Same News, Different Stories

Framing, Valence and Journalistic Quality in US News Reporting on the Brett Kavanaugh Allegations

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Bachelor Thesis in Communication Science (BSc)

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June 28, 2019

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ABSTRACT

Aim: Public allegations of sexual misconduct have become a subject of controversy among US news media outlets. Using framing techniques and valence, news producers may narrate such cases in contrasting ways, which biases public opinion. Therefore, this study investigates the usage of framing and valence in news reporting on the 2018 sexual misconduct allegations against US Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. Additionally, the potential relationship between reporting neutrality and journalistic quality is examined.

Method: 210 articles from CNN, Fox News and Reuters underwent a content analysis, using a three-category, 19-item coding scheme. In the analysis, articles were coded based on framing, valence towards Kavanaugh and accuser Blasey Ford, as well as basic journalistic quality.

Findings: The results show a clear contrast in framing and valence between CNN and Fox News. While Fox News used frames to discredit the accuser and attached positive valence to Kavanaugh, CNN focused on the case's partisan dimension, thereby displaying negative valence towards the nominee. Reuters remained neutral and used less framing altogether, though scoring comparatively low in journalistic quality.

Conclusions: Overall, the differences in framing and valence between the analyzed news outlets resulted in three rather contradictory depictions of the same case. Additionally, it is noteworthy how indicators of journalistic quality may not assure neutrality. News consumers, specifically of CNN and Fox News, need to be vigilant about one-sided framing efforts and are advised to consult politically diverse content when informing themselves about contentious news.

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1. INTRODUCTION

On September 13, 2018, accusations of sexual misconduct surfaced concerning the American Supreme Court candidate Brett M. Kavanaugh, who had been nominated by president Donald Trump on July 9, 2018. Among his accusers was psychology professor Christine Blasey Ford, who claimed that the 17-year-old Kavanaugh had sexually assaulted and attempted to rape the then 15-year-old Blasey Ford at a party in 1982. Along with a number of hearings and a restricted FBI investigation, the allegations sparked heavy political and societal discussions. Despite the controversy, Kavanaugh was sworn into the highest and most prestigious US court on October 6, 2018. The Kavanaugh case joins an increasingly long list of publicly discussed sexual misconduct cases within the public sphere, such as the Bill Cosby allegations and the Harvey Weinstein scandal, and the spheres of US politics, such as sexual harassment allegations against the president himself during his presidential campaign in 2016.

Until the 1990s, reporting sexual misconduct in US politics was largely avoided by mainstream media, deeming it "unworthy of their attention" (Tumber, 2004, p. 1125). According to Fassin (2006), the 1991 sexual assault allegations against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas, which resemble the Kavanaugh case remarkably, constituted an important turning point in the media's relationship with such scandals. Just a few days before the Senate vote on his appointment to the court, nominee Thomas was accused of sexual misconduct by his former staff member Anita Hill. Her testimony and the subsequent hearings provoked heavy discussion in the media before Thomas was formally confirmed by a historically tight 52 to 48 senate vote on October 15, 1991. Fassin (2006) concludes that from that point forward, private indiscretions of politicians were no longer viewed as irrelevant by the public eye. In recent years, the #metoo movement has certainly amplified news coverage on issues related to sexual misconduct in politics and other public spheres even further.

Nevertheless, Schneider and Hannem (2019) point out how "the political careers of powerful men like Clarence Thomas, former President Bill Clinton, and most recently Donald Trump and Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, remain seemingly impervious to allegations of sexual misconduct" (p. 3). Thus, despite an increased media coverage, sexual

scandals and sexual assault allegations in US politics still appear to have little impact on the power and career of the accused.

May its impact on the condemnation and conviction of accused perpetrators be limited, mass media do play an important role in shaping the views and political attitudes of the general public (De Vreese, 2005). Thus, they can impact public opinion on sexual assault scandals, such as the ones referenced above. By framing topics in a certain way, media outlets give meaning to news, put them into context, and influence what is viewed as more or less important on the general public's agenda. While it can be considered normal journalistic practise to make use of framing tools - after all, the large amounts of information needs to be classified in a way - framing may largely differ between news outlets along the political spectrum and raise questions of political bias if used noticeably. In 2017, the Reuters Institute revealed that the US's digital news media environment is more polarized than in any other Western country. In explanation, in most Western countries, there are many sources that attract readers from both the left and the right, but in the US, an unusual left-right gap has emerged. While left-leaning audiences consume media sources like Huffington Post, CNN, The New York Times and BuzzFeed News, conservatives have developed growing mistrust of these media (thereby coining the term 'fake news') and are deeply committed to Fox News instead (Reuters Institute, 2017).

This disparity in consumer preferences can potentially be explained by the outlets' own political alignments: In several studies, CNN has been identified as being seen as a liberal news outlet in the general public discourse, while Fox News holds the reputation of being a quintessentially conservative brand (see Otario, 2018; Nie, Miller, Golde, Butler, & Winneg, 2010; Morris, 2017; Terràn & Emmers-Sommer, 2018; Turner, 2007). Media reporting on sexual misconduct allegations is arguably divided between the two outlets. For example, Terán and Emmers-Sommer (2018) detected their contrasting attitudes towards the Bill Cosby sexual assault scandal. While CNN emphasized the powerful role of Cosby's victims and the importance of taking a stance against rape, Fox News "highlighted Cosby's support from the black community, celebrities and co-stars" (p. 63). Thus, though news sources from across the political spectrum may agree on the criminality and immorality of sexual misconduct, there still appears to be a fragmentation of the news media landscape into more liberal or more conservative stances, which seems to be reflected in the way issues are framed.

For many Americans, these differences in framing indicate media bias. As Morris (2007) points out, most Americans believe that media bias exists, specifically in the direction that "is counter to their own political beliefs" (p. 709). Nonetheless, there is only little empirical evidence available that supports this belief (Morris, 2007), necessitating further research in the field. Both CNN and Fox News have faced critique and skepticism related to bias. As Turner (2007) summarizes, "roughly one-third of the American public perceives Fox News Channel as being overtly conservative, and a comparable portion views CNN as being liberally biased" (p. 1). Consequently, the two digital news networks serve as highly important objects of analysis for the present study, as they "epitomize bias" (Morris, 2017, p. 45) and likely made use of contrasting frames and lines of argumentation with regards to the Kavanaugh case.

Overall, the high-profile Kavanaugh hearings were covered extensively and discussed ferociously by news media from across the political spectrum. Consequently, it appears highly promising to explore the approaches of different news sources to narrate the case. Based on the above considerations, the objective of the present study is to investigate and compare framing tools and valence in two competitive US news outlets, namely CNN and Fox News, as well as the credibly perceived news agency Reuters, with regards to the Kavanaugh case. In addition, the assessment of all three outlet's basic journalistic quality is the second objective of this study, allowing for more holistic comparisons between them. From these objectives, the following three main research questions (RQ) arise:

RQ 1: How and how much was framing used by different US digital news
to narrate the 2018 Kavanaugh case?
RQ 2: What valence was assigned to the Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford
in different US digital news?
RQ 3: How did basic journalistic quality differ among US digital news
with regards to the 2018 Kavanaugh case?

Two elements in the above RQs particularly contribute to the theoretical novelty and added value of the present study, namely the inclusion of Reuters as a third object of analysis and the additional attention paid to journalistic quality. Though previous research has been conducted comparing framing efforts of CNN and Fox News (e.g., Terràn & Emmers-Sommer, 2018), it is relevant to add Reuters, as this enables more nuanced

comparisons. In explanation, since Reuters is viewed as an impartial and credible news source (Otario, 2018), framing choices made by CNN and Fox News can be contrasted with a control group of some sorts. Furthermore, while framing and valence are commonly combined in content analyses, the present study particularly stands out with its third RQ. By examining basic journalistic quality in addition to framing and valence, conclusions can be drawn regarding the relationship between (non-)neutrality and reporting quality.

The present study contains six chapters. Next to this first introduction, the theoretical dimensions of the issue are explored in the second chapter, which involves clarifying the concepts of framing, valence, and basic journalistic quality. Third, the study's methodological choices are elaborated on and justified. Fourth, there is a thorough analysis of both quantitative and qualitative results. Fifth, the results are discussed and interpreted, before sixth, final conclusions are drawn.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Framing

For millions of citizens, mass media are the primary source of information and guidance with regards to daily news, political issues, presidential candidates and elections. Therefore, news media have and immense power and responsibility, as they shape public opinion (De Vreese, 2005). This introduces the agenda-setting function of mass media. In explanation, since news outlets make decisions regarding what they present to the public, and what gets more or less attention, they are an important determinant of what people talk about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). McCombs and Shaw (1972) assert that while mass media influence "the salience of attitudes towards political issues" (p. 177), they "have little influence on the direction or intensity of attitudes" (p. 177). In framing theory, however, scholars have extended agenda-setting research and identify the mechanisms with which the media *can* in fact influence the direction and intensity of attitudes and opinions.

As Pan and Kosicki (1993) explain, framing analysis "expands beyond agenda-setting research into *what* people talk or think about by examining *how* they think and talk about issues" (p. 70). In essence, framing involves the two concepts of selection and salience (Entman, 1993). In explanation, certain aspects of an issue are selected to be presented in the news while others are left out, which gives the selected aspects a perceived importance and meaning. Furthermore, Entmann (1993) adds that communicators, consciously or unconsciously, use frames to evaluate, diagnose and prescribe. Such evaluative characteristics of framing underline that there is a normative dimension to the concept, as frames tell consumers how to view a certain issue. As Entman (2007) clarifies in a later study, the media identify certain things as problems, encourage moral judgements and promote certain policies over others. Although a considerable variety of definitions is available in literature, several studies have identified similar characteristics of selection, salience, and evaluation (Gitlin, 1980; Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992; Tuchman, 1978). In explanation, framing deals with what to include and exclude in articles (selection), what to portray as more or less important (salience), and the assessment of the reported events (evaluation).

De Vreese (2005) clarifies that there is little consensus in previous literature on how to identify frames in news, which makes it a complex endeavour. However, he divides framing research into two general approaches: inductive and deductive. While frames newly

emerge throughout the analysis in inductive approaches, deductive approaches try to find priorly established and operationalized frames in the material (De Vreese, 2005). Overall, he argues that scholars tend to favor the deductive approach, as it is more concise than the inductive approach. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) express a similar preference, emphasizing that the deductive approach "can be replicated easily, can cope with large samples, and can easily detect differences in framing between [...] and within media" (p. 95).

Furthermore, within the deductive approach, a distinction can be made between *generic* and *issue-specific* frames. Generic frames, such as thematic and episodic frames (Iyengar, 1991) or human interest and conflict frames (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) can be applied for a range of topics and "transcend thematic boundaries" (De Vreese, Boomgaarden, & Semetko, 2011, p. 182). By contrast, issue-specific frames only pertain to certain news topics. For example, Terkildsen and Schnell (1997) analyzed media coverage on the women's movement using a sex roles frame, a political rights frame, an economic rights frame, a feminism frame, and an anti-feminism frame. While generic frames may be useful for a wider array of issues, these issue-specific frames allow for more in-depth thematic insights into the discourse. Before beginning a deductive analysis with issue-specific frames, one should have established knowledge about the frames that are likely to appear in the material, since otherwise important frames may be missed (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Consequently, using previous studies with a similar topical focus, issue-specific frames were established in the present research in order to obtain more specific information on the arguments and perspectives across the different news outlets.

There are several content analyses in contemporary research that use issue-specific frames in the context of sexual misconduct in the public sphere, two of which serve as particularly suitable inspirations for this study. Firstly, Terán and Emmers-Sommer (2018) present a mixture of deductive and inductive frames in their study about the Bill Cosby scandal. The following categories emerged during their analysis: (1) Support for Cosby, (2) Not acknowledged, (3) Power of Cosby, and (4) Power of victims/survivors. Categories (1), (3) and (4) demonstrate the opposition that usually forms between the accuser's side and the side of the accused. Support can be expressed, for example, for Cosby or for his accusers, and news producers have the power to decide which point of view they want to emphasize. In their study, Terán and Emmers-Sommer (2018) found that Fox News emphasized the power and support of Cosby, contrasting CNN's focus on the power of his victims. Category (2)

relates to Cosby's and other's denial of the allegations, for instance by labelling them as 'decade-old, discredited allegations' or stating that 'the stories were contrived in order to gain attention or financial gain'. Essentially, such statements aim to discredit the accusations and diminish what an accuser has to say. Information may also be framed the other way around, however, meaning to discredit the accused person instead. Though these categories cannot simply be applied to this study as they are, they are thematically very close to the Kavanaugh case and constitute a useful basis to develop suitable issue-specific frames.

A second content analysis containing insightful issue-specific frames was conducted by Schneider and Hannem (2019). They explored the politicization of sexual misconduct in news media coverage of the 2016 presidential election. Altogether, the researchers used the following four frame concepts: (1) Focus on the character of the accused (rather than harm to the victims), (2) Comparing severity of allegations relative to other politicians, (3) Leveraging victim stories for political gain, and (4) Dismissal of allegations as politically motivated lies. Not all of these frames are useful for the present study, but frame (4) is particularly relevant. Considering the fact that Kavanaugh's confirmation into the Supreme Court meant that there would now be five conservative judges compared to four liberal judges makes it likely for the media to focus on this political superiority. For example, it is possible that information is framed to portray the allegations and ongoing investigations as politically motivated or manipulated for an ideological or partisan agenda. Taking into account that both Fox News and CNN have been accused of being politically biased, it is to be expected that both of the outlets make use of such framing tools.

How sexual misconduct cases are framed can largely affect how accuser and accused are viewed by the general public. However, it is not only important to examine the meaning of those frames, but also their frequency, as some news outlets may make use of more framing than others. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), for example, found evaluative and emotional framing efforts to be made much more frequently by sensationalist news programs than by their more serious competitors. Therefore, it is important for the present study to examine framing frequencies as well as their actual content.

2.2 Valence

Next to framing, valence plays an important role in conveying attitudes within news. It deals with the affective component of news reporting, meaning the emotion, sentiment, or tone of voice that is attached to an issue within an article (Kiousis, 2004). Strong valence towards a specific matter or person can be an indicator for bias. For example, Schiffer (2006) clarifies that partisan bias in election news coverage is often times measured with the categories of *relative amount* and *tone*. In explanation, the relative amount to which a candidate is mentioned, combined with the valence with which he/she is described, may provide insights into possible biases. If one party or candidate receives a considerably better affective evaluation than another in a given source, there appears to be favorable treatment and therefore a partisan bias. To some extent, Schiffer's (2006) considerations about partisan bias can be applied to sexual misconduct cases as well. Though they are factually not a partisan issue, previous literature suggests that conservative outlets may report more positively on the accused, while liberal outlets may attach more positive valence to the accuser (e.g., Terán & Emmers-Sommer, 2018; Turner, 2007), which would thus point to a possible liberal or conservative bias.

Most commonly, valence is divided into two to four categories in content analyses, including negative, positive, neutral, and ambiguous/mixed (e.g., Kiousis, 2004; Köller, Stuckert, & Möller, 2019; Kouloumpis, Wilson, & Moore, 2011; Lee & Carroll, 2011; Long, Slater, & Lysengen, 2006). While it is appropriate to stick to this basic categorization in analyses that concern one single topic, further elaboration is needed in cases that deal with two or more opposing sides. In explanation, in cases that deal with allegations of sexual misconduct, there is the side of the accuser and the side of the accused. A positive or negative valence in news content would, therefore, probably be directed at either one or the other, not both. Thomas, McCoy, and McBride (1993) make such a twofold approach to valence in their study on the public discourse surrounding the sexual harassment hearings regarding Supreme Court justice (then nominee) Clarence Thomas. In a section that they call "evaluative orientation" (p. 704), they differentiate between three dimensions: (1) pro-Thomas/anti-Hill, (2) neither/both, and (3) pro-Hill/anti-Thomas, which is a highly valuable categorization of valence for cases with two opposing sides.

2.3 Basic Journalistic Quality

Concerns about news quality have been rising in the digital news era. Plasser (2005) effectively summarizes how "hyper-commercialization, channel fragmentation, shrinking audiences for conventional news formats, and drastic newsroom cutbacks [...] have changed the practices of journalism substantially and challenged the [...] relevance of professional journalism training, ethics, and truth claims" (p. 74). While an intense discussion has emerged among journalists regarding the decrease in news quality, it rarely transcends the normative level or a mere classification of types of news into soft news versus hard news (Plasser, 2005). According to Meijer (2001), only few attempts have been made to define journalistic quality in a way that enables researchers to measure it empirically. Otario's (2018) Media Bias Chart constitutes one of such concrete attempts. While the horizontal axis of the chart deals with bias, the vertical axis deals with news quality. She uses a 1 to 8 point scale to distinguish between different levels of quality, ranging from fabricated information to original fact reporting. However, her classifications are challenging to apply in the present study, as they involve intensive fact-checking, which exceeds present limitations in time and scope.

By contrast, Spurk and Lublinski (2014) developed measures to assess basic journalistic quality in a more straightforward, yet objective manner. Their quality criteria relate, inter alia, to the following elements: First, essential for any article are its sources. The researchers determine both the number and the variety of used sources to be important quality criteria. Second, they establish the diversity of viewpoints in an article (or the lack thereof) as a quality indicator. If a text includes multiple viewpoints and compares them, it will thus receive a higher quality score. Finally, the degree to which a text puts events into broader context determines its quality. If the background of an issue is elaborated on, it suggests higher journalistic quality.

In the present research, journalistic quality is expected to vary between the three analyzed outlets. Considering the Reuters Institute's (2017) characterization of the US media landscape as "fiercely competitive" (l. 5) and "dominated by private, for-profit enterprises" (l. 2), it seems likely for Fox News and CNN to prioritize fast and sensationalistic content over journalistic quality. Moreover, based on the media bias chart (Otario, 2018), it can be hypothesized that Reuters will score higher in journalistic quality than CNN and Fox News.

3. METHODS

3.1 Design and Instrument

The present study has a primarily qualitative research design. In explanation, a comparative content analysis was conducted in order to uncover the approaches of three US digital news outlets - Fox News, CNN and Reuters - to narrating the the 2018 sexual assault allegations against Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. In a deductive coding process, issue-specific frames, valence and journalistic quality criteria were assigned to a range of 210 articles. While quantitative elements, such as the frequencies of codes per news outlet, are taken into account, the analysis mainly focuses on the qualitative components related to the content and underlying meaning behind the codes, with a particular focus on the differences between the three media outlets.

Content analysis as a method is highly suitable for the present study, as it allows for a systematic assessment of various text elements (Spurk & Lublinski, 2014). In explanation, using a structured codebook, content can be analyzed in a comprehensible, representative, and easily replicable manner. Within content analysis, the researcher serves as the research instrument. Using the program Atlas.ti 8, all articles were coded manually by the researcher, having ensured intercoder reliability through a prior pre-test.

3.2 Corpus

In order to establish an adequate collection of news articles for the analysis, a number of inclusion and exclusion criteria were formulated first and foremost. First, articles to be included into the analysis had to be published on the website of either CNN, Fox News, or Reuters. As previously explained, CNN and Fox News were chosen as objects of analysis because of their perceived liberal or conservative bias (e.g., Turner, 2007). Additionally, Reuters was added as a third outlet to analyze. According to Otario (2018), Reuters is one of the most high-quality and neutral US news outlets, and is thus likely to approach the Kavanaugh case very differently than the former two. In some sense, the Reuters articles serve as a control group two the main objects of analysis, CNN and Fox News. In a modified Google search, the 'site' search operator was used to limit the results to articles published on one of the three outlets.

Furthermore, the articles had to contain the names of either Blasey Ford or Kavanaugh, in order to ensure topical specificity. This was achieved using the Google search operator 'intitle'. Combining the two operators, an example of a search term would be "intitle:Kavanaugh AND site:cnn.com". Containing the names of the accused or the accuser in the title did not suffice for an article to be taken into consideration, however. Since Kavanaugh's Supreme Court nomination had been contentious even before the allegations of sexual misconduct against him arose, there were a variety of articles that were rather unrelated to the topic in question. A timewise restriction was thus needed. Unrelated articles were excluded from the corpus, leading to a time frame from September 13, which is when the allegations were first addressed, to October 8, which is two days after Kavanaugh's confirmation into the most prestigious US court.

Considering the vast amount of daily content published on the case in this time period, some further exclusion criteria were established. However, for the sake of not imposing on the results of the analyses, they were limited. Namely, all articles were included except for opinion pieces (since they are biased by definition), videos, display of other material (such as Kavanaugh's calendar) without any comments or analysis, live coverages including social media content (meaning a mere line of tweets about the issue), and transcriptions of TV interviews.

Using these inclusion and exclusion criteria, 384 news articles were found. In order to remain within the time frame and scope of the present research, the number of items was first narrowed down to 300. From each news outlet, the surplus articles were extracted randomly, but preserving the percentage distribution of articles over time. From these 300 articles, a final corpus of 210 articles was then established by further filtering out articles with the least degree of relatedness to the case. For example, since this study focuses on the specific allegations made by Christine Blasey Ford, articles dealing with accusations made by other women were excluded. Thus, ultimately, the final corpus contains 210 articles, 70 from each of the three selected news outlets. In Appendix B, the final corpus can be found for reference.

3.3 Analysis

A deductive approach was taken to conduct this content analysis, meaning that priorly established categories were systematically organized in a codebook, which can be found in Table 1 below. Overall, the three coding categories are in alignment with the study's three research questions. Furthermore, as was introduced in the theoretical framework, the 19 individual codes were established based on previous studies with a similar topical focus.

Table 1

Codebook

Variable	Code	Description	Example
Issue-Specific Frames	**(1)** Support for Kavanaugh	Support for and supporters of the accused are emphasized	"His Yale classmate has no doubt about his character and morale"
(Assigned once per paragraph)	**(2)** Support for Blasey Ford	Support for and supporters of the accuser are emphasized	"Two witnesses have come out that support Blasey Ford's testimony"
	(3) Opposing Kavanaugh	Kavanaugh's confirmation into the court is opposed	"Feinstein said that she does not think he is the right person for the position"
	(4) Opposing Blasey Ford	Blasey Ford and her allegations are opposed	"She is blocking him from assuming his rightful position on the court"
	(5) Discrediting Kavanaugh	Details used to discredit the accused	"During his speech, he got overly emotional and angry"
	(6) Discrediting Blasey Ford	Details used to discredit the accuser	"She wasn't even able to recall the address of the house they were in"
	(7) Partisan Focus	Frames the case as a partisan issue	"Republicans are trying to manipulate the events for their agenda"
	(8) Ideological Focus	Frames the case as an ideological issue	"Liberals are trying to manipulate the events for their agenda"
	(9) Focus on Confirmation	Emphasizes importance of a fast confirmation vote	"Without further interruptions, the confirmation vote could take place in October"
	(10) Focus on Hearings and Investigations	Emphasizes need to further investigate	"A more thorough FBI investigation is needed"

Valence	(11) Very Positive Kavanaugh/Very Negative Blasey Ford	The article either portrays Kavanaugh very positively, or Blasey Ford very negatively	"Ford is definitely lying and Kavanaugh is innocent"
(Assigned once per article)	(12) Slightly Positive Kavanaugh/Slightly Negative Blasey Ford	The article favors Kavanaugh, at least slightly, over Blasey Ford	"Ford's testimony wasn't completely credible"
	(13) Neutral/Balanced	The article shows no valence or presents positive / negative sentiments for both sides	"Both opponents have positive and negative attributes"
	(14) Slightly Positive Blasey Ford/Slightly Negative Kavanaugh	The article favors Blasey Ford, at least slightly, over Kavanaugh	"Ford's testimony was more credible than his"
	(15) Very Positive Blasey Ford/Very Negative Kavanaugh	The article either portrays Blasey Ford very positively, or Kavanaugh very negatively	"Ford should be trusted no questions asked"
Basic Journalistic Quality	(16) Number of Sources	Does the text use a good number of sources?	**16.1** 0-1 sources (0 points) **16.2** 2-3 sources (1 point) **16.3** 4 or more sources (2 points)
(Assigned once per article)	(17) Diversity of Sources	What kinds of sources does the text cite?	**17.1** No sources (0 points) **17.2** Ordinary people (1 point) **17.3** Professionals (1.5 points) **17.4** Combination of both (2 points)
	(18) Diversity of Viewpoints	Does the text show different viewpoints and does it compare them?	**18.1** No (0 points) **18.2** Yes (2 points)
	(19) Background	Does the text put the specific topic into context?	**19.1** No (0 points) **19.2** Slightly (1 point) **19.3** Yes (2 points)

The first category, *Issue-Specific Frames*, is aimed at uncovering the potentially contrasting use of frames of the three chosen news outlets. In practice, these codes were assigned per paragraph for each article. In total, 10 codes belong to this category, the first six of which were adapted from Terán and Emmers-Sommer (2018). In their study about the Bill Cosby scandal, they identify frames that emphasize the power of, or the support for either Cosby or his accusers. Based on this, the two codes (1) Support for Kavanaugh and (2) Support for Blasey Ford were established. In order to be prepared for contrary statements as

well, the further codes (3) Opposing Kavanaugh and (4) Opposing Blasey Ford were added. Basically, codes (1) to (4) were assigned to any paragraph that included supportive or opposing views on either Kavanaugh or his main accuser. Moreover, Terán and Emmers-Sommer (2018) present the code 'Not acknowledged', which deals with Cosby's denial and with framing the accusations as discredited. For the present study, this category inspired the codes (5) Discrediting Kavanaugh and (6) Discrediting Blasey Ford. These codes refer to any paragraph in which details are disclosed or statements are made that focus on undermining either side's arguments.

Furthermore, several frames were based on Schneider and Hannem's (2019) content analysis of how news media politicized the sexual misconduct allegations made against president Trump during the 2016 presidential election. Their category 'Dismissal of allegations as politically motivated lies' is particularly relevant for the present research, resulting in the codes (7) Partisan focus and (8) Ideological Focus. These codes refer to statements that frame the allegations and ongoing investigations as politically motivated or manipulated for an ideological or partisan agenda.

In addition to the above frames that are rooted in literature, two more frames were added for the present study, namely (9) Focus on confirmation and (10) Focus on hearings and investigations. These codes are to be applied whenever a paragraph emphasized either the need for a fast and frictionless confirmation of the candidate, or the need to further explore the matter by means of FBI investigations or hearings. Putting emphasis on confirming Kavanaugh timely can be viewed as a form of support, though it may not be as explicit. In turn, underlining the need for a thorough investigation into the candidate suggests an opposition. Consequently, these two frames are meant to unveil more implicit stances that the news outlets may take.

The second category, *Valence,* is supposed to show to what extent the sources portray Kavanaugh and his accuser in a positive or negative manner, and was coded once per article. In explanation, valence was operationalized in the present study as follows: (11) Very positive Kavanaugh/very negative Blasey Ford, (12) Slightly positive Kavanaugh/slightly negative Blasey Ford, (13) Neutral/balanced, (14) Slightly positive Blasey Ford/slightly negative Kavanaugh, and (15) Very positive Blasey Ford/very negative Kavanaugh. This way, articles can be placed on somewhat of a likert scale, revealing an outlets overall valence towards the accuser and the accused when taken together.

The third and final category, *Basic Journalistic Quality*, is used to assess the reporting quality of the three outlets, in order to make more holistic comparisons between their approaches. For each article, quality was assessed on the basis of four criteria and scored using a point system, leading to an overall quality score per article. Adapting the assessment sheet developed by Spurk and Lublinski (2014), the criteria for basic journalistic quality used in the present study are the following: (16) Number of sources, which assesses whether the article substantiates its claims with no, few, or several sources. (17) Diversity of sources, which refers to whether the article cites only ordinary persons, only professionals in the field, or a combination of both. (18) Diversity of viewpoints, which assesses whether multiple contrasting arguments are made within the text instead of focusing on one point of view. Finally, the code (19) Background establishes whether the reported events are put into context and connected to 'the bigger picture'.

Before being able to code the entire corpus, the reliability of the codebook had to be ensured. Therefore, a pretest assessing intercoder reliability was conducted. In explanation, ten percent of the corpus were coded independently by two researchers using the existing codebook. Subsequently, three Cohen's Kappa scores were calculated: one for the issue-specific frames, one for valence, and one for the journalistic quality codes. Cohen's Kappa is a widely used tool to measure the explanatory power, reliability and accuracy of codebooks. In basic terms, it measures the degree to which both coders are in accordance in their choice of codes. In order to be sufficient, the Cohen's Kappa has to exceed a score of 0.6. As can be seen in Table 2 below, there was substantial to near perfect agreement for all three coding categories. The full Kappa calculations can be referenced in Appendix C. Having established a satisfactory intercoder reliability, the entire corpus of articles was uniformly coded, using the program Atlas.ti 8, which provides valuable tools for both qualitative and quantitative elements of content analysis.

Table 2

Intercoder Reliability

Category	Cohen's Kappa
Issue-Specific Frames	0.85
Valence	0.80
Basic Journalistic Quality	0.94

4. RESULTS

4.1 Framing

4.1.1 General Findings

With regards to framing, several quantitative differences between the three analyzed news outlets stood out. Overall, CNN used the highest number of frames with a total of 602, each article containing 8.60 frames on average. Fox News followed relatively closely with a total of 465 frames and a mean of 6.60 frames per article. Comparatively, Reuters used the least frames by far (n=230), averaging on 3.29 frames per article.

Moreover, based on the frequencies of all ten issue-specific frames shown in Table 3 below, distinctions can be made between the outlets' respective framing preferences. In the CNN material, the most frequently found frame was *Partisan Focus* (n=150), closely followed by the *Discrediting Kavanaugh* frame (n=133). By contrast, Fox News used the frame *Discrediting Blasey Ford* most often (n=147), while *Support for Kavanaugh* was used frequently as well (n= 106). No frame was used as frequently by Reuters as it was by the two other news sites, resulting in *Partisan Focus* to be the most frequently used frame with n=61.

Table 3

Frequencies of Issue-Specific Frames

Frame	CNN	Fox News	Reuters
(1) Support for Kavanaugh	93	106	35
(2) Support for Blasey Ford	73	36	23
(3) Opposing Kavanaugh	52	26	32
(4) Opposing Blasey Ford	1	1	5
(5) Discrediting Kavanaugh	133	11	18
(6) Discrediting Blasey Ford	49	**147**	24
(7) Partisan Focus	**150**	93	**61**
(8) Ideological Focus	10	9	19
(9) Focus on Confirmation	10	23	3
(10) Focus on Hearings and Investigations	31	13	9

On the contrary, Table 3 also shows that several frames were only scarcely used. Altogether, *Opposing Blasey Ford* was the least used frame with a combined total of n=7, most likely because negative statements about her usually fell into the 'discrediting' category. Moreover, the frames *Ideological Focus*, *Focus on Confirmation* and *Focus on Hearings and Investigations* were not used frequently either. As a consequence, they are not interpreted in closer detail in the present study.

Furthermore, certain frames showed more contrasting results for the different outlets than others. This is especially true for the frames in support of either Kavanaugh or Blasey Ford, or those discrediting either him or her (see Figure 1). The most striking difference was found in the *discrediting* frames. CNN material focused on statements that discredited Kavanaugh (n=133), while Fox News used frames to discredit his accuser, Blasey Ford (n=147). Reuters did not use the discrediting frame nearly as frequently. Moreover, the frequencies for 'support' frames were quite compelling. Overall, frames supporting Kavanaugh appeared more often than frames supporting Blasey Ford. While Kavanaugh was most supported in Fox News, there was also a rather surprising amount of supporting frames for the nominee in CNN's articles. In the following section, this apparent anomaly is discussed more closely. Blasey Ford unambiguously received most support in the CNN material.

Figure 1

Frequencies of Issue-Specific Frames (Selection)
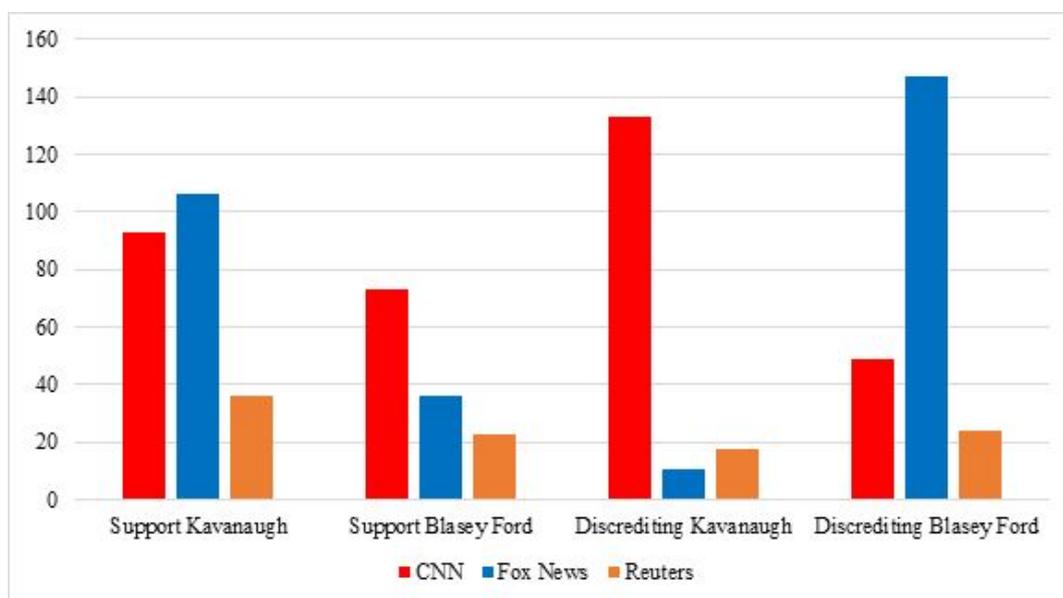
Next to these quantitative descriptions of the data, there are several aspects worth noting with regards to the qualitative content of the frames. First and foremost, it is important to note that all three outlets predominantly relied on quotes and references to other people's statements to characterize the nominee and his accuser, as opposed to making explicit evaluative statements themselves. Support for Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford was almost always based on another person's judgement. In explanation, statements coded as *Support for Kavanaugh* usually contained quotes from president Trump, Republican senators like Lindsey Graham (R-SC), or Kavanaugh's acquaintances from high school and college. Sections coded as *Support for Blasey Ford,* in comparison, included statements made by her husband, friends, or some of the democratic members of the senate, like Dianne Feinstein (D-CA). Though this means that the news outlets used framing more implicitly, the careful and contrasting selection of quotes and viewpoints certainly reveals some underlying motives. There are also more explicit instances of framing, however, for instance in the *Discrediting* category and the *Partisan Focus* frame. In the following paragraphs, several expressive examples of framing are discussed for each of the three news outlets. Additionally, a more comprehensive list of compelling examples can be found in Appendix D.

4.1.2 Framing in CNN

As previously noted, most of CNN's framing efforts were aimed at discrediting Kavanaugh or focused on the partisan dimension of the case. Regarding the *Partisan Focus* frame, the predominant narrative in the CNN material implied that Republicans (i.e. the GOP, Republican senators, or president Trump) were overconfident in their support for nominee Kavanaugh, and how the candidate and his Republican peers had villainized the Democratic party. For instance, one contributor wrote: "Each senator was allowed five minutes to question Ford and Kavanaugh [...]. But Republicans abandoned that approach during Kavanaugh's testimony, and the tone shifted drastically as Sens. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and John Cornyn of Texas used their time to assail Democrats" (CNN, Article 25).

Moreover, CNN often framed information in a way that discredited Kavanaugh, mainly by characterizing the nominee as overly defensive and angry in his testimony, and as untruthful in his accounts of his alcohol consumption throughout high school and college. "It was a day in which Brett Kavanaugh did himself few favors. After the US Supreme Court

nominee's hearing on Thursday, even commentators on Fox News portrayed him as an aggressor with, as one said, 'guns blazing' - the very opposite characterization the judge had hoped to achieve" (CNN, Article 29).

There were, however, also quite some statements in support of the nominee, which seems surprising considering their efforts to discredit him and to support Blasey Ford. As mentioned previously, most of these supporting statements contained direct quotes from others, rather than a writer's own evaluations, though this aspect alone does not suffice in explaining the unusually high figure. Particularly prominent, by contrast, were some of the paragraphs that directly followed affirming statements about Kavanaugh. In explanation, the sentences following the *Support for Kavanaugh* frames often dealt with portraying the respective supporter, as for instance president Trump or a specific Senate Republican, in a negative light. For example, one article states how "Majority Leader Mitch McConnel described Kavanaugh as a 'superstar'" (CNN, Article 3). However, in the following sentence, it is emphasized that McConnel's support for Kavanaugh is likely motivated by the fact that his confirmation would anchor a conservatice majority on the Supreme Court, at least for the coming decade. Similarly, in another article, Trump's support for his nominee is iterated (CNN, Article 12). Subsequently, however, a whole section is dedicated to the sexual assault allegations Trump himself has faced, to his suspicion against the #metoo movement as a whole, and to crude comments he had made about women in the past. Thus, even though quite a high number of frames in support of Kavanaugh were detected in the CNN material, their placement within a line of argument often decreased their strength.

4.1.3 Framing in Fox News

By contrast, the Fox News articles largely framed the case in an attempt to discredit Kavanaugh's main accuser, Christine Blasey Ford. Most of such statements referred to discrepancies in Ford's testimony, and to different people who did not corroborate her allegations. The following statement exemplifies this tendency: "Mitchell noted that Ford repeatedly changed her story [...] and could not remember certain key details like how she got home or whether she had given her therapist notes to The Washington Post just two months ago" (Fox News, Article 16).

Furthermore, many instances of support for Kavanaugh were found in the Fox News material. While the detected support predominantly stemmed from other people's statements,

there were also instances of more explicit support for the candidate from the network itself. For example, one contributor wrote "Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh has turned over his calendar from four months in 1982 to Senate investigators as he fights back against accuser Christine Blasey Ford's allegations that he sexually assaulted her that summer" (Fox News, Article 56). Another characterized him favorably by stating: "The judge currently coaches his daughters' basketball teams. Kavanaugh also has tutored children at a D.C. elementary school, volunteered for Catholic charity groups and is a regular participant in services at his Catholic church" (Fox News, Article 24).

Interestingly, certain recounts of the same event were framed very differently between Fox News and CNN. There was one instance, for example, in which president Trump commented rather harshly on the fact that Blasey Ford did not remember all the details from the decades-old alleged assault. In the Fox News article, this was coded as *Discrediting Blasey Ford*. For reference, the statement read:

> "The president, before a campaign crowd, referenced holes in Ford's story, portraying the back-and-forth between Ford and her interviewers during last week's congressional hearing. 'How did you get home?' 'I don't remember.' 'How did you get there?' 'I don't remember.' 'Where is the place?' 'I don't remember.' 'How many years ago was it?' 'I don't know.', Trump said as the crowd applauded." (Fox News, Article 18)

The careful wording of the phrase 'referencing holes in Ford's story', combined with the reference to a cheering crowd, stands in strong contrast to CNN's reporting, in which the incident was described as Trump *mocking* Blasey Ford, before reminding the reader that Trump himself had been accused of sexual misconduct by over a dozen women (CNN, Article 38). Overall, this example illustrates the discrepancies in framing between the two news outlets.

4.1.4 Framing in Reuters

In the Reuters material, the negative and positive evaluations towards Kavanaugh and his accuser were not highlighted as much. Though the *Support for Kavanaugh* code was applied relatively frequently, it predominantly contained direct quotes of president Donald Trump or of Republican senators. Instead, emphasis was mainly put on the partisan (and slightly the ideological) aspects of the case, and what effects his confirmation into the highest US court would have on a political level. One article read "Kavanaugh was nominated by

Trump to be the man who would enshrine a conservative majority on the Supreme Court for a generation" (Reuters, Article 22), while another stated "Democrats said Kavanaugh's partisan defense of himself, in which he said he was victim of a 'political hit,' was enough itself to disqualify him from the court" (Reuters, Article 4). This type of partisan focus differed from the one-sided kind described and expected in previous chapters (in which focus is on either Republicans or Democrats), by including the perspectives of both parties.

4.2 Valence

In addition to framing, the present research dealt with how different news media would evaluate the Kavanaugh case from an emotional point of view. Upon analysis, the valence attached to both Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford differed significantly between the three chosen outlets and aligned with what was previously predicted in the theory chapter. Reuters particularly stood out with its predominantly neutral or balanced reporting; 67.14 percent of the articles were coded as such (n=47). In articles of Fox News and CNN, by contrast, sentiments towards Kavanaugh and his accuser were on opposite ends of the spectrum. In explanation, 62.86 percent of the CNN articles either slightly or strongly favored Blasey Ford or disfavored Kavanaugh (n=44), while 67.14 percent of the Fox News articles attached slight or strong positive valence to Kavanaugh or negative valence to Blasey Ford (n=47). Figure 3 below conclusively visualizes these differences.

Predominantly, the valence of an article manifested itself in the amount of positive or negative statements that were included about either of the two involved parties. Certainly, the relative amount of supporting, opposing, or discrediting instances of framing played a deciding role in determining the article's overall valence. If there was both positive and negative framing present in an article, or no framing at all, it was coded as *Neutral/Balanced* instead. Bearing these considerations in mind, it is striking how the valences detected in Fox News and CNN seem to be almost perfectly mirrored horizontally where the lines intersect in the *Neutral/Balanced* category (at approx. n=17).

Figure 2

Frequencies of Valence
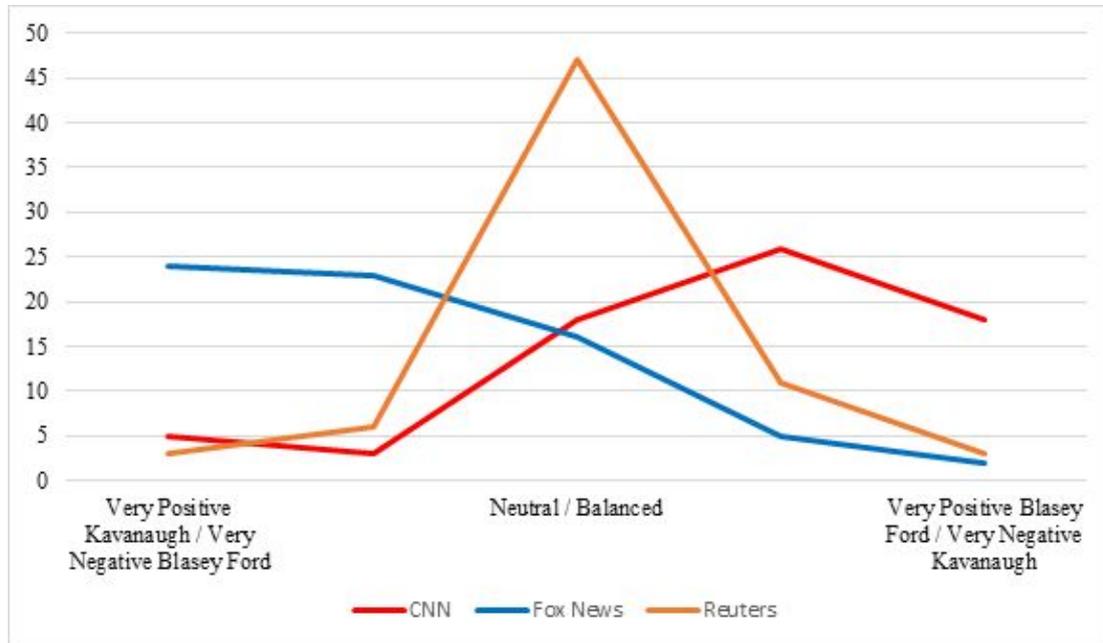
4.3 Basic Journalistic Quality

With regards the basic journalistic quality of the three analyzed news outlets, several considerations can be made based on the collected data. Using the previously determined scoring system, basic journalistic quality scores for all three outlets were calculated. Overall, CNN received the highest score with 361 out of 560 possible points. Fox News followed relatively closely with a total of 330 out of 560 points, while Reuters only reached 275 out of 560 points. Considering Reuters' good reputation, its low basic journalistic quality score seems rather surprising. Thus, this apparent discrepancy is reviewed in more detail in the discussion section. Apart from the *Background* category, in which it was surpassed by Fox News, CNN achieved the highest score in all categories. Additionally, it is worth noting that Fox News scored by far the lowest in the *Diversity of Viewpoints* category. These differences are illustrated in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3

Basic Journalistic Quality Scores
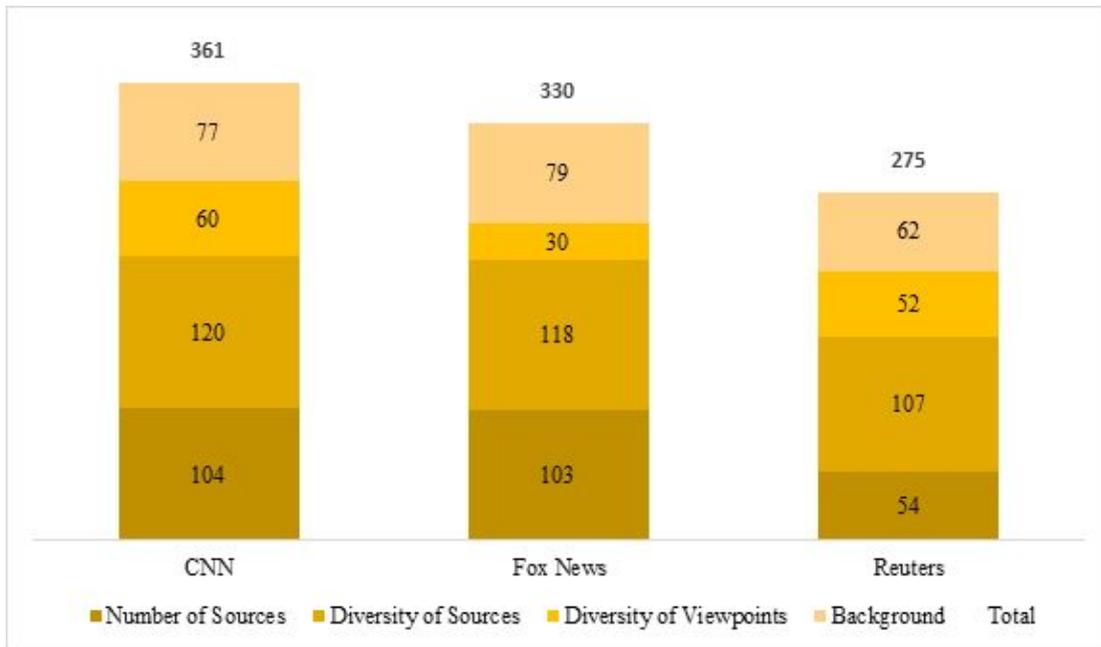
5. DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to analyze how the Kavanaugh case was portrayed in different US news media. Taking the above results into consideration, it becomes clear that the three chosen news outlets, CNN, Fox News, and Reuters, all took rather differing approaches to narrate the 2018 Kavanaugh case, with an especially present discrepancy between the former two. This chapter discusses the different findings in order to conclusively answer the three research questions and to put them into a broader context. Furthermore, the limitations of the conducted research are elaborated and reflected on for the sake of replicability and transparency.

5.1 Contrast Between CNN and Fox News

The findings of this research support the theoretical claim that by using framing, communicators add a normative dimension to news reporting (e.g., Entmann, 2007). They emphasize certain aspects as more or less important and, to a certain degree, predetermine how consumers will evaluate contentious issues. With the Kavanaugh scandal, this was certainly the case, as there was a strong dichotomy in both framing and valence between CNN and Fox News. While both outlets used framing comparably more frequently than third news outlet Reuters, a clear distinction could be made between what each of the two outlets seemed to deem important and worth emphasizing, placing them on opposite ends of the spectrum. Regarding RQ 1 (*How and how much was framing used by different US digital news to narrate the 2018 Kavanaugh case?)*, it can therefore be concluded that the Kavanaugh case was framed quite differently among news outlets, portraying the involved persons in contrasting ways. In explanation, CNN and Fox News used frames to discredit either Kavanaugh or his accuser, thereby taking typical liberal and conservative stances on the case. Meanwhile, Reuters focused on documenting the partisan focus of the events and framed less information overall.

Furthermore, the results align with those of previous studies that explored the differences in framing between Fox News and CNN in the context of sexual misconduct allegations. For example, similar framing tendencies were found in the study conducted by Terán and Emmers-Sommer (2018) on the Bill Cosby scandal, as was explained in the theoretical framework. There seems to be a tendency for Fox News to accentuate the harmful

implications of false allegations, as well as positive characteristics and support of the accused. CNN instead appears to follow the basic principle of perceiving accusers as inherently credible, leading to a more negative depiction of the accused person.

To some extent, this research can also contribute to bridging the research gap between perceived and proven media bias in the United States. Media bias is hard to measure empirically, which leaves many US citizens with rather subjective suspicions (Morris, 2007). Insights on valence, such as those gained in the present research, can be helpful in determining whether a news medium is actually prone to political bias, especially in cases involving two main opponents (Schiffer, 2006). In this study, the valence attached to the opponents of Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford was certainly striking, which provides an answer for RQ 2 (*What valence was assigned to the Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford in different US digital news?*). Reuters remained notably neutral. In the other two outlets, however, balance and neutrality were largely replaced by straightforward negativity or positivity towards only one of the involved parties: Fox News was significantly more negative towards Christine Blasey Ford and her accusations, and supported Kavanaugh with positive valence. The CNN material displayed much more positive valence towards Blasey Ford and instead depicted Kavanaugh in a more negative light. Reading only one of these sources to inform oneself about the Kavanaugh case would thus lead to different and certainly limited formations of opinions. Consequently, at least with regards to the Kavanaugh case, the discrepancies in valence detected in Fox News and CNN indicate that the two outlets are prone to bias.

5.2 Reuters and Basic Journalistic Quality

The findings of the present study provide rather unexpected answers for the third and final RQ (*How did basic journalistic quality differ among US digital news with regards to the 2018 Kavanaugh case?*). On the one hand, the journalistic quality scores of CNN and Fox News aligned with the results of other research in the field, as for example the media bias chart (Otario, 2018), since CNN scored slightly higher than its conservative competitor. On the other hand, Reuters scored surprisingly low in comparison to the other outlets, especially considering its reputation as high-quality news source (Otario, 2018).

However, this discrepancy can, at least partly, be explained by the fact that the Reuters approach to news reporting deviated significantly from that of Fox News and CNN. In explanation, Reuters reported on the case in a very straightforward and concise manner,

resulting in notably short articles (sometimes comprised of only two sentences) that seemingly prioritized information provision over the construction of a compelling argument. Besides manifesting it as the most neutral and balanced outlet among those analyzed, however, this approach also resulted in a lower basic journalistic quality score in the present research, as articles oftentimes lacked background information and a sufficient number of sources. Though these findings are valid, they may not fully reflect Reuter's overall reporting quality, as the shortness of articles simply entailed that only new information was stated, instead of reiterating previous statements. It is also worth noting that Reuters refers to its reporting standards ('The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles') at the end of every single article; these principles vouch for the independence, integrity and freedom of bias of its published content, which seems to be intended as an additional quality assurance.

5.3 Discrepancy Between Framing and Quality

Upon closer examination, the answers to the three RQs actually give rise to further questions about the relationship between framing and journalistic quality. In explanation, it seems contradictory that Reuters, which was most neutral in its reporting, scored low in journalistic quality, while Fox News and CNN, which were more biased, received higher quality scores. Therefore, there seems to be a discrepancy between framing and journalistic quality. One of the effects that this might have is that readers, specifically of CNN and Fox News, perceive them to be objective based on quality indicators such as a high number of sources, although they are in fact highly selective in their provision of information.

As a consequence, it is increasingly difficult for consumers to classify the news they read. On the one hand, there may be a clear orientation towards more liberal or conservative values in terms of content, but on the other hand, a convincing number of sources or the provision of background information might convey impartiality. To truly find out whether news content accurately depicts the events that occur, fact-checking has to be done, which can be rather time consuming or even hardly possible in cases where not all information is available for the general public to review. In essence, it is important to bear in mind that simply because an article is well-written and speckled with sources does not mean that it is automatically more objective. On the contrary, the news that readers perceive as 'good stories' might often times be exactly the ones that are less neutral, but more persuasive.

5.4 Limitations

Every study has certain limitations and implications for further research. This section thus contains a reflection on the limitations and implications of the present study. First, since this research focused on framing, valence, and basic journalistic quality in the context of public sexual misconduct allegations, generalizing inferences about the overall use of framing and valence, or the overall journalistic quality of CNN, Fox News and Reuters, cannot be made. Therefore, it would be interesting to investigate these components in other contentious thematic areas to establish more overarching conclusions.

Second, the corpus was narrowed down from 384 to 210 due to time restrictions and limitations in scale. Although efforts were made to maintain the distribution of articles over time and to exclude the articles that were least specific to the case, this impacts the validity of the present study, as not all available material was analyzed. Also, the other allegations against Kavanaugh, meaning those besides Blasey Ford's, were not taken into account in order to enable a more focused analysis, but for the sake of completeness, it would have been best to include them as well.

Third, another factor impairing the validity of this study is that there is inherently some subjectivity to manual coding. Generally, deductive coding counts as more easily replicable than inductive coding, and certainly, intercoder reliability was established prior to data analysis. Nonetheless, especially in the context of a subject as politically charged as the Kavanaugh case, subjective political biases of the researcher are prone to play a role. In future research, it would be a possibility to purposely use a second assessor for intercoder reliability testing with a different political orientation. In order for a codebook to be reliability, it needs to lead to the same outcomes for different researchers, regardless of their political orientation. Furthermore, some subjective decisions had to be made with regards to what truly counts as framing. For example, direct quotes from other people could be perceived as neutral, as they are not interpreted by the outlet in any way, but also as framing, as the selection one makes of which quotes to include or leave out already indicates how a situation is portrayed. Therefore, direct quotes were included as framing in the present research, but there is certainly room for discussion regarding this decision.

Fourth, the specific coding category *Basic Journalistic Quality* was subject to restrictions, which is why the scoring system to determine an article's quality was rather

simplified. In explanation, quality scoring depended on categories that could be checked instantly by reading the article, but important, more time-consuming measures such as fact-checking were not taken. An adequate orientation for more comprehensive journalistic quality evaluation is Otario's (2018) media bias chart. For future research, such more elaborate scoring systems would be of high value.

Fifth and finally, the findings of the present study suggest an unexpected discrepancy between journalistic quality and framing, which was only shortly addressed due to time restrictions. However, it could be extremely valuable for future research to explore this link more extensively, for example by contrasting comprehensive assessments of journalistic quality among US news outlets with consumer perceptions of these outlet's credibility, neutrality and quality.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the aim of this study was to investigate news reporting on the contentious 2018 Kavanaugh case. This was done by assessing the use of framing and valence, as well as introducing the concept of journalistic quality into content analysis. Framing and valence significantly differed between the three analyzed news outlets, with the contrast between Fox News and CNN being the strongest. Both outlets were rather one-sided in their support or opposition of either Kavanaugh or his accuser, which indicates a bias in their reporting, especially in comparison to the neutrality found in the Reuters articles. This finding thus helps bridge the gap between the widespread perceived media bias in the US and the sparse empirical evidence for this perception. Interestingly, although CNN and Fox News were more biased than Reuters in their reporting, they scored higher in journalistic quality. Indicators for journalistic quality can therefore not be equated as indicators for neutrality.

Overall, the different approaches of the news outlets led to three very different depictions of the same events. Consumers of only one of these media would therefore likely form highly differing opinions about what they perceive to be right, wrong, true or important in a case as contentious as the Kavanaugh allegations. Especially readers of either Fox News or CNN may receive limited and biased interpretations, which harms the process of forming a well-informed opinion on the matter. Additionally, journalistic quality indicators such as a high number of sources may falsely convey objectivity, which makes it even more difficult for readers to recognize framing or bias, especially if the portrayed storyline aligns with their own political attitudes. Therefore, regardless of what one's own political orientation might be, it is highly recommended to consult a variety of sources when informing oneself about a contentious topic, in order to counteract one-sided framing efforts.

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APPENDIX A: Mandatory Literature Study Log

1. Research Questions and Main Concepts for the Literature Study

RQ 1: What theories are there about <u>framing</u>?

RQ 2: How was <u>framing</u> used in other <u>sexual misconduct cases</u>?

RQ 3: What role does <u>valence</u> play in news reporting?

RQ 4: How can <u>journalistic quality</u> be determined?

2. Materials and Databases

In order to find useful results for this study's theoretical framework, the appropriate materials and databases had to be selected. The two primary databases used to scout literature were Scopus and the University of Twente's online library LISA. Scopus is one of the largest databases for peer-reviewed literature in the social sciences, which makes it a highly promising website to consider for a research in the field of communication. Both Scopus and LISA also have extensive filtering options, for example regarding publication year, format and topic. This is helpful for the searching process as well, as it ensures a higher specificity of the displayed results as compared to more generic databases such as Google Scholar.

With regards to the selected materials, precedence was given to peer-reviewed journal articles as well as scientific books, as these two formats provide reliable and high-quality information. Furthermore, it was important to select articles from within a relevant time frame, which varied depending on the topic in question. For example, for identifying relevant theoretical input on the concept of framing, older articles were taken into consideration (e.g., McCombs & Shaw, 1972) if they seemed especially influential for the development of the overall theory. By contrast, the literature search for theoretical accounts on journalistic quality indicators was focused on more recent literature, in order to factor in the idiosyncrasies of the modern media ecosystem (including online news, new media, etc.).

Finally, with regard to the language of the selected literature, material in the English language was prioritized in order to establish a framework containing references that any reader can refer back to. However, if literature on a specific subtopic were sparse, German literature was consulted as well. Only in one case was a German article actually used in the present study, namely Köller, Stuckert, and Möller (2019).

3. Search Matrix

Table 4

Literature Search Matrix

Constructs	Related Terms	Broader Terms	Narrower Terms
Framing	Priming, Framing Theory, Framing Tools, Content Analysis, Media Analysis	Agenda-Setting	Deductive/Inductive Framing, Generic/Specific Frames,
Framing in Sexual Misconduct Cases	Framing Sexual Assault Cases/Scandals/ Allegations	News Reporting Scandals	Bill Cosby Scandal, Trump Sexual Assault Allegations, Harvey Weinstein Scandal, Kavanaugh, Blasey Ford
Valence	Sentiments, Emotions, affective evaluation	Evaluation	pro versus anti
Journalistic Quality	News Quality, Journalism Principles	Article Quality	Ranking news quality

4. Search Actions and Results

Table 5

Examples of Search Actions and Results

Nr	Date	Database	Search action + search technique	Total hits
1	07/03	Scopus	(priming OR framing OR "agenda setting")	17667
2	08/03	Scopus	(priming OR framing OR agenda-setting) AND (scandal OR "sexual assault allegations" OR "sexual misconduct")	7
3	08/03	Scopus	(framing OR "media analysis" OR "content analysis") AND (scandal OR "sexual assault allegations" OR "sexual misconduct")	15
4	08/03	Scopus	(valence OR sentiments OR emotions OR "affective evaluation") AND ("media analysis" OR "content analysis")	484
5	08/03	Scopus	(valence OR sentiments OR emotions OR "affective evaluation") AND (framing OR priming OR "agenda setting")	340
6	11/04	Scopus	(priming OR framing OR "agenda setting" OR media OR news OR reporting) AND (Kavanaugh OR Cosby OR Weinstein OR Trump)	123
7	11/04	Scopus	("journalistic quality" OR "news quality" OR "reporting quality" OR "journalism principles" OR "journalism quality")	533

8	11/04	Scopus	("journalistic quality" OR "news quality" OR "reporting quality" OR "journalism principles" OR "journalism quality") AND ("United States" OR America)	30
9	11/04	Scopus	("media bias" OR "media landscape" OR "news media") AND ("United States" OR America)	91
10	11/04	Scopus	(priming OR framing OR "agenda setting") AND theory	1042

5. Found References in APA (Examples)

Entmann, R. M. (1993). Framing: toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication, 43*(4), 51-58. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x

Kouloumpis, E., Wilson, T., & Moore, J. (2011). Twitter sentiment analysis: The good the bad and the OMG! *Proceedings of the International Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*, *5*, 538-541.

McCombs, M., & Shaw, L. D. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 36*(2), 176-187. doi: 10.1086/267990

6. Reflections

For the present study, it was important to find representative literature for each of the three main concepts of framing, valence and journalistic quality. The first step to get high quality information about these concepts was certainly to choose suitable databases, such as Scopus, and to search for peer-reviewed articles. It also prove very useful to take a snowball approach once a highly suitable source was found, meaning to look into that source's references in order to find further useful studies. This was also a valuable technique for orienting oneself on the subject and to find out what literature is actually out there on a topic. Furthermore, although complex search terms in scientific databases were helpful in finding specific studies, it was also useful to first work with Google Scholar in an attempt to get a general overview.

With regards to search terms, it took some time to figure out the appropriate length and complexity. Some searches only yielded under 10 results, while others came to over 10,000 results, which is far too much. The most useful articles were usually found through searches that had approximately a few hundred search results. Overall, the quality of the found articles certainly seems sufficient. However, a more systematic approach could have been taken with regards to trying out different search terms and combinations.

APPENDIX B: Corpus

Table 6

Corpus CNN

Nr	Source
1	October 2 2018_Brett Kavanaugh's drinking at Yale comes into renewed focus
2	October 6 2018_George W. Bush made calls reassuring Collins about Kavanaugh
3	October 7 2018_Brett Kavanaugh sworn in as Supreme Court justice
4	September 16 2018_Washington Post_ Kavanaugh accuser comes forward
5	September 17 2018_Why the Kavanaugh allegations come at the worst possible time for Republicans
6	September 20 2018_Republicans just made a giant gamble on Brett Kavanaugh
7	September 25 2018_Brett Kavanaugh tries unprecedented move to save his chance for the SC
8	September 27 2018_Frustrated Trump turns optimistic on Kavanaugh
9	September 28 2018_Kavanaugh denies two additional accusations to Senate Judiciary Committee
10	September 29 2018_For Supreme Court, Kavanaugh marks partisan turning point
11	September 14 2018_Woman accuses Brett Kavanaugh of assault in letter to senator
12	September 17 2018_The power of a named accuser has his Supreme Court future in the balance
13	September 17 2018_State of play of the Brett Kavanaugh nomination
14	September 17 2018_Trump stands by Kavanaugh, supports 'a full process'
15	September 18 2018_Brett Kavanaugh nomination descends into chaos
16	September 19 2018_George W. Bush defends Kavanaugh as 'a fine husband, father, and friend'
17	September 19 2018_Trump on Kavanaugh_ 'This is not a man who deserves this'
18	September 24 2018_Brett Kavanaugh slams 'smears,' says he won't abandon his nomination
19	September 24 2018_Christine Blasey Ford_ Fear won't stop me from testifying about Brett Kavnaugh
20	September 24 2018_Lindsey Graham_ 'Not going to ruin' Brett Kavanaugh accusation
21	September 25 2018_Renate Dolphin calls yearbook revelation 'hurtful'
22	September 26 2018_Kavanaugh_ Republicans flex muscle ahead of hearing
23	September 27 2018_Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh has a slim margin of error
24	September 28 2018_Brett Kavanaugh gets combative with Sen. Amy Klobuchar over drinking question
25	September 28 2018_Brett Kavanaugh hearing_ Ford '100%' certain; Kavanaugh says 'I am innocent'
26	September 28 2018_Republican senators say Kavanaugh committee vote to go on as scheduled Friday
27	September 28 2018_The Kavanaugh math_ 2 or 3 senators will decide judge's fate
28	September 28 2018_Two red state Democrats announce opposition to Kavanaugh
29	September 29 2018_World media tears into Kavanaugh hearing 'spectacle'
30	September 30 2018_Amy Klobuchar_ I was 'really stunned' by Brett Kavanaugh's behavior at hearing
31	September 30 2018_Trump says FBI has 'free rein' in Kavanaugh probe
32	October 1 2018_FBI's Kavanaugh investigation narrow in scope

Table 7

Corpus Fox News

Nr	Source
1	October 3 2018_Cory Booker_ Ditch Kavanaugh, whether he's innocent or guilty
2	October 6 2018_Trump congratulates 'great nominee' Brett Kavanaugh
3	September 17 2018_Brett Kavanaugh dismisses sexual assault allegations as 'completely false'
4	September 20 2018_Inconsistencies emerge in Kavanaugh accusations, with hearing in doubt
5	September 21 2018_Women rally in support of Kavanaugh_ 'We know the man, we know his heart'
6	September 24 2018_Kavanaugh fires back at latest allegation
7	September 26 2018_Republicans stand by Kavanaugh as details on Avenatti's new client emerge
8	September 27 2018_Kavanaugh confirmation derailed by sexual misconduct allegations
9	September 28 2018_Kavanaugh threatened anew with impeachment as Supreme Court vote nears
10	September 29 2018_USA Today hit piece says Kavanaugh should 'stay off basketball courts'
11	October 1 2018_Brett Kavanaugh's friend Mark Judge interviewed by FBI, lawyer reveals
12	October 1 2018_Georgetown professor says white GOP senators deserve miserable deaths
13	October 1 2018_House could investigate Kavanaugh if he's confirmed, Nadler says
14	October 1 2018_Whats next in Kavanaugh confirmation process_
15	October 2 2018_Anti-Kavanaugh protesters accosting senators have ties to Soros
16	October 2 2018_FBIs Kavanaugh investigation may wrap up as soon as Wednesday, source says
17	October 3 2018_Avenatti emerges with new sworn allegations against Kavanaugh
18	October 3 2018_Capitol Hill tensions flare over Kavanaugh, as protesters confront lawmakers
19	October 3 2018_FOX NEWS FIRST_ Ex-boyfriend pokes holes in her testimony
20	October 4 2018_As Kavanaugh vote looms, GOP Sen. Daines says he's going to daughter's wedding
21	October 4 2018_Facebook executives Kavanaugh support triggers backlash for Zuckerberg
22	October 4 2018_Kavanaugh, in op-ed, decries vicious attacks
23	October 4 2018_Senate Judiciary Committee receives FBI report on sexual misconduct allegations
24	October 5 2018_5 things to know about Brett Kavanaugh
25	October 5 2018_Kavanaugh allegations thrust Ford friend, Monica McLean, into spotlight
26	October 5 2018_Senate votes to advance Kavanaugh nomination, setting up final vote for Saturday
27	October 6 2018_Activists target Susan Collins after she seals Kavanaugh vote, call for harassment
28	October 6 2018_Kavanaugh confirmed to Supreme Court by Senate_ What happens next
29	October 7 2018_Angry about Kavanaugh confirmation, Dems continue protests
30	October 7 2018_Hirono_ Collins doubts of Kavanaugh
31	October 7 2018_Susan Collins reveals she thought Kavanaugh
32	October 8 2018_Dems wage war on Kavanaugh, court
33	October 8 2018_How Justice Brett Kavanaugh's impeachment could happen
34	October 8 2018_President Trump apologizes to Brett Kavanaugh and his family

Table 8

Corpus Reuters

Nr	Source
1	October 2 2018_Amid Kavanaugh fight, Trump says it is a 'scary time' for young men
2	October 4 2018_Democrat Coons concerned FBI did not question vital witnesses in Kavanaugh probe
3	October 5 2018_Liberal groups won't support Democrats backing Kavanaugh
4	October 6 2018_After fight that split U.S., Kavanaugh wins place on Supreme Court
5	October 6 2018_U.S. First Lady Melania Trump glad judge Kavanaugh, his accuser were heard
6	September 14 2018_Supreme Court nominee Kavanaugh denies sexual misconduct allegation
7	September 22 2018_Kavanaugh accuser agrees to testify in Senate hearing
8	September 26 2018_Senate panel to interview Kavanaugh over new allegations_ Politico
9	September 28 2018_Panel sends Supreme Court pick Kavanaugh's nomination to full Senate
10	September 28 2018_Under pressure, Trump orders FBI Kavanaugh probe, causing week delay
11	October 1 2018_Eclipsed by Kavanaugh fight, divided U.S. top court opens new term
12	October 1 2018_FBI talks with school friend of U.S. Supreme Court nominee Kavanaugh
13	October 1 2018_Flake pushes for real investigation of Kavanaugh allegations
14	October 2 2018_Emboldened protesters step up effort to block Kavanaugh confirmation
15	October 2 2018_Flake concerned by Kavanaugh's 'partisan' interactions at Senate hearing
16	October 2 2018_McConnell says senators will get FBI report on Kavanaugh
17	October 2 2018_Top Judiciary Democrat_ Friday vote on Kavanaugh 'too soon'
18	October 3 2018_FBI report on Brett Kavanaugh nears completion
19	October 3 2018_Opposition to Kavanaugh grows after Senate hearing_ Reuters_Ipsos poll
20	October 3 2018_Republican Senator Kennedy wants FBI Kavanaugh findings made public
21	October 4 2018_Democratic Senator Heitkamp a 'no' on Kavanaugh nomination
22	October 4 2018_Democratic Senator Manchin says still undecided on Kavanaugh vote
23	October 4 2018_Five senators hold keys to Kavanaugh's Supreme Court bid
24	October 4 2018_Senators swap accusations over past FBI Kavanaugh probes
25	October 4 2018_White House receives FBI report on Kavanaugh_ spokesman
26	October 5 2018_Backing from senators puts Kavanaugh on track for U.S. Supreme Court
27	October 5 2018_'Don't really know' how Kavanaugh vote will go_ Senator Grassley
28	October 5 2018_Factbox_ Witnesses in the Kavanaugh FBI probe
29	October 5 2018_Kavanaugh does not belong on Supreme Court, retired Justice Stevens says
30	October 5 2018_Sparks or harmony with Kavanaugh on the U.S. Supreme Court_
31	October 6 2018_Kavanaugh likely to be pivotal U.S. high court vote on divisive social issues
32	October 6 2018_Kavanaugh to be sworn in as U.S. Supreme Court justice on Saturday
33	October 6 2018_Trump '100 percent' certain Kavanaugh accuser named wrong person
34	October 6 2018_Trump applauds Kavanaugh confirmation - Twitter

35	October 6 2018_Trump says Kavanaugh will do 'great, great' job on Supreme Court
36	October 6 2018_U.S. Senate votes to confirm Kavanaugh to Supreme Court
37	October 7 2018_Brett Kavanaugh sworn in as U.S. Supreme Court justice
38	October 7 2018_Democratic senators urge voters to focus Kavanaugh anger on election
39	September 16 2018_Democratic Senator Feinstein urges FBI probe of Kavanaugh allegations
40	September 16 2018_Senate Judiciary to probe Kavanaugh, accuser in public hearing
41	September 17 2018_Schumer_ FBI should reopen Kavanaugh background check - ABC
42	September 17 2018_Senate judiciary chair says he's working to get to bottom of Kavanaugh allegations
43	September 17 2018_Trump court pick Kavanaugh calls sexual misconduct accusation 'completely false'
44	September 19 2018_Kavanaugh accuser wants FBI investigation before she will testify
45	September 20 2018_Sen. McCaskill says will vote against U.S. Supreme Court nominee Kavanaugh
46	September 21 2018_At Las Vegas rally, Trump backs Kavanaugh, treads carefully around accusations
47	September 21 2018_Senate Republicans to propose Wednesday hearing for Kavanaugh, accuser
48	September 21 2018_Supreme Court nominee Kavanaugh's accuser agrees to testify on Thursday
49	September 21 2018_Trump says Supreme Court nominee Kavanaugh is 'under assault'
50	September 22 2018_Senate panel to vote on Kavanaugh on Monday unless deal reached with accuser
51	September 23 2018_Overshadowed by Kavanaugh drama, new Supreme Court term looms
52	September 24 2018_Kavanaugh tells senators he will not withdraw nomination
53	September 24 2018_Senate Republican leader McConnell_ Democrats 'trying to destroy' Kavanaugh
54	September 24 2018_Trump's Supreme Court nominee Kavanaugh rejects 'false accusations'
55	September 25 2018_Trump calls allegations against Kavanaugh a 'con game'
56	September 26 2018_Kavanaugh accuser Ford welcomes new FBI investigation_ lawyer
57	September 26 2018_Senate Democratic leader calls on court nominee Kavanaugh to withdraw
58	September 26 2018_Senate Judiciary Democrats ask Trump to withdraw Kavanaugh or investigate
59	September 26 2018_Trump wavers on U.S. Supreme Court nominee Kavanaugh
60	September 26 2018_Who is the Arizona prosecutor chosen to question Kavanaugh and his accuser
61	September 27 2018_Supreme Court's Ginsburg voices support for #MeToo on eve of hearing
62	September 27 2018_With anger and tears, Kavanaugh denies sex assault allegation
63	September 28 2018_Democrat Donnelly says will oppose U.S. Supreme Court pick Kavanaugh
64	September 28 2018_Democratic Senator Tester says will oppose Kavanaugh for top court
65	September 28 2018_Factbox_ Kavanaugh's Supreme Court bid hinges on handful of senators
66	September 28 2018_More than 20 million Americans glued to Kavanaugh hearing telecasts
67	September 28 2018_Republican Senator Murkowski backs idea of delay in vote on Kavanaugh
68	September 28 2018_Senate Democrat Manchin joins Flake's call for FBI probe of Kavanaugh
69	September 28 2018_Trump calls Kavanaugh testimony powerful, calls for Senate vote
70	September 28 2018_In #MeToo era, Ford lauded on left and right as honest and brave

APPENDIX C: Cohen's Kappa Calculations

Table 9

Cohen's Kappa Calculations for Issue-Specific Frames

Code	(1)	(2)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(3)	(4)	-
(1)	**15**	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
(2)	0	**70**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
(5)	0	1	**64**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
(6)	0	0	0	**48**	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
(7)	0	0	0	0	**50**	0	0	0	0	1	0
(8)	0	0	0	0	0	**7**	0	0	0	0	1
(9)	0	0	0	0	0	0	**7**	0	0	0	4
(10)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	**16**	0	0	1
(3)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**1**	0	0
(4)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	**13**	0
-	0	3	1	5	3	0	0	1	0	0	-

Note: Cohen's Kappa= 0.85 (95% confidence interval: From 0.81 to 0.90). The strength of agreement is considered to be 'very good'.

Table 10

Cohen's Kappa Calculations of Valence

Code	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
(11)	**6**	1	0	0	0
(12)	0	**4**	1	0	0
(13)	0	0	**12**	1	0
(14)	0	0	1	**2**	1
(15)	0	0	0	0	**1**

Note: Cohen's Kappa= 0.80 (95% confidence interval: 0.63 - 0.98). The strength of agreement is considered to be 'very good'.

Table 11

Cohen's Kappa Calculations for Basic Journalistic Quality

Code	(16.1)	(16.2)	(16.3)	(17.1)	(17.2)	(17.3)	(17.4)	(18.1)	(18.2)	(19.1)	(19.2)	(19.3)
(16.1)	**5**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(16.2)	0	**3**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(16.3)	0	0	**22**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(17.1)	0	0	0	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(17.2)	0	0	0	0	**7**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(17.3)	0	0	0	0	0	**7**	0	0	0	0	0	0
(17.4)	0	0	0	0	0	0	**15**	0	0	0	0	0
(18.1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**16**	4	0	0	0
(18.2)	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	0	**10**	0	0	0
(19.1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**8**	0	0
(19.2)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	2
(19.3)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**13**

Note: Cohen's Kappa= 0.94 (95% confidence interval: 0.90 - 0.99). The strength of agreement is considered to be 'near perfect'.

APPENDIX D: Examples of Framing

Table 12

CNN Content of Issue-Specific Frames (Selection)

Frame	Examples
Partisan Focus	"But Republicans abandoned that approach during Kavanaugh's testimony, and the tone shifted drastically as Sens. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and John Cornyn of Texas used their time to assail Democrats." (Article 38)
	"Kavanaugh's clear disdain bordering on hate for how Democrats have handled this process could make it hard for him to keep an even keel ruling on any case involving a Democrat in the future." (Article 45)
	"As one GOP official put it to me this weekend: The three undecided GOP senators 'drove the scope of this and our goal is to make sure they get what they need to get to yes. Anything outside of that is noise.'" (Article 54)
	"During his testimony, Kavanaugh alternated between angrily yelling at Democrats on the committee and tearing up, delivering the most heated partisan message heard from a Supreme Court nominee in modern times. He accused Democrats of creating "a calculated and orchestrated political hit, fueled with apparent pent-up anger about President Trump and the 2016 election, fear that has been unfairly stoked about my judicial record, revenge on behalf of the Clintons, and millions of dollars in money from outside left-wing opposition groups."" (Article 73)
Discrediting Kavanaugh	"Democrats pressed Kavanaugh to support an FBI investigation into the allegations he faces -- and a combative Kavanaugh refused to ask for one." (Article 38)
	"It was a day in which Brett Kavanaugh did himself few favors. After the US Supreme Court nominee's hearing on Thursday, even commentators on Fox News portrayed him as an aggressor with, as one said, 'guns blazing' -- the very opposite characterization the judge had hoped to achieve." (Article 49)
	"Meanwhile, Kavanaugh was reaching out himself to former classmates, hoping to ensure they didn't speak poorly of him to the press. A series of text messages and phone conversations from mid-September reveal how closely Kavanaugh was involved in contacting former Yale classmates who spoke to reporters about allegations of wrongdoing during his college years." (Article 81)
	"In a letter written in 1983, Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh describes himself and his friends as 'loud, obnoxious drunks with prolific pukers' -- a stark contrast to the image Kavanaugh painted of himself during his testimony before the Senate last week." (Article 82)

Table 13

Fox News Content of Issue-Specific Frames (Selection)

Frame	Examples
Discrediting Blasey Ford	"In a memo released Sunday, experienced sex-crimes prosecutor Rachel Mitchell sagged numerous inconsistencies in Ford's testimony, saying that her case against Kavanaugh was even weaker than the typical 'he said, she said' scenario. Specifically, Mitchell noted that Ford repeatedly changed her story as to the number of people at the party where she allegedly was assaulted, and could not remember certain key details like how she got home or whether she had given her therapist notes to The Washington Post just two months ago." (Article 18)
	"None of the witnesses Ford named as present at the house, including her lifelong best friend, has backed her claims. Additionally, Ford admitted under questioning by Mitchell that she travels regularly on airplanes, even though her team had cited a fear of travel as a reason she could not promptly come to Washington, D.C. to testify. Ford also indicated under oath she was not aware that Senate Republicans had publicly and privately offered to §y to California to interview her -- a disparity that Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., vowed to investigate." (Article 18)
	"The president, before a campaign crowd, referenced holes in Ford's story, portraying the back and forth between Ford and her interviewers during last week's congressional hearing. 'How did you get home?' 'I don't remember.' 'How did you get there?' 'I don't remember.' 'Where is the place?' 'I don't remember.' 'How many years ago was it?' 'I don't know', Trump said as the crowd applauded." (Article 21)
Support for Kavanaugh	"The judge currently coaches his daughters' basketball teams. Kavanaugh also has tutored children at a D.C. elementary school, volunteered for Catholic charity groups and is a regular participant in services at his Catholic church." (Article 28)
	"Trump added that "under historic scrutiny," Kavanaugh had been "proven innocent." A series of uncorroborated and disputed sexual misconduct allegations had threatened to upend Kavanaugh's confirmation, and some top Democrats have §oated further investigations and even possibly impeaching Kavanaugh." (Article 42) !!
	"More than five dozen women came forward Friday to defend Supreme Court nominee Judge Brett Kavanaugh against an alleged high school incident, calling President Trump's pick for the high court "a good person."" (Article 44)
	"Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh has turned over his calendar from four months in 1982 to Senate investigators as he fights back against accuser Christine Blasey Ford's allegations that he sexually assaulted her that summer." (Article 75)

Table 14

Reuters Content of Issue-Specific Frames (Selection)

Frame	Examples
Partisan Focus	"Democrats said Kavanaugh's partisan defense of himself, in which he said he was victim of a 'political hit,' was enough itself to disqualify him from the court." (Article 3)
	"Stevens cited commentary by Harvard University law professor Laurence Tribe and others suggesting Kavanaugh had raised doubts about his political impartiality when he asserted that sexual misconduct accusations he faced stemmed from an 'orchestrated political hit' funded by left-wing groups seeking 'revenge on behalf of the Clintons.'"(Article 33)
	"While Republican senators depicted her testimony as part of a partisan attack orchestrated by Democrats, they - and Kavanaugh - were careful not to attack Ford personally." (Article 100)
Support for Kavanaugh	"'Just started, tonight, our 7th FBI investigation of Judge Brett Kavanaugh. He will someday be recognized as a truly great Justice of The United States Supreme Court!', Trump said in a Twitter post late on Friday." (Article 9)
	"U.S. President Donald Trump said he was looking forward to a Senate confirmation vote on his Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh on Saturday and said the conservative judge would do a 'great, great' job on the court." (Article 44)
	"'We're going to be moving forward,' Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell told reporters. 'I am confident we're going to win, confident that he'll be confirmed in the very near future.'" (Article 70)
Ideological Focus	"Conservatives will now have a 5-4 majority in any future legal battles on contentious issues such as abortion rights, immigration, transgender rights, industry regulation, and presidential powers." (Article 3)
	"The difficulties facing the court now that it is - at least temporarily - evenly divided ideologically with four liberals and four conservatives were on full display in the first of the two cases. Kavanaugh's confirmation would restore and deepen conservative control of the court." (Article 12)