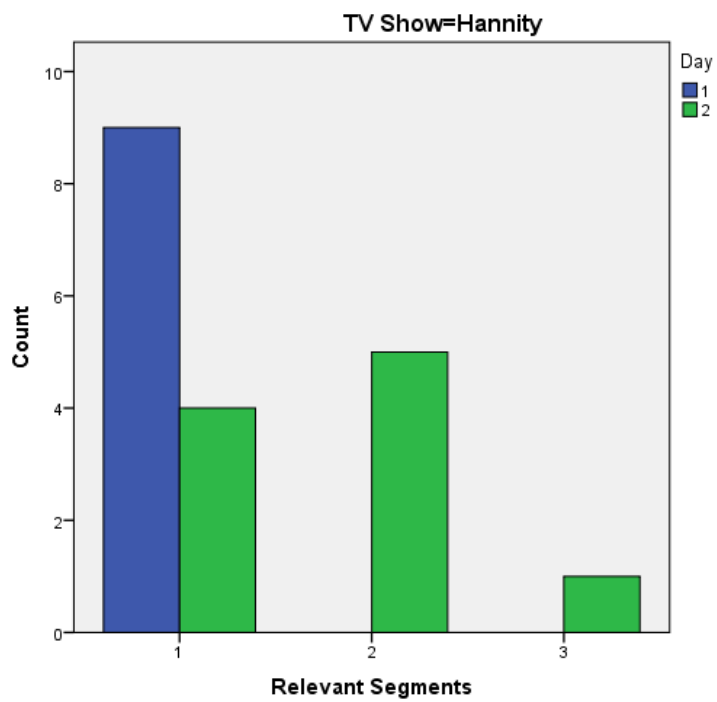


Figure M

Segments from *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*

1 = Before the Election

2 = After the Election

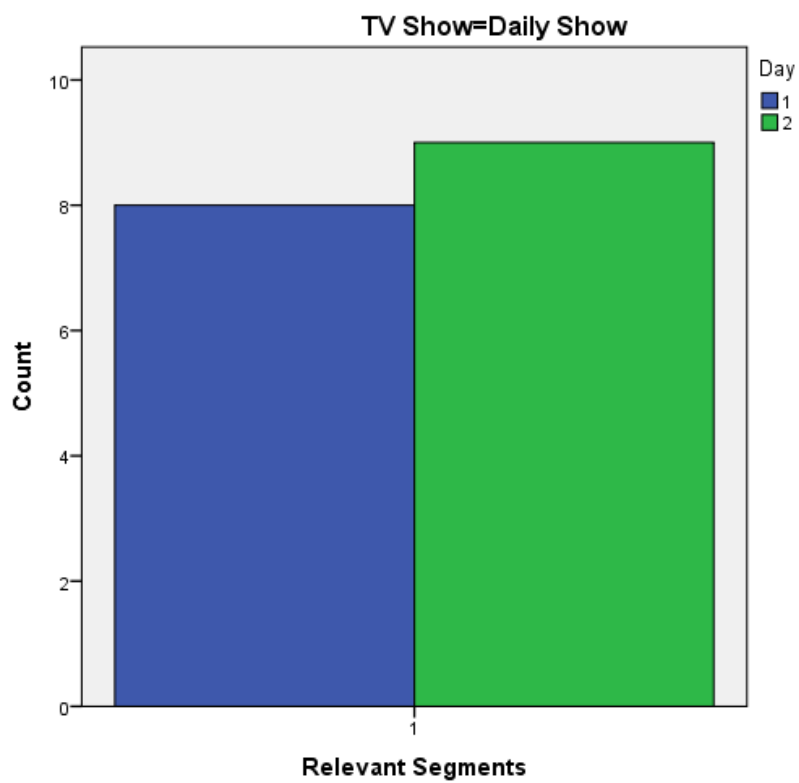


Figure N

Segments from *The Colbert Report*

1 = Before the Election

2 = After the Election

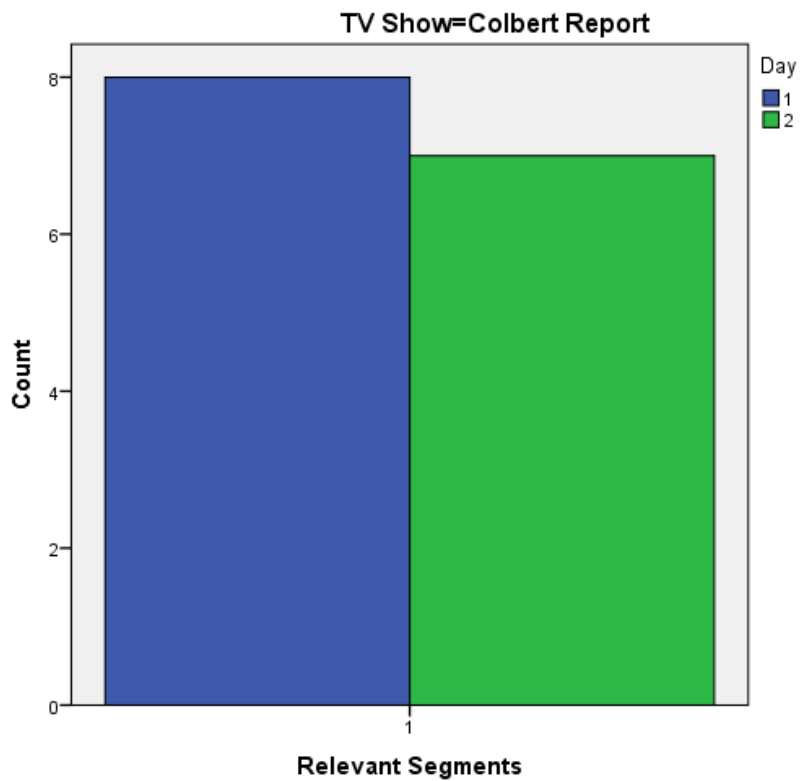


Figure O

Graph of Articles from Each Online Source

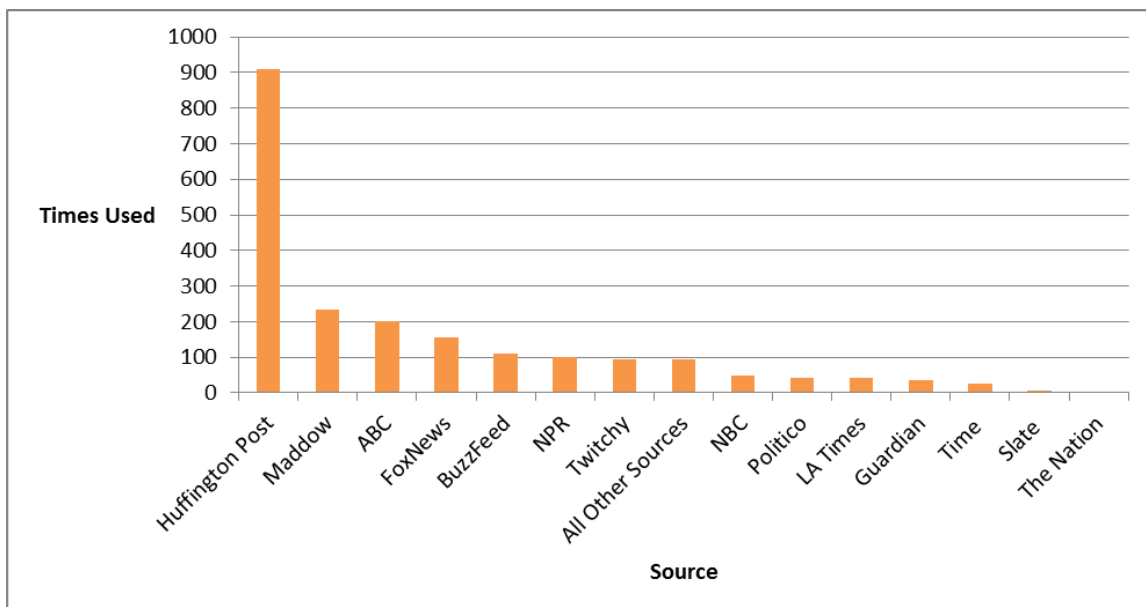


Figure P

Graph of the four most popular sources over time

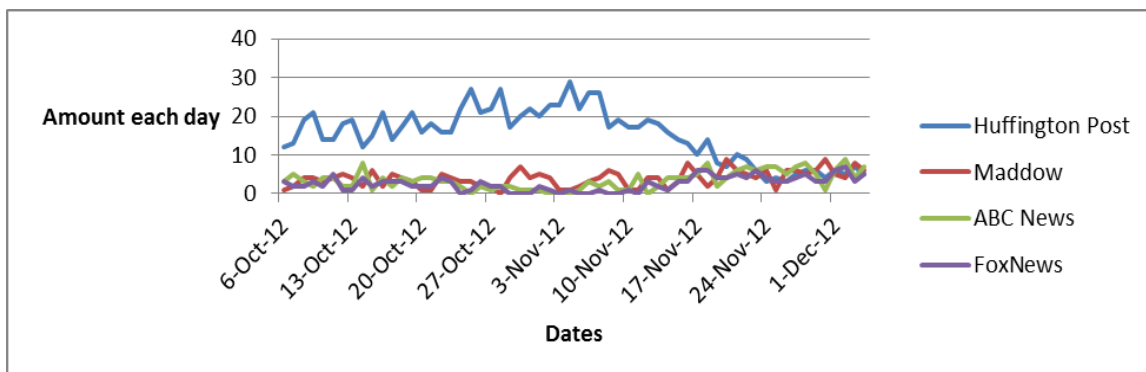


Figure Q

Graph of Online News Code Frequency

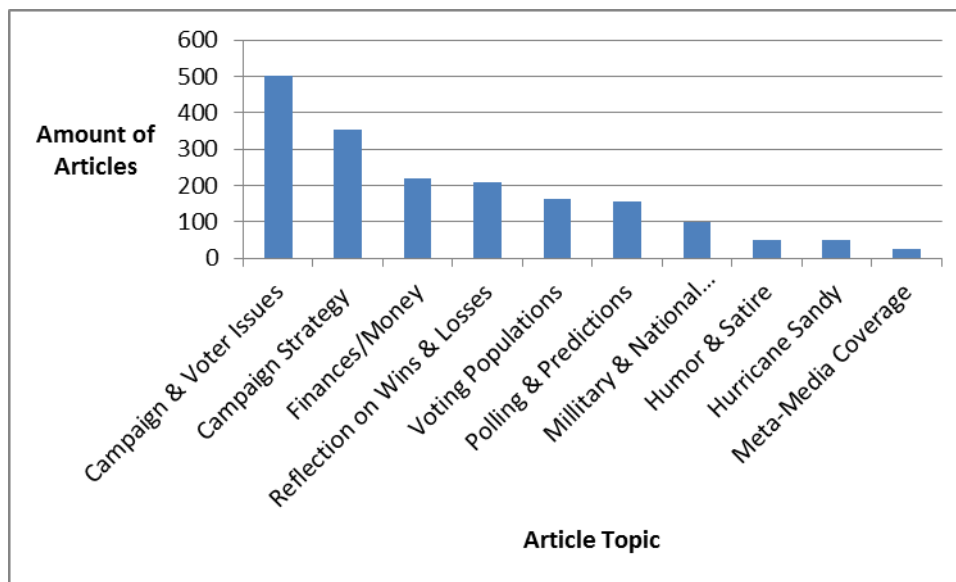
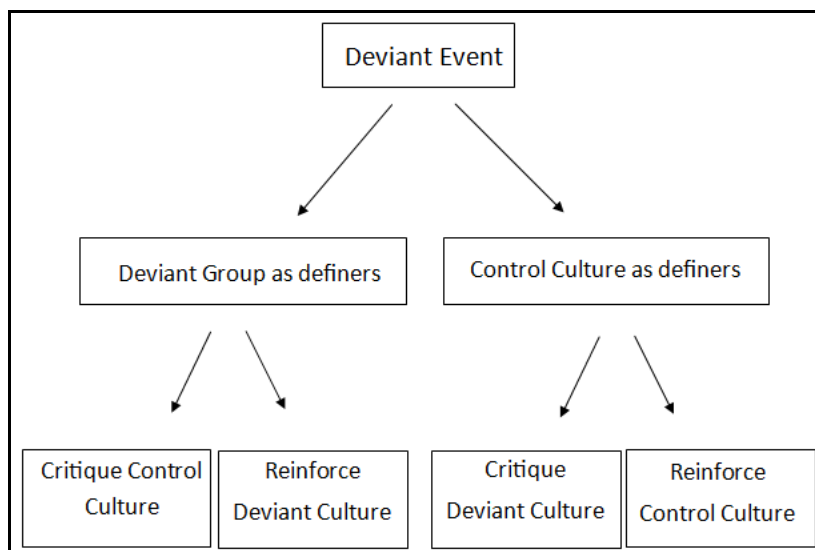


Figure R
Representation Models



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SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Novak, A. N. (2014). "Millennials, citizenship, and *How I Met Your Mother*." In J. Zenor (Ed.). *Parasocial Politics: Audience Readings of Cultural Politics in Pop Culture*. Lexington Books.
- Novak, A. N. (2013). The female email: A rhetorical and content analysis of the emails from the Obama 2012 campaign. In M. Lockhart & K. Mollick (Eds.), *Political Women: Language and Leadership*. Lexington Books.
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SELECTED CONFERENCES

- Novak, A. N. (2013, November). *The millennial engagement myth: Discourses of engagement in 2 Broke Girls*. National Communication Association 99th Annual Convention, Washington D.C.
- Novak, A. N., Bishop, R., & Hakanen, E. A. (2013, June). *Get to know your local occupiers: A framing analysis of the coverage of the Occupy Movement*. International Communication Association 2013 Conference: Challenging Communication Research, London.

SELECTED AWARDS

- Drexel University Dissertation Award: Humanities, May 2014
- Eastern Communication Association Centennial Scholarship, April 2013
- American Political Science Association Award for Best Graduate Student Paper in Information Technology and Politics, August 2012
- Selected Participant in the National Communication Association Doctoral Honors Seminar, July 2012

