

Framing and Debates: The Effects of Media Coverage on Candidate Evaluations

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Introduction

Nineteen Democratic and Republican presidential debates have been aired on numerous television stations since April 2007 alone. Beginning with the first televised general presidential election debate between Kennedy and Nixon in 1960, debates have quickly become an important feature of campaigns, receiving major media coverage and drawing millions of viewers. Other than television ads, there are very few opportunities for direct mass communications during a campaign, debates being one of them, making their potential affect very important. Importantly, “as messages running an hour or longer, debates offer a level of contact with candidates clearly unmatched in spot ads and news segments” (Jamieson 1987, 28). There is evidence to suggest that debates significantly influence voters; “focus groups and exit polls told us that more people based their decision in 1992 on the debates than any other single means of information throughout the course of the campaign” (Kirk 1995). However, some of the research points to the debate itself, and some to the effect of media coverage. The question thus becomes whether candidates can directly affect voters’ opinions, or if their evaluations are influenced by media commentary, or some combination of the two.

How the media covers an event, such as a presidential debate, is possibly more important than simply the presence of media coverage in general. This is due to the fact that media commentary is packaged into different frames, or different ways of discussing the same topic or event. Framing can have an effect in two ways. The first occurs when different, but logically equivalent, phrases cause individuals to change their preferences (Tversky and Kahneman 1987). The second, and the one on which this research will focus, occurs when the media highlights or focuses on one specific aspect of an issue or event. This is of particular importance because it has been found that emphasizing certain aspects over others “can put people in mind of very different considerations when they contemplate the matter and form opinions about it” (Price, Tewksbury, and Powers 1997, 485). Therefore, if media coverage does influence voters, what aspects of debates the media hones in on could have far reaching implications, including affecting the outcome of elections.

Media coverage of campaigns typically focuses on two aspects, the image of the candidates and their issue positions (Benoit, McKinney, and Holbert 2001). It is unknown if these frames are the frames which the candidates themselves utilize, or if the media creates these frames. The ability of a candidate to frame him or herself and have this frame appear in the media is a matter of frame resonance (see Snow and Benford 1988). If candidates utilize certain frames to portray

themselves in a particular way, and these frames resonate with the media and appear in the media coverage of them, this in essence mitigates the affect of the media. If, however, candidates' personal framings do not resonate, and the media instead chooses to focus on entirely different aspects of their image or issues positions, the relative power of the media is intensified.

Another way media coverage could impact candidate evaluations is through cues and expectations. Political heuristics, or cues, refer to "common judgmental shortcuts that people use to draw complicated inferences [and make decisions] from simple environmental cues" (Lupia, McCubbins, and Popkin 2000, 17). Examples in political science include endorsements, party identification, candidate demographics, and polls among other things (Popkin 1991; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlok 1991).

This interdisciplinary thesis in political science and sociology will attempt to pinpoint the relative power of the media in the context of a debate and general campaign coverage. This research has three goals: 1) to explore how candidate frames resonate in the media, 2) how media frames impact candidates and 3) how the impact of frames compares to the impact of cues. Overall, this research is a critical test of whether candidates can directly affect voters through campaigns and debates, or if even debates, a form of so-called direct communication are mediated (and if so, how). More generally, this research sheds light on how citizens form preferences, something which is important because it is the basis of a democratic government.

To better understand the context of these questions, I first outline the literature and past research on both debates and framing. This will shed light on how research has approached the issue of media coverage of debates in the past, and why examining how the media frames debates, an area which has received little focus, is beneficial to understanding the power of the media in this context. Next, I examine how two candidates, Jim Ogonowski and Tom Tierney, who were vying for an open congressional House seat in Massachusetts during the summer of 2007, framed themselves, and the extent to which their messages resonated with the media. Finally, I explore the impact of pre-debate coverage by pegging frames against cues to see which, if any, has a greater affect on candidate evaluations.

Literature Review

Framing Effects

There are many theories which suggest how the media affects opinions, but one popular concept which appears to exhibit a large degree of influence is that of framing effects. A media frame refers to the words and images that are used to communicate information about an issue or an event to an audience (Gamson and Modigliani 1989). The concept of a frame was developed by Goffman who believed that in order to interpret the world they live in and process new information, individuals applied interpretive schemas or primary frameworks (Goffman 1974). Importantly, "in pure form, frames supply no new information. Rather, by offering a particular perspective, frames organize – or better, reorganize – information that citizens already have in mind. Frames suggest how politics should be thought about, encouraging citizens to understand events and issues in

particular ways” (Kinder 2003, 359). Thus frames are implicit; most information which individuals are presented is framed in some way, and importantly, most individuals do not consider how the information could have been presented differently.

There are multiple ways in which information can be framed. Many frames are issue specific, while there are also larger frames that transcend a single issue, such as a cost-benefit analysis frame (Gamson, Croleau, Hoynes and Sasson 1992). Frames are not constant or stable; many evolve and change over time as societal attitudes or political climates shift, as was the case with the different frames surrounding the nuclear power debate (Gamson and Modigliani 1989).

Most importantly, research has shown that the media “by emphasizing some aspects of a problem rather than others, can put people in mind of very different considerations when they contemplate the matter and form opinions about it” (Price, Tewksbury, and Powers 1997, 485). What aspects the media focuses on can therefore have an important affect on attitudes and issue positions. It has been shown that framing can affect issue opinion (Nelson and Oxley 1999), public support for racial and social policies (Kinder and Sanders 1990, 1996), and that the content of participants’ thoughts on an issue are affected by the story frame (Price et al. 1997).

In campaigns, research has established that both strategy and issue frames in print stories are effective in influencing campaign interpretation (Rhee 1997). On most topics, there is not one sole frame. When faced with competing frames, repetition of frames should have a greater impact on less knowledgeable individuals, while more knowledgeable individuals are more likely to engage in systematic information processing by comparing the strength of competing frames (Chong and Druckman 2007b). Despite these findings, framing effects are not always widespread and context can have a large impact on how effective the frame is, with elite competition and heterogeneous discussion limiting, and often eliminating, framing effects (Druckman 2004).

Issue and Image Frames

My research focuses on two overarching types of frames, image frames and issue frames. Issue and image frames have been identified by scholars as the two principal types of campaign coverage. The Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse “holds that political campaign discourse can address two factors: policy (issues) and character (image)” (Benoit, McKinney, and Holbert 2001, 262). Media critics have suggested that the media has a reporting style that focuses on a candidate’s image, or personality characteristics (Jamieson 1992). An image frame is person-centered and emphasizes the performance of political actors and the consequences of their actions, such as their ability to lead (Iyengar 1991). An alternative reporting style is issue coverage, which emphasizes policy issues, problems and solutions that candidates propose (Jamieson and Capella 1993). Importantly, these two types of frames “presumably have different thematic propositions, rhetorical styles, and narrative strategies” (Rhee 1997, 30). While it is clear that these frames exist, it has yet to be determined exactly how these different frames affect evaluations of candidates, which is what my research sets out to explain.

Frame Resonance

Framing is also important for the success of social movements. Snow and Benford (1988), using the U.S. peace movement as a case study, explain the factors which affect the mobilizing potency of a movement. How a frame affects the mobilizing potency of a movement is referred to as frame resonance. The degree to which a frame resonates depends on the degree that core framing tasks are developed. They outline three major core framing tasks. First, the diagnosis of an event or aspect of social life as a problem that is in need of change (diagnostic frame), second a proposed solution (prognostic frame), and third a call to arms (motivational frame). The success of mobilization depends on the degree these three tasks are developed and interconnected. They also argue that there are external constraints, appeal and potency, which affect frame resonance: "The greater the correspondence between values promoted by a movement and those held by potential constituents, the greater the success of the mobilization effort" (205).

Finally, Snow and Benford (1988) show that frame resonance depends on relevancy. Relevancy is broken down into three parts: 1) empirical credibility, the fit between the frame and the events in the world, 2) experiential commensurability, the extent that suggested answers and solutions harmonize with the way the condition is actually experienced, and 3) narrative fidelity, how well the frame resonates with cultural narrations. It has also been argued that variations in the degree of frame resonance is due to the "credibility of the proffered frame and its relative salience" (Benford and Snow 2000, 619). The credibility of a frame has to do with frame consistency, empirical credibility, and the credibility of the frame articulators.

This theory of frame resonance has been used to explain that the mass mobilization of Chinese citizens occurred because of the consistency between student activists' public framing and their behavior at Tiananmen Square (Zou and Benford 1995). Benford and Snow (2000) also explain that frames are developed, generated and elaborated by three overlapping processes referred to as discursive, strategic, and contested. Central to frame resonance are two types of discursive processes: frame articulation and frame amplification. Frame articulation is the "connection and alignment of events and experiences so that they hang together in a relatively unified and compelling fashion," while frame amplification "involves accenting and highlighting some issues, events or beliefs as being more salient than others" (623). The extent to which these processes are carried out effects the degree of resonance a frame will have within a movement.

Other studies have found that resonance is a key predictor of social movement organizations framing activities. David Levin (2005) examined the framing tactics of social movement organizations (SMOs) in the context of the Israeli peace movement and found that competing SMOs act strategically in relation to political opportunity structures, adopting different framing tactics based on the different political opportunity structures they confront. Using press releases from four Israeli SMOs and three Israeli governments, he also found that SMOs use culturally resonant symbols to bring their message to the public, and competing SMOs then attack the link between the other SMOs message and symbol.

Stanbridge (2002) examines the relationship between master frames and political opportunity, something which she argues is an important factor for frame resonance. Using a case study of the Aland Islands' desire for succession, Stanbridge found that the capacity to generate frame resonance was insufficient for the Islands to succeed in their succession attempt. Instead, the political conditions were a key factor. This suggests that frame resonance is not always enough to make a movement successful, but it is still an important factor nonetheless.

The Affects of Media Coverage of Debates

Since the first televised presidential debate in 1960, scholars have been attempting to determine what impact presidential debates have on voters. A large amount of this research has ignored media coverage and focused on the impact of debates directly. When focusing solely on debates and excluding media coverage, it has been found that debates can increase issue knowledge and issue salience in viewers, can alter perceptions of candidates' character, and can influence vote preferences (Benoit, Hansen, and Verser 2003).

Debates have also been shown to affect candidate evaluations. A study looking at the first 1984 debate found that those who watched the debates rated Mondale on average 8.24 degrees higher after the debate compared to only a 2.94 degree increase for Mondale if the individual didn't watch the debate (Lanoue and Schrott 1989). Therefore, "televised presidential debates typically produce significant effects (except when the number of undecided or conflicted prospective voters is unusually small, as is often the case in elections that feature a popular incumbent)" (Pfau 2002, 252).

Other research has found that debates are used more as reinforcement of prior beliefs (Sigelman and Sigelman 1984), and while they can help viewers make a vote choice, they are more likely to strengthen existing preferences, making it less likely that the individual will change his/her vote and more likely that the individual will vote on election day (Benoit and Hansen 2004; Benoit, McKinney and Holbert 2001).

However, debates do not exist in a vacuum, and the media coverage of them plays a very important role, with post-debate analysis having potentially as much of an impact as the debate itself (Lemert, Elliott, Bernstein, Rosenberg, and Hestvold 1991). The media devote major coverage to debates, typically focusing on image, and rarely showing much of the candidate's own words (Kendall 1997). The first time a post-debate media influence was detected was in 1976 following the first Ford-Carter debate. The immediate reactions to the debate split along party lines, but over the following week, Ford's gain among voters in both parties was attributed to media coverage (Lang and Lang 1978). In the next debate between these two candidates, Ford led 54%-36% in voting intentions immediately after the debate, but the media latched on to an inaccurate statement by Ford, and two days later voting intentions reversed with 54% favoring Carter and 37% Ford (Steeper 1980).

It thus appears that post-debate media commentary has a significant affect on voters' evaluations of the candidates. This pattern holds true over time. When examining the effect of various campaign events from 1952 to 1992, Shaw (1999) found that presidential debates produced substantial effects and followed a

distinct wave pattern where there was a “gradual change in the margin between the presidential candidates” that accumulated over several days and established a new equilibrium which he attributed to the media’s post-debate interpretations (405).

Many experiments have been conducted which attempt to pinpoint the power of post-debate media coverage. Reifler (2006) showed subjects footage from a Republican congressional debate and then randomly assigned each subject to one of three post-debate conditions: a neutral article that simply stated a debate took place, an article which stated that candidate A won, or an article which stated that candidate B won. He found that the articles had the ability to alter what citizens’ think (who won the debate), and shape how citizens think. This is important because it shows that the “media has a powerful ability to shape public thinking of political events even for those who witnessed the event directly themselves” (4).

Lowry (1990) focused on the September 1988 debate between Bush and Dukakis. Participants were divided into four groups and all watched the debate in real time. Following the debate three of the groups watched the instant analysis by the network they had viewed the debate on, and then all of the participants filled out a post- experiment survey. He found that post-debate commentary primarily reinforced voting predispositions – 86.1% of the subjects reported they would still vote for Bush, and 87.1% would still vote for Dukakis. However, there was a large difference in general support for a candidate if they did not see any media coverage. Forty seven and two-tenths percent of subjects who only saw the debate had a more favorable opinion of Bush following the debate, whereas only 20.7% had a more favorable opinion of Bush if they watched the instant analysis. Even though a large percentage of participants retained their pre-debate voting intentions, even a slight change of 1-2% in either direction could make the difference in a close election.

While most research on media coverage has focused on what is said following debates, pre-debate media coverage cannot be overlooked either. Pre-debate coverage can also have an effect on voters’ evaluations of the debate. Norton and Goethals (2004) found that when candidates received a low pitch prior to a debate and subjects did not receive any post-debate media coverage, the candidate had a lower performance rating. However, when the candidate received a low pitch followed with a positive post-debate spin, they received a higher rating. This suggests that the expectations which the media build up can have serious effects on how candidates’ performances are judged. Because the effects of post-debate coverage have clearly been established, and little is known about the role of pre-debate coverage, my research will focus on honing in on the power of pre-debate frames and expectations.

Framing and Debates

Only two studies have examined how presidential debates are framed, and both focus on post-debate framing rather than pre-debate framing. Hwang, Gotlieb, Nah, and McLeod (2007) integrated priming and framing into a cognitive processing model to examine how individuals reflect on post-debate analysis of presidential debates. They used an experiment (n= 698) to look at how the frame of post-debate news analysis primed audience reflections on a previously viewed segment from a 2004 presidential debate. After watching a five minute clip from

the debate, participants were assigned to one of two post-debate news analysis conditions, or a control group which did not receive any news analysis. The news analysis was presented as a 400 word news story highlighting either the candidates' policy stands or their debate performances. Hwang et al. found that individuals higher in reflection and knowledge reported the greatest effect of the debate clip when they received the policy analysis, but this was not statistically significant. They did find that among individuals who received the performance framed analysis, those high in reflection but lower in knowledge reported the greatest perceived effect of the debate clip on their candidate preferences.

Fridkin, Gershon, Kenney, and Woodall (2006) used a multi-methodological approach (public opinion survey, content analysis, and a quasi-experiment) to examine how citizens reacted to framing following the final 2004 presidential debate. Her content analysis determined that there were three salient frames present in the post-debate coverage: "(1) Senator Kerry's response regarding homosexuality, (2) President Bush's characterization of Senator Kerry as extremely liberal, and (3) the general framing of 'who won the debate.' Both the discussion of homosexuality and ideology reflected negatively on Senator Kerry, while the discussion of who won was characterized as moderately positive for Senator Kerry" (10). These frames had a significant effect on citizen's responses to the debates. When asked what the most significant moment of the debate was immediately following the debate, and then asked the same question a week later after they had been exposed to media coverage, Fridkin et al. found that 23% of the subjects believed Kerry's response about homosexuality was the most important moment a week later, while no one had said this was the most important event directly following the debate before being exposed to the media. Also, Kerry had much lower evaluations, and Bush higher evaluations by people who watched the debate and the subsequent media coverage than by those who only watched the debate. Therefore, media coverage in general, and how the media frames the debate can have important implications for how candidates are evaluated.

Case Study Data Collection and Coding Methods

Using the two candidates featured in the experiment's debate, I conducted a case study to determine how each candidate framed himself, and how these frames resonated with the media and constituents. To ascertain how the two candidates featured in my experiment framed themselves, I analyzed their press releases. All of Ogonowski's press releases were available on his website. After eliminating those press releases which were published prior to Tierney's entrance into the race, I separated the remaining press releases based on topic and randomly selected one press release on each topic, n=9. Tierney only made three press releases, so I used all of those. I also obtained additional statements that Tierney had made to the press from his press secretary. These statements were somewhat shorter than Ogonowski's press releases, so I utilized all of them, as well as the three press releases, n=17 (12 separate topics).

I coded these press releases to identify how each candidate framed himself and the issues. To determine the image frames, I first coded words and phrases that were repeated throughout the press releases. In Tierney's case, no

specific words or phrases were repeated, but general types of statements were used repeatedly. The majority of the words and phrases that were used multiple times fell into natural categories. Anything that was only said once and didn't fall into any of the categories which had emerged was ignored. I then examined each category and decided what the overall theme or message was, gave it a name, and this became the image frame for each candidate. For the issue frames, I analyzed each issue individually and looked for both a problem, or diagnostic frame, and solution, or prognostic frame, in each. I then determined what the problems and solutions as a whole were suggesting, and named each frame. I chose to utilize this method of inductive reasoning because I did not want to start out with a frame in mind and force what each candidate said into it. Most importantly, this ensured that I did not ignore any of the frames which the candidates employed because they did not fit into predetermined categories.

I also analyzed newspaper articles to pinpoint how Tierney's and Ogonowski's frames resonated with the media. To do so I analyzed newspaper articles published between May 1, 2007 and September 4, 2007 (the day of the election). All articles published between these dates, in any Massachusetts newspaper, which discussed either candidate were included in the analysis. This resulted in 80 articles from 5 newspapers: *Lowell Sun* (n=63), *The Boston Globe* (n=9), *The Boston Herald* (n=5), *Sentinel & Enterprise* (n=2), *Telegram & Gazette* (n=1). These newspapers represent the major news sources available to residents of Massachusetts 5th district, a district which includes the city of Lowell. Because all newspaper coverage of the candidates published during the campaign was analyzed, the frames which I determined through my analysis are comprehensive. Television coverage was not analyzed, so it is unknown if these frames existed in other types of media. However, due to the large number of articles published, it is safe to infer that voters of the 5th congressional district would have been presented enough information framed in these manners to make them significant.

These newspaper articles were coded similarly to the way the press releases were coded. For the image frames, I again coded words and phrases that were repeated throughout the articles. Again, these fell into distinct categories, some the same as those in the press releases, and some into new categories. I named the new categories based on their overarching messages or ideas to identify the new image frames which the media created. To code for issue frames I looked for the specific issue prognostic and diagnostic frames identified in the press releases. Due to the large number of articles and number of issues discussed, I chose not to identify all of the media's prognostic and diagnostic frames unless a frame was repeatedly used.

Frame Resonance in Congressional Campaigns: A Case Study

How the media frames candidates is in part determined by how the candidates frame themselves. What issues and personal traits candidates decide to focus on, and the way they present them, can have a very large impact on how the frame resonates with the constituents. To determine how Jim Ogonowski and Tom Tierney framed themselves, I analyzed their campaign materials. I focused on their press releases and answers to questions from reporters because both instances

allowed the candidates to respond freely, and should provide an accurate representation of how the candidates chose to frame themselves. I will first examine how the candidates framed themselves, specifically the image they presented to the voters. I will then analyze the ways in which Ogonowski and Tierney framed the various issues and their proposed solutions.

Jim Ogonowski's Image Frames

Ogonowski and Tierney both framed themselves in dramatically different manners, each choosing to highlight very different character traits. Ogonowski consistently framed himself as the candidate who was most in touch with the needs of the people, or a *people's candidate* frame. He did this by focusing on how his background as a farmer and small business man would help him meet the needs of his constituents. For example, when discussing the need for clean energy Ogonowski said, "As a life-long farmer, I believe I am uniquely able to understand the needs of small businesses and the environment, and I will make bold choices that will benefit our district." He capitalized on the fact that his background was easily relatable to, and made sure that his constituents understood that he would use his experience to do what is best for the members of his district.

In addition, Ogonowski used his background to frame himself as "one of them," someone who is just as affected by government policies as his constituents. Ogonowski said, "Our tax code already penalizes working families. As a farmer, my biggest cost is not fertilizer or equipment, but taxes. This is plain wrong. Congress needs to stop penalizing working families and small business owners." By tying himself to the people, Ogonowski solidified his image as a *people's candidate*. No matter what issue he was discussing, Ogonowski always referenced how his plan would best meet the needs of his district or the American people in general, using the phrase "Jim understands" repeatedly to do so. In total, 76 words or statements in nine categories created Ogonowski's *people's candidate* frame (see Table 1). By consistently referring to families, small business owners, and the general needs of the people in his district, Ogonowski made it clear that he puts his constituents' needs first.

Table 1 – How Ogonowski Created a *People's Candidate* Frame

	Number of references
Jim as farmer	8
Jim as small business man	4
Needs/people of the 5 th District	22
American people	8
People in general (not including above categories)	17
Small business owners	5
Middle class/ working families	5
Taxpayers	4
Homeowners	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>76</i>

A sub-frame which Ogonowski employed to help portray the idea that he best understood the interests of the people was a *Washington outsider* frame. To do so he positioned himself as someone who did not have special interests in mind, unlike the current congressional representatives in Washington. An example of this frame can be seen in the following statement: “The biggest problems I see are political insiders who want to continue ‘business as usual’ down in Washington D.C...As someone who has lived here all my life, I know that the people of the 5th Congressional District deserve better.” Here Ogonowski used the *Washington outsider* frame together with the *people’s candidate* frame to portray the idea that he is different from other politicians, which will ultimately benefit the people of his district. Ogonowski accomplished this frame by positioning himself as an outsider and a different type of politician – nonpartisan (see Table 2).

To ensure that being a *Washington outsider* was seen as a positive thing, Ogonowski positioned Congress as a “corrupt” and “broken” institution, mentioning problems in Washington in eight of the nine press releases, for a total of 35 references (see Table 2). After making this point clear, he then positioned himself as the candidate who would look out for the interests of his district in Washington, and bring an end to the corrupt practices because he was a *Washington outsider*. When discussing alternative energy sources Ogonowski said, “This issue is far too important to leave to the special interests in Washington. Massachusetts and the 5th district shouldn’t have to buy energy from New York...We need a leader in Congress who understands.” Ogonowski, therefore, employed the *Washington outsider* frame as a way to emphasize the idea that he was the *people’s candidate* who would represent the interests of his constituents in Washington D.C. if elected.

Table 2 – How Ogonowski Created a *Washington Outsider* Frame

	Number of References
Washington Outsider	
Ogonowski as different type of politician	4
Ogonowski as Washington outsider	3
<i>Total</i>	7
Problems in Washington	
Partisan bickering	5
Washington insiders	4
A broken Congress	4
Congress can’t be trusted	3
Special Interests	3
Partisanship	3
Backroom deals	2
Corruption	2
Divisiveness	1
Out-of-touch congressmen	1
Congress is a circus	1
Other	6
<i>Total</i>	35

Tom Tierney's Image Frames

Unlike Ogonowski's, Tom Tierney's image frame was not as apparent. He clearly did not use the same image frame as Ogonowski, never referencing the needs or people of the 5th district, families, or any specific group of people. He did reference "people" four times, however they were in terms of the number of people on Earth or a "a more-acceptable-to-the-people process." He also never mentioned corruptness or problems in Washington. In this way, Tierney and Ogonowski are clearly distinguishable from one another.

Tierney's image frame was subtle, and I will refer to it as the *knowledgeable candidate* frame. He chose to let the issues speak more for themselves, and through those issues exemplified his knowledge of the various subjects. To do this he employed three strategies: showcasing his in-depth issue understanding, stating facts and numbers, and utilizing elevated language. In total 12 of the 17 statements I examined utilized the *knowledgeable candidate* frame, for a total of 23 references (see Table 3). While the total number of references used to create the *knowledgeable candidate* frame was small, it is still significant because in many cases it took multiple sentences to portray in-depth issue understanding.

Table 3 – How Tierney Created a *Knowledgeable Candidate* Frame

	Number of references
In depth issue understanding	9
Facts and numbers	6
Elevated language	8
<i>Total</i>	<i>23</i>

For example, when discussing Medicare he said, "It's way overpriced (about twice as much per capita as the rest of the First World). I have a very detailed public-sector-financed and private-sector-delivered proposal that will address these problems." By citing this fact, rather than just stating that he thought Medicare was too overpriced, Tierney made it evident that he had done research on the issue and had a knowledgeable reason behind his policy stance.

On the subject of Iraq, Tierney exhibited substantial knowledge of the current situation in the country. He said, "What [the Iraqis] want is the lion's share of governmental authority to be returned from Baghdad to their 18 respective provinces; this is what's now working in the northern Kurdish zone of Iraq and it's what should be the model for the southern and mid-country Sunni and Shia areas." This in-depth understanding of the region indicated that Tierney had a clear grasp on the issue. By utilizing such specific language, Tierney portrayed himself as an expert on the subject who would use his knowledge and understanding to make effective laws in Washington.

Another way Tierney created the *knowledgeable candidate* frame was to reference concrete numbers and facts. For instance, when discussing global warming he easily stated that there are "6.7 billion people on Earth, we're projected to reach 9.2 billion by 2050 and we ought to be hovering around 4.3 billion." Tierney's ability to state concrete facts and numbers made evident the fact that he

had done his research and was therefore knowledgeable enough about the issue at hand to be able to talk about concrete figures instead of just abstract ideas.

Finally, Tierney used elevated language throughout his press releases. When discussing the company Polartec he said, “Semper fi Polartec.” While some people might know that *semper fidelis* is the motto of the United States Marine Corp and means “always faithful” in Latin, many people might just think this sounds smart. Thus by using this phrase Tierney illustrated his general intelligence. Overall, his language in the press release was more elevated than Ogonowski’s, using words such as “amalgamation” and “codifying,” words that the average reader may not understand. Through elevated language, numbers and facts, and in-depth issue understanding Tierney created his *knowledgeable candidate* frame, without ever explicitly stating that he is the more intelligent or knowledgeable candidate.

Tierney’s frame is clearly distinguishable from Ogonowski’s *people candidate* frame. Ogonowski never utilized elevated language or demonstrated a deep understanding of the issues in his press releases. He did use concrete facts once in reference to the number of earmarks in a federal spending bill, but this was used in conjunction with his *Washington outsider* frame. Since the *people’s candidate* frame and the *knowledgeable candidate* frames are easily distinguishable, the constituents are offered two candidates with distinct images for which they can vote, if these are the frames which the media presents. The decision by each of the candidate to use these particular image frames could have serious consequences as to how their message resonated with their constituents, something which will be discussed in the next section.

Ogonowski’s and Tierney’s Issue Frames

I will now analyze the issue frames of the two candidates by examining the diagnostic and prognostic frames the candidates chose to use when discussing various issues. “*Diagnostic framing* involves identification of a problem and the attribution of blame or causality” and *prognostic framing* suggests solutions to the problem and identifies “strategies, tactics, and targets” (Snow and Benford 1988, 200-201). While both candidates touched on a few key issues, many of the issues the candidates chose to focus on in their press releases were different (see Table 4). Even though the fact that the candidates did not focus on the same issues is important, I will be concentrating my analysis to the five issues which both candidates released statements on to demonstrate how the candidates employed different diagnostic and prognostic frames for the same issues.

Table 4 – Issues Discussed by Ogonowski and Tierney

Ogonowski	Tierney
Immigration	Immigration
Homeland Security	Homeland Security
Social Security	Social Security
War in Iraq	War in Iraq
Energy	Energy
Trust in Washington	Abortion
Wasteful spending	Global Warming
Changing the way Congress operates	Medicare
Renewable Energy	Jobs
	Healthcare for Veterans
	No Child Left Behind

Immigration. Ogonowski’s diagnostic frame for immigration was a *limited resources* frame. He stated that the problem with illegal immigrants is that they “put strains on our local schools and hospitals.” In essence, Ogonowski presented the problem as illegal immigrants using the United States resources and money, thus limiting the ability of the government to fix other problems. His prognostic frame is a *deportation frame*: “illegal immigrants must return to their home country and apply for citizenship, just like everyone else.” The presence of the *limited resources* frame adds weight to Ogonowski’s argument for deportation, and offers the voter a clear reason for his position.

Tierney did not have a clear diagnostic frame, never providing any reason as to why illegal immigration is, or is not, a problem. He did have a prognostic frame, however, one of *general enforcement*. He simply stated, “With regard to ‘curbing illegal immigration,’ my three word answer is ‘enforcement, enforcement, enforcement.’” He did not expand upon this by stating what type of enforcement he thought was needed, just that it was necessary. The lack of a diagnostic frame, and unspecific prognostic frame was in clear contrast to Ogonowski’s immigration frames which presented a concrete problem and solution.

Homeland Security. To frame his position on homeland security Ogonowski used a *growing terrorist threat* diagnostic frame, citing the “growing organizational strength of al-Qaeda” as a threat to homeland security. He then used a *communication* prognostic frame to show how to deal with the *growing terrorist threat*. He said, the responsibility “begins with our elected officials communicating at the federal, state, and municipal level in order to ensure our public safety and national security. In this regard I will support measures in Congress that will help streamline the communication between and facilitation of resources.” This prognostic frame was very explicit and told the constituents unquestionably what types of legislation he would support if elected.

Tierney, on the other hand, framed the issue of homeland security as a *non-problem*. He stated, “President Bush has done an excellent job in ‘protecting the homeland’ since the 9/11 attacks. The fact that American hasn’t had a major terrorist attack since 2001 speaks volumes.” The choice of this *non-problem* frame emphasized the idea that Tierney supported the President and did not want to

come across as unpatriotic. His prognostic frame was one of *continued funding*. He said, "My only activity as a new congressman in this area would be to ensure continued funding to sustain this good work." Here Tierney linked his prognostic frame back to his *non-problem* diagnostic frame by stating that the funding was to sustain the good job that the President was doing.

Social Security. On the topic of Social Security reform, Ogonowski framed the problem with Social Security as a problem with the way we look at it, or an *outdated* diagnostic frame. He stated that we need to stop looking at "Social Security the same way we did in 1935." He then framed the solution as the need for *modernization* of the system. He stated, "Today we are better able to manage our own retirements. We have IRAs, Roth IRAs, 401(k)s. There are many different retirement options now, and we shouldn't look at retirement the way we did in 1935. The Social Security system should reflect the 21st century." The diagnostic and prognostic frames are noticeably linked here, providing the voters with a clear problem/ solution for Social Security.

Conversely, Tierney utilized the same *non-problem* diagnostic frame as he had with homeland security. Tierney did not think that there was anything wrong with the program and stated that he believed it is "one of the few laws that are now working well." Since he did not argue for any major reforms to the program, his prognostic frame was a *protection* frame. He stated that "it has to be protected from several strong forces that are unwittingly attempting to damage it." This was vague as he did not explain who the several strong forces were, or how exactly to protect it, but it did reiterate the fact that he did not think that program needs to be changed.

War in Iraq. Ogonowski had recently retired from the Air Force after 28 years of service, and he made the war in Iraq his key issues. Unlike with previous frames, Ogonowski did not have one diagnostic or prognostic frame, but instead utilized three distinct ways of framing the issue. First and foremost, Ogonowski employed an *American safety* diagnostic frame, repeatedly discussing the need to keep Americans safe. He stated that "America's safety must be our top priority." Tied to this was a prognostic *funding* frame. To keep Americans safe, Ogonowski argued that America's troops need the best equipment and technology, which can only be accomplished by "providing sufficient funding." This frame goes back to his *people's candidate* frame, making it clear that even with the war his primary concern is the needs of the people.

His second diagnostic frame was an *Iraqi instability* frame. The problem, according to Ogonowski, was that Iraqis cannot yet provide for themselves, so American troops cannot come home. This frame was used in conjunction with an *American assistance* prognostic frame. Because Iraq was still unstable, Ogonowski stated that the United States needed to "focus on training Iraqi military and police, guiding them to rebuild their infrastructure."

Finally, similar to the *Iraqi instability* frame, Ogonowski utilized a *Middle Eastern instability* diagnostic frame. He discussed how the problem of turmoil in Middle Eastern countries such as Iran and Syria was leading to further turmoil in Iraq itself. He then employed the same prognostic frame as before, *American assistance*. Ogonowski argued that America should "apply diplomatic pressure to ensure that these nations will protect [Iraq]." He linked this to the war in Iraq

because he argued that without stability in the entire Middle East there could not be stability in Iraq.

Tierney also had a clear plan for Iraq, but viewed the problem in a vastly differently light from Ogonowski. Tierney's diagnostic frame was the *American assistance* frame that Ogonowski had utilized as his prognostic frame. He argued that the major problem was that America has forced an American style of government on the Iraqi people. Tierney then used a *decentralized government* prognostic frame to propose his solution. He wanted to return the authority from Baghdad back to the Iraq people in their 18 separate provinces. While Tierney did not argue to completely get rid of *American assistance*, he did want to transfer power back to the Iraqi people, unlike Ogonowski who believed more *American assistance* was the solution.

Energy. Both Ogonowski and Tierney utilized the same diagnostic frame on the topic of energy, a *dependency* frame, framing the problem as a dependence on oil and fossil fuels. However, both employed different prognostic frames. Ogonowski chose a *research and development* frame, arguing that the solution to the energy crisis is to "rapidly expand our research and development of renewable clean alternatives." Tierney, on the other hand, chose an *alternative energy* prognostic frame. He stated that we need to switch to "a smorgasbord of wind, hydro, nuclear and solar energy." Ogonowski's prognostic frame touches on the idea of alternative energy, but his focus is on the need for more research and development, a more concrete solution.

While Tierney and Ogonowski both identified these five issues as important, each utilized unique prognostic and diagnostic frames, except in the case of energy. When the diagnostic and prognostic frames were markedly linked, as was the case with both candidates' social security frames, the arguments and reasoning behind certain positions became much clearer. However, when there was no obvious diagnostic frame the solutions tended to be vaguer, as with Tierney's *enforcement* frame. The choice of issue frames could again have a very important impact on how the frames resonated with the media, and subsequently the constituents.

Discussion of Frame Resonance in Media Coverage of Congressional Campaigns

Both Tom Tierney and Jim Ogonowski deliberately chose how they wanted to frame their images, as well as their issue stances. These frames are unimportant, however, if the media chose not to use them in their coverage of the candidates. While a few individuals will read candidates' press releases on their websites, and many may hear them speak in a televised debate, the majority of constituents learn about candidates through local media coverage of the races. Therefore, what frames constituents are exposed to depends on whether or not the candidates' frames resonated with the various media outlets. In turn, which frames the media used, either the candidate-made frames or frames of their own choosing, can impact which candidates' messages resonate with the people, ultimately affecting who wins the election.

To determine how Tierney's and Ogonowski's frames resonated with the media, I analyzed local newspaper articles which were published prior to election day that discussed one or both of the candidates. Before even analyzing the content of the articles, it was apparent that Ogonowski's and Tierney's images and issue positions had resonated much differently with the media. Of the 80 total articles, only five dealt solely with Tierney, while 36 focused on Ogonowski, and 39 discussed both candidates (see Table 5). This discrepancy in media coverage is particularly remarkable when considering the fact that neither candidate had held elected office before, and Ogonowski was the less well known of the two candidates (Tierney having run for the seat in prior elections). Therefore, while there may be other unknown factors, this disparity likely had something to do with the extent to which the candidates' messages resonated with the local newspapers.

The breakdown of articles about each candidate by newspaper is fairly even (see Table 5). The only major difference is that 80% of the articles in the *Boston Herald* discussed Ogonowski. Since the number of articles published in papers other than the *Lowell Sun* is relatively small, and the *Lowell Sun* is the primary newspaper for the 5th congressional district, it is unlikely that this difference would have had a huge impact with the voters.

Table 5 – Breakdown of Articles by Paper

Paper	# Articles about Ogonowski	# Articles about Tierney	# Articles about both	Total
<i>Lowell Sun</i>	28 (44%)	5 (8%)	30 (48%)	63 (78.75%)
<i>Boston Globe</i>	3 (33%)	0	6 (66%)	9 (11.25%)
<i>Boston Herald</i>	4 (80%)	0	1 (20%)	5 (6.25%)
<i>Sentinel Enterprise</i>	1 (50%)	0	1 (50%)	2 (2.5%)
<i>Telegram Gazette</i>	0	0	1 (100%)	1 (1.25%)
Total	36	5	39	80

In addition, the number of articles which discussed image and issue were disproportionate (see Table 6). In total, only 37 articles mentioned issues compared to 67 articles which discussed the candidate's images. When combined with the disparity in coverage of the two candidates this means that Tierney received substantially limited coverage of both his image and issue compared to Ogonowski; 35% less coverage of issues (22 articles versus 36 articles) and 43% less image coverage (36 articles versus 63 articles). This puts Tierney at a disadvantage because unless his frames resonated exceptionally well with the media, it is highly likely that the voters will not see Tierney according to how he presented himself in his press releases. In addition, this disparity could be crucial due to the fact that simple exposure may put Ogonowski at an advantage irregardless of how his frames resonated.

Table 6 – Disparities in Newspaper Coverage

	All Articles	Articles that only mention Ogonowski	Articles that only mention Tierney	Articles that mention both candidates
Issue	10	3	1	6
Image	40	18	2	20
Both Issue and Image	27	13	2	12
Neither Issue nor Image	3	2	0	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>39</i>

The Resonance of Ogonowski’s Image Frames

Jim Ogonowski’s *people’s candidate* frame was visible throughout the newspaper articles, but not to the same extent as in his press releases (see Table 7). The media chose to focus most on the fact that Ogonowski was a farmer in their coverage, something which still fit the *people’s candidate* because it put Ogonowski at the same level as many of his constituents. They also included many references to Jim caring about the needs and people of the 5th district, or Americans in general. All 12 of the references were in separate articles, or 19% of the articles. However, the media did not include the part of Ogonowski’s message which focused on families, taxpayers, homeowners, and small business owners. This weakens the *people’s candidate* frame since it is no longer as clear that his policy positions are meant to benefit working families, etc. In addition, the language the Ogonowski campaign had utilized to portray this message did not translate to the media coverage. Only one article used the phrase “Jim understands,” a phrase which his press releases had used repeatedly to create this frame.

Table 7 - How Ogonowski’s *People’s Candidate* Frame Resonated with the Media

	Number of references in newspaper articles (n=63)	Number of references in press releases (n=9)
Jim as farmer	34	8
Jim as small business man	2	4
Needs/people of the 5 th district	9	22
American people	3	8
Small business owners	0	5
Middle class/ working families	0	5
Taxpayers	1	4

Homeowners	0	3
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While Ogonowski's *people's candidate* frame does not appear to have translated completely to the general media, the media chose to focus on other aspects of his image which are still aligned with this frame. The newspaper coverage of Ogonowski included three additional characteristics which added to the *people's candidate* frame (see Table 8). The media jumped on the fact that Ogonowski's brother John had been pilot of American Airlines Flight 11, one of the planes which had been hijacked and crashed in the World Trade Center on September 11th, something which Ogonowski had only mentioned once in his press releases. Many times this statement was only made in passing when stating who Ogonowski was: "Republicans Jim Ogonowski, an Air Force veteran whose brother piloted one of the planes hijacked and flown into the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001..." Other times, however, it was linked to the idea that Ogonowski was running to ensure that other American's didn't die like his brother: Ogonowski "approaches the subject of combating terrorism not just as a person with 28 years of military experience, but also as brother of the pilot of the American Airlines airplane that struck the World Trade Center on Sept. 11." This added to Ogonowski's *people's candidate* frame by putting him at a very human level where the constituents could feel sympathetic for him and understand the reasons behind his bid for Congress.

Table 8- Media Additions to the *People's Candidate* Frame

	Number of articles which referenced (n=63)
Jim as military man	42
Jim as family man	9
Jim's brother's as pilot on 9/11	26

The focus on Ogonowski as a military man and family man also helped make Ogonowski very relatable. By highlighting his military background the media added weight to his plan for Iraq, making him appear an expert on the subject. In addition, focusing on his family background by discussing his wife, son, and grandparents in effect replaced Ogonowski's discussion of working class families and homeowners in his press releases because Ogonowski and his family are a working class family, homeowners, and taxpayers just like the people of the 5th district. This focus on Jim as a "family man" succeeded in portraying the message that his policies had families in mind; he would not pass legislation that would hurt his own working class family. As a whole, Ogonowski's *people's candidate* frame as it appeared in his press releases was not found in the newspaper articles. However, this frame did resonate sufficiently with the media that they took the frame and added to it so that the same message came across to the constituents, only in a slightly different light.

The resonance of Ogonowski's *people's candidate* frame can be associated with several factors. First, this frame was very apparent throughout his press releases. The thirty mentions of the needs/people of the 5th district or the American people meant that there were on average over three references per press

release. The media, therefore, did not have to try and ascertain what image Ogonowski was trying to portray. In addition, given that this frame is easily understood, and something which the people would arguably like to read about since it deals with their needs, it was easily translated into the newspaper coverage. The frame was also able to successfully translate to print because Ogonowski consistently tied his policy stances to the needs of the people, which meant that most quotes about a policy position would likely have included a mention of the people.

Finally, the fact that Jim's brother was one of the pilots who died on 9/11 simply made for a remarkable story and it put a human interest spin on a story which would normally only have been political news. When discussing this fact about his brother, the newspapers inevitably mentioned other facts about Ogonowski's background, typically that he was a military veteran who had recently taken over the family farm. This background even helped him land national media attention according to an article in the *Lowell Sun*:

Jim Ogonowski, of Dracut, last week received a lengthy profile on CNN and CNN.com, boosting his name recognition. Ogonowski, who retired as a lieutenant colonel at the end of May after 28 years in the U.S. Air Force, is the brother of John Ogonowski, pilot of American Airlines Flight 11, the first plane to hit the World Trade center on September 11, 2001, a fact remarked upon by the CNN story.

Therefore, the fact that the newspapers found a story in his family background in addition to his run for public office is a likely reason why Ogonowski received more newspaper coverage than Tierney. The media capitalized on the loss of Ogonowski's brother on 9/11 to create an interesting dimension to his campaign story, and as a result showcased Ogonowski's human side, a conception which coincided with the *people's candidate* frame he presented in his press releases.

Ogonowski's *Washington outsider* frame also resonated well with the media (see Table 9). The newspapers picked up on and highlighted many of the same phrases which Ogonowski had used to create this frame in his press releases. For example, an article in the Boston Globe stated, "In his first campaign for elected office, Ogonowski also makes frequent references to Ronald Reagan and John F. Kennedy, as he seeks to cast himself as an outsider who will refrain from partisan politics." This is almost an exact translation of his frame from his press releases, clearly indicating that the newspapers picked up on the frame. Overall, the newspapers included both parts of the *Washington outsider* frame: the fact that Ogonowski is an outsider and a political newcomer, and that this is a good thing because of the current problems in Washington.

Table 9 – How Ogonowski’s *Washington Outsider* Frame Resonated with the Media

	Number of references in newspaper articles (n=63)	Number of references in press releases (n=9)
Washington Outsider		
Ogonowski as different type of politician	6	4
Ogonowski as Washington outsider	4	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>7</i>
Problems in Washington		
Partisan bickering	3	5
Washington insiders	2	4
A broken Congress	4	4
Congress can’t be trusted	1	3
Special Interests	3	3
Partisanship	4	3
Backroom deals	0	2
Corruption	1	2
Divisiveness	1	1
Out-of-touch congressmen	1	1
Congress is a circus	3	1
Other	12	6
<i>Total</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>35</i>

This *Washington outsider* frame resonated with the local newspapers because it also made for a good story. In essence, this frame is about a person who wants to change the way the government operates. It is almost a human interest story in itself – the political newcomer who wants to change a broken system and help the people. Journalists are always looking for an interesting lead or spin to a story, and this frame provided it for them. The fact that the frame identified and attacked career politicians, special interests, and partisanship, something which the media already tends to cover, is likely another reason why this frame resonated to the extent that it did. Importantly, this frame should resonate well with the voters because it is still part of the *people’s candidate* frame, and is essentially about how Ogonowski wants to be a different type of politician, which would ultimately benefit the people of the 5th congressional district.

The Resonance of Tierney’s Image Frame

Unlike Ogonowski’s image frames, Tierney’s *knowledgeable candidate* frame did not resonate with the media, and is barely present in the 36 articles which discussed his image (see Table 10). All three references which showcased his in-depth issue understanding were in conjunction with his plan for Iraq, and the

newspapers never quoted Tierney citing any concrete numbers or facts. The lack of resonance of the facts and numbers as well as the elevated language part of Tierney’s *knowledgeable candidate* frame most likely has to do with how newspaper articles in general are written. Most newspapers are written at a relatively low reading level, and elevated language does not fit with this. Both instances of elevated language were used in conjunction with a concrete issue stance that the newspaper was quoting Tierney on. For example, Tierney was quoted on immigration as saying, “This pathway should only open and remain open if... enforcement triggers (such as) biometric tamper-proof IDS, fines, creation and maintenance of a noncitizen database...” The newspaper would not normally have included the word “biometric,” on the argument that the average person would not know what this refers to, however it made an exception because it was a crucial part of his immigration stance. In many cases, the elevated language was lost because the newspaper simply paraphrased Tierney.

Table 10 – How Tierney’s *Knowledgeable Candidate* Frame Resonated with the Media

	Number of references in newspaper articles (n=36)	Number of references in press releases (n=17)
In-depth issue understanding	3	9
Facts and numbers	0	6
Elevated language	2	8

The absence of concrete numbers and facts is also linked to how newspaper articles are written. Strict space constraints imply that writers eliminate unnecessary statements which do not add to the article. This suggests that statements referencing facts and numbers made by Tierney, elements which were not critical to his message, were not included. A better approach for Tierney would have been to make clear statements to research he had done, his understanding, intelligence, expertise or any other explicit statements that would have portrayed the idea that he is *knowledgeable*. Importantly, since this was the only image frame he utilized, it left the door open for the media to create its own image frame.

To replace the *knowledgeable candidate* frame, the newspapers created an *unqualified candidate* frame for Tierney by highlighting three main points (see Table 11). Tierney had had four unsuccessful bids for the 5th Congressional seat since 1984, a fact which the newspapers mentioned in 30% of the articles. Emphasizing the idea that Tierney had been unable to win before portrayed him as a loser who could not win the general election, even if he did manage to beat Ogonowski in the primaries. This made him seem unqualified, which is the complete opposite of the *knowledgeable candidate* frame Tierney had utilized himself. In his press releases Tierney appeared to be very intelligent; however, by highlighting the fact that he had been unable to get elected before, Tierney now came across as unintelligent and out of touch with voters.

Table 11- How the Newspapers Created the *Unqualified Candidate* Frame

	Number of articles which referenced (n=36)
Lives outside the district	9
Run for the seat and lost before	11
Run as a Democrat before	4

Also, the fact that Tierney had run as a Democrat before, and was now running as a Republican surely did not resonate with Republican voters. Given that the Democrats had five candidates from their party on their primary ballot, it is improbable that they would have decided to vote in the Republican primary instead. Republicans, on the other hand, would be expected to vote for the most viable candidate whom they believed could win against a Democrat in the general election. Thus, constituents after reading about Tierney's failed campaigns and party switch presumably would not have viewed Tierney as the best choice for their party to win the general election. Due to this, it appears that the media's *unqualified candidate* frame will resonate well with the voters.

Highlighting that Tierney did not live in the district also added to the media's frame of Tierney as the *unqualified candidate*. Without explicitly stating it, the media made the argument that Tierney could not understand the needs of the 5th district because he did not live there. Three of the articles did qualify this idea, however, by stating that Tierney had lived in the district until 1990 when it was redistricted. The fact that Tierney lived a little outside of the district could have been seen as irrelevant, and in no way indicative of Tierney's ability to represent the district in Washington. Instead, the media chose to call attention to this, and use it to replace Tierney's own frame as the *knowledgeable candidate*, with their own frame of Tierney as the *unqualified candidate*.

It is also important to note that the *unqualified candidate* frame was the only negative frame which emerged in the media coverage of either candidate. When combined with the fact that the *knowledgeable candidate* frame was the only image frame Tierney had utilized in his own press releases, this puts Tierney at a significant disadvantage. Had he used an additional image frame in his press releases that was easier to translate to print coverage, the *unqualified candidate* frame might not have been as dominant in the media coverage. However, since the readers were primarily presented with a negative view of Tierney as a person, it is highly likely that the *unqualified candidate* frame played some role in their vote choice.

Overall, each candidate's image frame resonated differently with the media. In Ogonowski's case, the media simply took his frame and added to it, leaving the basic message intact. Tierney's frame did not resonate with the local newspapers due to its complexity and inability to translate into print, and therefore was completely replaced with a frame which put him in a much worse light. The fact that the newspaper coverage was mainly attuned to the background and human interest potential of the candidates (40 articles focusing solely on image versus only 10 articles focusing on issues) seemed to work in Ogonowski's favor, and against Tierney's *knowledgeable candidate* frame. Unfortunately for Tierney, his unsuccessful

campaigns, political party switch, and residency status made for a much more interesting story than the fact that he was knowledgeable. On the other hand, Ogonowski's *Washington outsider* frame, combined with his family history, made for good news. Had Ogonowski not chosen to present himself as a different type of politician or highlight the problems in Washington, the newspapers may have created their own frame for him as well.

The Resonance of Image Frames Across Newspapers

All of the image frames highlighted above resonated across newspapers. In almost every instance, each frame resonated in proportion to the number of newspaper articles published on the candidates in each newspaper (see Table 12). The main exception was that the *Telegram & Gazette* only had one reference to any of the frames, Jim as a military man. However, because only one of the total eighty articles published on the candidates appeared in the *Telegram & Gazette*, this does not weaken the argument that the frames resonated across newspapers.

Table 12 – Resonance of Image Frames Across Newspapers

Frame	Lowell Sun	Boston Globe	Boston Herald	Sentinel & Enterprise	Telegram & Gazette	Total # of references
People's Candidate Frame						
Jim as Farmer	27 (79%)	6 (18%)	2 (6%)	1 (3%)	0	34
Jim as small business man	2 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0
Needs/people of the 5 th district	7 (78%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)	0	0	9
America people	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	0	0	0	3
Taxpayers	1 (100%)	1	0	0	0	1
Total	39 (76%)	8 (16%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	0	51
Media Additions to People's Candidate Frame						
Jim as military man	29 (69%)	6 (14%)	4 (10%)	2 (5%)	1 (2%)	42
Jim as family man	7 (78%)	1 (11%)	0	1 (11%)	0	9
Jim's brother	14 (54%)	6 (23%)	4 (15%)	2 (8%)	0	26
Total	50(65%)	13 (17%)	8 (10%)	5 (6%)	1 (1%)	77
Washington Outsider Frame						
Washington Outsider	8 (80%)	2 (20%)	0	0	0	10
Problems in Washington	28 (80%)	6 (17%)	0	1 (3%)	0	35
Total	36 (80%)	8 (18%)	0	1 (2%)	0	45
Knowledgeable Candidate Frame						
Total	5 (100%)	0	0	0	0	5
Unqualified Candidate Frame						
Lives outside the district	7 (78%)	2 (22%)	0	0	0	9
Ran for the seat and before and lost	7 (64%)	3 (27%)	0	1 (9%)	0	11
Ran as a democrat	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	0	0	0	4

before						
Total	17 (71%)	6 (25%)	0	1 (4%)	0	24

The breakdown of articles by newspaper was as follows: *Lowell Sun* 79%, *Boston Globe* 11%, *Boston Herald* 6%, *Sentinel & Enterprise* 3%, *Telegram & Gazette* 1%. Ogonowski's *people's candidate* frame, as well as the media's additions to this frame, resonated across the board almost perfectly. While the number of references in newspapers other than the *Lowell Sun* was small, it was in proportion to the amount of coverage Ogonowski received. This is significant because it indicates that coverage of Ogonowski and the prevalence of the *people's candidate* frame was not due to bias by one single newspaper. Every newspaper picked up on Ogonowski's frame, and utilized it in their coverage of him.

The *Washington outsider* frame, a subframe of the *people's candidate* frame, did not appear in the *Boston Herald*; the *Lowell Sun* and *Boston Globe* constitute the majority of references to this frame, with only one reference appearing in the *Sentinel & Enterprise*. While the lack of the *Washington outsider* frame in the *Boston Herald* is notable, it can still be argued that this frame resonated across newspapers. In total, only five newspaper articles about the candidates appeared in the *Boston Herald*, so the absence of this frame could have more to do with the type of coverage of the election the newspaper aimed to have than a lack of resonance of this frame.

Tierney's *knowledgeable candidate* frame only appeared in the *Lowell Sun*. This in effect supports the argument that Tierney's frame did not resonate with the media. Had elevated language, concrete facts and numbers, and in-depth issue knowledge appeared in multiple newspapers, it would lessen the claim that this frame did not resonate with the media. The five references in the *Lowell Sun* is not large enough to make the argument that this frame resonated with the paper, particularly in light of the large number of references which constitute each of Ogonowski's frames.

Finally, the *unqualified candidate* frame also resonated across the papers. While no references appeared in the *Boston Herald*, this is likely due to the fact that only one *Boston Herald* article mentioned Tierney. The *Boston Herald*, therefore, did have some bias toward Ogonowski by focusing the majority of its coverage on him, but unexpectedly then did not frame Tierney in a negative light. The appearance of the *unqualified candidate* frame across newspapers suggests that newspapers, when confronted with a lack of a resonate frame for a candidate, will create a frame to fill the void. In Tierney's case, the media drew attention to three negative aspects, rather than positive characteristics such as the fact that Tierney had also served in the military, and as a result created a negative image frame.

The resonance of the image frames across newspapers suggests that Ogonowski's frames resonated equally with the newspapers, and a bias toward one particular frame in one newspaper does not account for the presence of that frame. Similarly, the lack of the *knowledgeable candidate* frame and the prevalence of the *unqualified candidate* frame across newspapers indicate that the negative frame was not a result of bias against Tierney in one single paper.

The Resonance of Issue Frames

Media coverage of Tierney's and Ogonowski's issue stances was significantly less than of their images; only ten articles focused solely on the issues with another 27 discussing their images and issue positions (see Table 6). The breakdown of articles by issue (see Table 13) reveals that the five issues covered by both candidates in their press releases did account for the majority of issue references for both candidates. The major difference being that Tierney received no coverage of his position on homeland security, and only one reference to his energy plan. Instead, most media coverage of Tierney's issue positions focused on his plan for Medicare. Although Tierney had released statements on abortion, jobs, and No Child Left Behind, he still received less coverage than Ogonowski on these topics, who had not released statements on the issues. Taxes, gay marriage, and the military's don't ask don't tell policy also received coverage, despite the fact that neither candidate released statements on the issues. It does not appear, therefore, that newspaper coverage of the issues was contingent upon the issuance of the press releases.

Table 13- Breakdown of Media Coverage by the Issues

Issue	# of Articles which reference Ogonowski's position (n=34)	# of articles which reference Tierney's position (n=21)
War in Iraq	14	10
Immigration	15	6
Social Security	4	8
Energy	9	1
Homeland Security	8	0
Medicare	6	10
Taxes	6	2
Abortion	5	3
Education	4	1
Don't ask, don't tell	4	0
Gay marriage	4	0
Economy	2	1

The resonance of Tierney's Medicare position is likely linked to the fact that he took a traditionally Democratic stance on the issue. He was cited as supporting a "quasi-public" system for providing medical care that would be government-funded and available to all, yet still delivered by the private sector." As a non-traditional Republican position, the media jumped on this, often directly stating that this was a Democratic position. "Tierney said he supports single-payer health care, a classic Democratic proposal." This fit well with the *unqualified candidate* frame as it pegged Tierney as a candidate who did not support traditional Republican positions on key issues, thus making him unqualified to represent the Republican Party in the general election.

On the other issues not covered by both the candidates in press releases, taxes, abortion, education, and the economy most likely received coverage because they are traditional issues that constituents are interested in knowing the candidates'

positions on. Neither candidate had any particularly newsworthy stance on these issues, so they while they evoked some coverage it was far less than the coverage major issues such as immigration drew. Also, Ogonowski presumably attracted coverage for his more liberal positions on gay marriage and the don't ask don't tell policy; he supported civil unions and believed that the military's policy should be abolished. Due to the fact that he had just retired from the military after 28 years, this made for an interesting story, and also explains why Tierney's opinion was never covered. The media also reacted differently to the liberalness of these policies than they had to Tierney's, never stating that Ogonowski held traditionally Democratic views on the issues.

The Resonance of the Immigration Frames. Immigration was the second most covered issue, just behind the War in Iraq, with 15 articles referencing Ogonowski's position and six Tierney's position. However, only Ogonowski's prognostic frame of *deportation* resonated with the media (see Table 14). Tierney had not established a diagnostic frame, and only one article utilized his *enforcement* frame, quoting his press releases exactly, "[Tierney] says the best way to stop illegal immigration is 'enforcement, enforcement, enforcement.'" The lack of any definitive frames could explain the disparity in coverage between Ogonowski and Tierney, as many reporters could have seen it as a waste of space to provide Tierney's opinion on the issue.

Table 14- Immigration Frame Resonance

Frame	Number of Articles Utilizing Frame
<i>Ogonowski</i>	
Diagnostic: Limited Resources	1
Prognostic: Deportation	6
<i>Tierney</i>	
Prognostic: General Enforcement	1

Ogonowski, on the other hand, had established clear frames on immigration. In spite of this, his *limited resources* frame was completely overlooked. In the one instance when the *limited resources* frame was picked up, it was not used in conjunction with the *deportation* frame, which indicates that there was a disconnect between the diagnostic and prognostic frames. Ogonowski's prognostic frame was very clear and direct, and posed a direct solution to a problem. As a result, it was used to describe his issue stance in 40% of the articles. While not insignificant, this is still low considering it was the one solution he posed to illegal immigration. Many times the newspapers simply stated that Ogonowski opposed a "path to citizenship" for illegal immigrants, an opinion Ogonowski never stated in his press release. Opposing a path to citizenship does not necessarily correlate with deportation, and in effect works to lessen the severity of Ogonowski's position. This suggests that while the *deportation* frame did resonate with the newspapers, at times the newspapers chose to frame his position differently.

The Resonance of the Homeland Security Frames. The homeland security frames did not resonate with the media to any significant extent (see Table 15). Importantly, Tierney did not receive any coverage on the issue at all, despite the fact that he had released a statement. His *non-problem* frame could be related to

this lack of coverage. As with immigration, without a strong diagnostic frame to make it clear that he thought the issue was important, the media chose not to spend time describing his position.

Table 15- Homeland Security Frame Resonance

Frame	Number of Articles Utilizing Frame
<i>Ogonowski</i>	
Diagnostic: Growing Terrorist Threat	1
Prognostic: Communication	1
<i>Tierney</i>	
Diagnostic: Non-problem	0
Prognostic: Funding	0

Ogonowski did receive a substantial amount of coverage on the topic, but neither of his frames resonated. Both the diagnostic and prognostic frames appeared once, but not in the same article, again suggesting that there was a disconnect between the problem and the proposed solution. In most articles, no prognostic frame was presented at all. Instead, the media chose to link the purported importance of homeland security to Ogonowski’s brother and military background. “Politicians in Washington need to make sure that national security is one of our top priorities,” said Ogonowski, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel and the brother of John Ogonowski, pilot of American Airlines Flight 11, which was hijacked and crashed into the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.” This in effect put the focus on Ogonowski’s image, and away from a concrete policy position, despite the fact that Ogonowski had proposed the need for increased communication to protect the country.

The Resonance of the Social Security Frames. On the topic of Social Security, only Tierney’s frames resonated (see Table 16). While four articles did discuss Ogonowski’s position, all of them simply stated that he was “against privatization.” Unlike with previous issues where a lack of resonance was tied to a disconnect between the prognostic and diagnostic frame, it cannot be argued that a disconnect between the *outdated* and *modernization* frames as they were inextricably linked to one another. Instead, the “against privatization” position likely replaced the *modernization* frame because it was easier to understand, and the *modernization* frame had not posed any concrete solution to the problem.

Table 16- Social Security Frame Resonance

Frame	Number of Articles Utilizing Frame
<i>Ogonowski</i>	
Diagnostic: Outdated	0
Prognostic: Modernization	0
<i>Tierney</i>	
Diagnostic: Non-problem	6
Prognostic: Protection	2

Tierney’s *non-problem* diagnostic frame appeared in six of the eight articles, and was twice tied to his *protection* frame. An article in the *Lowell Sun* stated, “Tierney’s lawn signs throughout the district pledge that the candidate ‘will save

Social Security.’ When asked how, Tierney said he would leave it alone. ‘It’s working perfectly. We shouldn’t need to touch it for another 25 years.’” While his previous *non-problem* frame had resulted in a lack of resonance, this frame did resonate with newspapers due to its abnormality. All of the other candidates were arguing that Social Security needed to be fixed, while Tierney made the argument that there was nothing wrong with it so he would protect or save it from those individuals who were trying to change it. While the *protection* frame only appeared twice, this was likely do to the fact that it was implied; if Tierney thought that the program worked perfectly, then he obviously would try and protect the program from those individuals who want to change it.

The Resonance of the War in Iraq Frames. The war in Iraq was the most covered issue, with 14 articles discussing Ogonowski’s position and ten Tierney’s. In addition, both candidates’ frames resonated with the media to varying degrees (see Table 17). Ogonowski presented three distinct diagnostic and two prognostic frames in his press release. His primary frame had been the *American safety/ funding* frame. Despite the focus on that frame, the *Iraqi instability/ American Assistance* frame was most dominant in the media coverage of the issue. Both the *American safety* and *funding* frames appeared three times in the articles, however, they only appeared once together. The *Lowell Sun* quoted Ogonowski, “‘Our troops want to come home, but they also want to accomplish their mission: keeping America safe,’ Ogonowski said. “To do this, we must provide the best equipment and technology for our troops by providing sufficient funding to allow our generals the ability to properly plan and execute our mission.”” The other two *American safety* frames appeared as the sole Iraq war frames in their respective articles, while the two *funding* frames were tacked on to the *Iraqi instability/ American Assistance* frames. Ogonowski had linked clearly that funding was necessarily to keep America safe, yet the two frames only appeared together once, suggesting that his proposed problem/solution did not resonate with the media.

Table 17 - War in Iraq Frame Resonance

Frame	Number of Articles Utilizing Frame
<i>Ogonowski</i>	
Diagnostic: American Safety	3
Prognostic: Funding	3
Diagnostic: Iraqi Instability	6
Prognostic: American Assistance	10
Diagnostic: Middle Eastern Instability	1
<i>Tierney</i>	
Diagnostic: American Assistance	1
Prognostic: Decentralized Gov’t	8

Conversely, every *Iraqi instability* diagnostic frame, was followed by the *American assistance* prognostic frame. This frame presumably resonated with the newspapers because it presented a clear solution to what was seen as the major problem in Iraq. In four additional articles, the *American assistance* frame appeared as the single frame on the issue, which suggests that this frame resonated particularly strongly with the media. Even though the *Middle Eastern instability* frame also

utilized the *American assistance* prognostic frame, it only appeared once in the 14 articles. This likely has to do with the fact that while it was related to the war in Iraq, it was not presented as an inextricable part of Ogonowski's plan for how to achieve victory, and newspapers did not need to include this concept to explain his position on the issue.

Tierney's, *decentralized government* prognostic frame appeared in every newspaper article which stated his position on the war. The perfect resonance of this frame is arguably due to two factors. First, this frame was clearly established in his press releases, and thoughtfully explained. When presenting his reasons for why he supported decentralization, Tierney had demonstrated thorough knowledge of the region, and this knowledge and comprehensive plan for how to solve the problems in Iraq resonated with journalists. The *Lowell Sun* wrote, "Tierney said he supports the creation of separate sectarian governments in Iraq, dividing the Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds." While the majority of the newspaper articles did not explain this position as the *Lowell Sun* did, as his *knowledgeable candidate* frame did not resonate, it does not imply that Tierney was not helped by presenting such a clear vision in his press releases.

Second, his position was unique to other candidates in the race, and also was more liberal than Ogonowski's position, representing a plan similar to Senator Joe Biden, a Democrat from Delaware. The liberalness of this plan, therefore, fit the *unqualified candidate* frame that Tierney was not a true Republican. This created a unique juxtaposition because while Tierney's proposed solution did receive a lot of press, since it was a Republican primary and his plan was more liberal, it could ultimately hurt support for Tierney. Additionally, only one article utilized his *American assistance* diagnostic frame. The newspapers chose not to position Tierney and Ogonowski against one another, even though they had opposite plans for Iraq. Instead, they chose to simply overlook Tierney's *American assistance* frame and focus on his solution. The lack of Tierney's *American assistance* frame is anomalous because it could have been used to create an interesting story, and was as unique as his *decentralized government* frame.

The Resonance of the Energy Frames. There was a large disparity in coverage of Ogonowski's and Tierney's energy plans with eight articles discussing Ogonowski's position and only one Tierney's. The inequality in coverage can be associated with Ogonowski's profession as a farmer. Newspapers likely saw Ogonowski as more connected to the environment than Tierney, a consulting actuary, and therefore valued his opinion more. Even though Ogonowski received more coverage, only his *dependency* diagnostic frame resonated (see Table 18).

Table 18 – Energy Frame Resonance

Frame	Number of Articles Utilizing Frame
<i>Ogonowski</i>	
Diagnostic: Dependency	4
Prognostic: Research & Development	0
<i>Tierney</i>	
Diagnostic: Dependency	0
Prognostic: Alternative Energy	0

The frequency of the *dependency* frame and absence of his *research and development* frame suggests that another frame must have filled this void since a problem is not typically posed without a solution. In all four articles where the *dependency* frame appeared, it was followed by an *alternative energy* frame, the frame Tierney had utilized in conjunction with his *dependency* frame. The substitution of Ogonowski's *research and development* frame with the *alternative energy* frame suggests that *alternative energy* was a stronger frame. However, because Ogonowski was a farmer and was presented as an expert on the subject, this frame appeared in his coverage rather than Tierney's.

General Trends in Issue Resonance. The lack of resonance of the candidates' issue frames implies that except in instances where the frame represents a unique issue position, the media does not utilize the same frames as the candidates. Tierney's *non-problem* Social Security diagnostic frame and *deportation* frame both resonated for this reason. A few other general trends emerged in the media coverage as well. First, if a *non-problem* frame is utilized, or a frame is missing altogether, the issue will receive substantially less coverage, in addition to a lack of frame resonance (the exception being the presence of a *non-problem* frame when most people cite a problem). Second, prognostic frames can stand alone whereas diagnostic frames are almost always followed by a prognostic frame. This is presumably because newspapers are more interested in a solution to the issue at hand rather than how a candidate framed the issue. Third, having multiple frames for the same issue could help with frame resonance. Ogonowski employed three diagnostic and two prognostic frames for his position in Iraq, and only two of the fourteen articles did not utilize any frame. While having a strong and unique issue position as Tierney had on Iraq also helped his frame resonate, he received less coverage of his position, which suggests that presenting multiple frames for the media to choose from could generate additional coverage.

Overall, the general lack of issue frame resonance and the tie of issues to image, suggests that image was much more important to the media in this election. The candidates' images received substantially more media coverage than their issue positions, which puts Ogonowski at a distinct advantage. He spent much more time in his press releases establishing his image, with three of his press releases focusing on his *Washington outsider* frame, and these frames resonated strongly in newspaper coverage of him. Conversely, Tierney's press releases relied on his knowledge and in-depth issue understanding. Since the media did not focus much attention on the issues, and replaced Tierney's *knowledgeable candidate* frame with an *unqualified candidate* frame, Tierney was extremely disadvantaged.

These newspaper articles were the only articles published in the state of Massachusetts on either candidate, and therefore unless the television networks framed the candidates differently, these were the frames the voters of the 5th district were presented. The outcome of the election appears to indicate that the media frames did resonate with the voters, and the lack of a positive image frames hurt Tierney. Ogonowski won the election with an overwhelming 89% of the vote to Tierney's 11%. While other factors clearly go into a person's vote, some of the vote differential appears to be attributable to how the candidate's issue and image frames resonated with the local media.

Support of Frame Resonance Theory

These findings support the arguments put forth by Snow and Benford (1988) and Benford and Snow (2000) on frame resonance. In this case, mobilization is associated with voting rather than social movement mobilization with the media acting as intermediary between the candidates and their constituents. Thus in order for the politicians to mobilize their constituents, their frames must first resonate with the media.

Ogonowski's image frames met most of the criteria outlined for successful frame resonance. Both his *people's candidate* and *Washington outsider* frames corresponded to values held by potential constituents, meeting the appeal and potency requirements. By appealing directly to the residents of the 5th district for what he could do for them, Ogonowski was able to sell himself as the politician who would best suit their needs. On relevancy, Ogonowski ensured that his frames were seen as relevant to the voters. In particular, the *Washington outsider* frame demonstrated empirical credibility. With the extent of coverage corruption in politics receives in the news, Ogonowski's frame could easily be connected to events occurring in the world. In turn, his solution to the problem, electing him to Congress, met the experiential commensurability criterion.

His image frames also resonated due to the credibility of these frames. Since Ogonowski was a military veteran and farmer, he was seen as a credible frame articulator, and this background added credibility to his statements that he understood the needs of the people. As an individual who had never run for politics and had a personal story behind his decision to enter politics, his message resonated with the media, and ultimately the voters of the district.

Finally, and most importantly, the comprehensive extent to which the frame articulation and frame amplification were carried out led to a high degree of frame resonance. Both image frames were articulated extremely well, and the media's additions to the *people's candidate* frame helped to make his arguments that much more compelling. Ogonowski's choice to highlight working class families, taxpayers, small business owners, etc. put the focus on the people and made them the most important part of his campaign. The decision to amplify the people helped the frame to resonate first with the media, and then with the voters of the district.

Tierney's *knowledgeable candidate* frame, on the other hand, did not resonate well because it did not meet the guidelines for frame resonance. This frame missed the mark on appeal and potency because while it may have resonated with constituents, it needed to resonate with media before it would be presented to the voters. The lack of resonance with the media was due to the fact that it was presented to them in a manner that made it too difficult to incorporate into print coverage. It also lacked a strong frame articulation, never really connecting events and experiences together in any compelling fashion.

Frame amplification was missing altogether. Tierney did not highlight any particular event or belief, but instead inconspicuously incorporated facts, numbers, and knowledgeable statements into all of the issues. By failing to accent any single issue, group, or event, Tierney's *knowledgeable candidate* frame simply did not resonate with the media. Most importantly, this frame likely failed to resonate because of the lack of credibility Tierney had as the frame articulator. As an individual who had lost four times in prior elections, his claim to be knowledgeable simply did not

stand up in the eyes of the newspapers. If Tierney really was knowledgeable and understood the needs of the voters, he would have been elected before. Instead, the media took this lack of credibility and highlighted it in their own *unqualified candidate* frame.

On the issues, resonance depends on the development and degree to which the diagnostic and prognostic frames are interconnected (Snow and Benford 1988). Only three of the twelve frames resonated in the newspaper coverage, which indicates that the frames were not well developed and/or interconnected. On further examination, Ogonowski's immigration and homeland security frames lacked a strong connection between the problem and proposed solution. However, his Social Security frames as well as both candidates' frames for energy were well connected. On Social Security, the lack of resonance is likely due to the lack of a strategy or concrete solution to the problem. The lack of resonance of the energy frames is harder to pinpoint since the *alternative energy* frame utilized by Tierney was used in the media as the solution with Ogonowski's *dependency* frame. The credibility of the frame articulator could be attributable to this as Ogonowski, a farmer, is more of a credible opinion on energy than Tierney.

Tierney's immigration and homeland security frames did not have well developed diagnostic frames, and this arguably caused their lack of resonance. Without any diagnostic frame, the media chose not to focus on those issues or utilize the prognostic frames that had been developed, which suggests that the presence of a strong diagnostic frame is necessary for resonance of the prognostic frame to occur. Tierney's Social Security frame as well as both war in Iraq frames did carry out these core framing tasks, and as a result resonated with the media. All of them established clear problems (or in Tierney's case with Social Security a clear lack of problem) and then proposed solutions that were well connected to the problem. Tierney's war in Iraq frame appeared in every newspaper article which discussed his stance on Iraq and this was due to his well developed prognostic frame. While the media did not necessarily articulate this frame in the same manner, having a clear plan and reasoning for his position in his press releases led the frame to resonate better than any other issue frame of the campaign.

These results reveal that frame resonance theory can be applied to frames utilized in campaigns, in addition to frames utilized by social movement organizations. The extent to which each candidate met the core framing tasks and resonance factors such as relevancy, credibility, appeal and potency, frame articulation and frame amplification all determined whether or not the frame resonated with the media. For campaigns, it is much more important that the frame resonate with the media as well as with potential voters. When frames do not resonate with the media, it leaves the door open for other frames to be created in their place, and as the above case suggests, this can hurt the candidate whose frames are replaced.

Experimental Data Collection Methods and Design

Participants

Both adults and students were recruited to ensure that the results were generalizable across the two categories. The student population sample was taken primarily from students enrolled in large introduction political science and sociology classes at Northwestern University as well as from Oakton Community College and Elmhurst College. At Northwestern University, students were given the option on the first day of class when classes typically ended early to stay for the rest of the class period and complete the study. They were compensated \$10 for participating, n=193. At Oakton Community College students completed the study in lieu of a regular class period and were compensated \$20 for participating, n=43. Elmhurst College students also completed the study in lieu of class and were compensated \$10 for participating, n=55. Additional students were recruited from general advertisements around campus and were paid between \$10 and \$20 for participating, n=41.

Adults, primarily Northwestern staff and some members of the community, were recruited through email for two open sessions which took place over the lunch hour. They were paid \$20 for participating and provided lunch, n=58. In addition, adults who were enrolled in political science classes in the School of Continuing studies were given the option on the first day of class, which ended early, to stay and complete the study. They were compensated \$15 for their participation, n=26. In total, there were 416 participants, approximately 50 per condition.

The introduction political science and sociology classes were selected because of accessibility, as well as because many students take them for distribution requirements and therefore have diverse majors and interests. The advertisements to the general Northwestern community should help to offset any bias in majors or political knowledge. Within the sample population, the participants were all randomly assigned to one of nine conditions, with every participant having an equal opportunity to be given any of the conditions.

Experimental Design

Before beginning the experiment all participants signed a consent form which told them they were participating in a study on political learning and outlined the procedure of the study and rights of the subject. All participants then completed a pre-experiment questionnaire. This contained 28 questions. From this survey, only answers to the questions pertaining to political ideology, party identification, age, gender and ethnicity were used, all as control variables.

Following the pre-experiment survey all participants then read the same short paragraph of information about the candidates followed by a newspaper article which they believed was from the *Boston Globe* according to one of the following nine conditions:

	Ogonowski Cue	Tierney Cue	No Cue
Issue Frame	Condition 1, n= 47	Condition 2, n= 47	Condition 3, n= 41
Image Frame	Condition 4, n= 48	Condition 5, n= 45	Condition 6, n= 45
No Frame	Condition 7, n= 47	Condition 8, n= 48	Condition 9, n= 49

This setup pegs frames against cues (or who is expected to win the debate) in the same article. This will allow me to determine if priming (in the form of an endorsement) or framing has a greater impact on candidate evaluations following the debate. The newspaper articles resembled that of an actual newspaper article, were identical in length, and contained the same background information. They only differed in their discussion of issue or image and who was endorsed.

After reading the article, all participants watched a 20 minute debate between Tom Tierney and Jim Ogonowski. Following the debate, the participants then completed another questionnaire. This questionnaire consisted of 38 questions. All of the questions utilized a seven-point scale which presented options to the participant on the continuum. This scale was chosen because it allowed the subject to easily show where they fell on an issue, etc. without being forced to circle a simple yes or no, or trying to describe their opinion. The first two questions asked who the participant thought won the debate and who they would have voted for. The next set of questions focused on the participants' perceived images of the candidates. Following that were five groups of questions where the subject identified the candidates' issue positions as well as their own. The last portion of the questionnaire was not used to calculating the results of the study.

Key Variables

Issue variables. I focused on Iraq withdrawal (NIraq), Iraq government (NGov), healthcare/ Medicare administration (NMedic2), and taxes (NTax2) because these were the central issues covered in the debate. The candidates did not differ on Iraq withdrawal, both supported withdrawal generally speaking, but did differ on whether the government in Iraq should be provincial or centralized (Tierney supported provincial governments and Ogonowski was unclear). The candidates also differed in their position on healthcare, Ogonowski argued that it should be left to the states while Tierney argued for national healthcare. Finally, Ogonowski supported the Bush tax cuts and Tierney opposed them. In this sense, Tierney's positions were a bit more to the left.

These variables were then grouped into easy issues and hard issues based on the criteria established by Carmines and Stimson (1980). Easy issues are issues that are symbolic rather than technical, deal with policy ends rather than means, and have been on the political agenda for a long time. Hard issues then are more technical, deal with means and have not been on the political agenda for any extended period. Healthcare administration is clearly a hard issue as it involves a means and not an end – it is about the means of administering Medicare at the state or national level. It is also technical, and while possibly on the agenda for a while, it is not an issue that generates substantial debate currently. Iraq government was also categorized as a hard issue as it is a means for reform and is extremely technical.

Iraq withdrawal might be construed as an easy issue insofar as it is about ends, rather than the means of withdrawal. It is also not particularly technical because it is not about the specifics of withdrawal. While the issue is fairly new as it is only as old as the war, it is very salient and has been a feature of the political agenda. This may seem odd since Carmines and Stimson's (1980) original example

of a hard issue was Vietnam withdrawal. However, the focus there was not about whether or not to withdraw troops, but rather about “alternative plans (one of them was ‘secret’)...” (80). Nearly all agreed on the need to withdraw and end the Vietnam War but they disagreed on the pace and specific plan of withdrawal. “It deals with the best means of ending the war, but with nearly universal agreement on the ultimate end” (81). Conversely, in the Iraq war case, it is the ends of withdrawal rather than the means which was discussed. Tax cuts were also categorized as an easy issue because it has been a mainstay of the political agenda, it represents an end, and is more symbolic than technical.

This assessment of healthcare and Iraq government as hard issues and Iraq withdrawal and taxes as easy issues was confirmed in a pre-test. In this condition, I asked respondents to simply fill out a questionnaire after watching the debate, and they did not receive any information or newspaper article prior to the debate. This questionnaire included questions about the respondents’ confidence of their responses to the issue questions, and I found that respondents were much more confident in their attitudes toward Iraq withdrawal and tax cuts. (These confidence questions were cut from the main experiment for the sake of time).

The issue variables were measured by asking respondents to rate their own positions and then their perception of each candidate’s position. I then computed, for each issue, the difference between their position and the position of each candidate ($|R - O| - |R - T|$). These differences were combined and re-standardized on a seven-point scale so that higher scores indicate closer positions to Tierney and lower scores indicate positions closer to Ogonowski. Thus, a score of four indicates equal distance between the two, a score of seven means an identical position to Tierney, and a score of one means an identical position to Ogonowski.

Image variables. The four image variables were honesty (NHon), leadership(NLead), knowledge(Nknow), and empathy(NTouch), or how in touch the candidate is with the people. These variables were also categorized into either performance based traits or interpersonal characteristics (see Druckman, Jacobs and Ostermeier 2004). Performance based traits consist of traits which highlight competence and strength, while interpersonal traits emphasize warmth and trust. Interpersonal images are formed based more on visuals, so in that sense they may be easier to form from watching a debate than performance based traits (Druckman 2003). Therefore, honesty and empathy were categorized as interpersonal images while leadership and knowledge were grouped together as performance images. As I found in their press releases, Ogonowski emphasized empathy and interpersonal images while Tierney emphasized knowledge, and this was also true in the debate.

The image variables were measured by asking respondents to rate perceptions of each candidate’s given image. I then combined and standardized these on a seven-point scale ($|O - T|$) such that a higher score indicates relatively higher evaluations for Tierney.

Results

The key dependent variable was vote choice. The distribution was fairly even between the candidates with a mean of 3.904 (see Table 19), indicating that people were slightly more likely to vote for Ogonowski.

Table 19 – Distribution and Mean for the Key Dependent Variable - Vote Choice

Nvote7	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1	61	14.70	14.70
2	64	15.42	30.12
3	59	14.22	44.34
4	62	14.94	59.28
5	64	15.42	74.70
6	49	11.81	86.51
7	56	13.49	100.00
Total	415	100.00	

. sum Nvote7

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Nvote7	415	3.903614	1.98067	1	7

(Nvote7 = Seven-point scale with higher scores indicating increased likelihood of voting for Tierney.)

Issues and Images

I first establish basic candidate evaluations. The only information participants had about the candidates was what they learned in the debates (no participant reported living in the district in which the campaign took place). Given that both were Republicans, this means that evaluations had to be based on what the participants read, heard and saw. I found that on the issues, when averaging across the four issues, participants recorded a score of 4.06 (SD=.89, n=413), which indicates average indifference.

On images, the average score of all four images is 3.93 (SD=.86, n=413). The exception to this is knowledge, where subjects supported Tierney with an average of 4.44 (SD= 1.24, n=414). Removing knowledge from the image average lowers the average to 3.79 (SD=.86, n=414). This indicates that Tierney is advantaged on the issues while Ogonowski is advantaged on images. In other words, Tierney’s campaign is best off framing in terms of issues and Ogonowski is relatively better off framing on images. Indeed, a statistical significance test between the issue average and image average found that the averages are statistically different from one another (without knowledge $t_{412} = 2.31, p < .05$; with knowledge $t_{413} = 5.80, p < .01$).

These results stand if we only look at the condition where there was no cue and no frame. The issue average is 4.07(SD=.95, n=48), the image average is

3.83 (SD=.67, n=48), and the image average without knowledge is 3.66 (SD=.67, n=47). Again, the averages between the issues and image were statistically different (without knowledge $t_{46} = 1.81, p < .08$; with knowledge $t_{47} = 3.41, p < .01$).

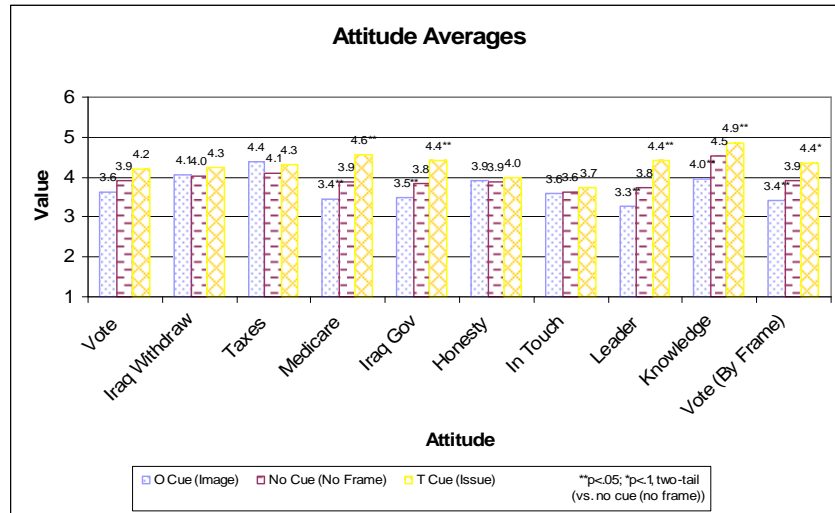
The knowledge exception is interesting and not surprising given that Tierney worked particularly hard during the campaign and the debate to emphasize his knowledge. As the case study found, the *knowledgeable candidate* frame was the primary frame utilized by Tierney in his press releases. These findings indicate that he also used this frame during the debate, as participants had not been presented with any of the candidates' press releases or authentic newspaper articles. In contrast, Ogonowski's *people's candidate* frame highlighted that he was a common person and empathized with his constituents. This was indeed the image on which Ogonowski did the best on in the debate, with an average of 3.54.

Cue Effects

The basic cue prediction is that a cue for a candidate should cause the respondent to increase their evaluations of the candidates. If used as a strong shortcut, the respondent may forgo considering any other dimension of evaluation other than the endorsement itself. In other words, it would have a direct effect on vote choice. The cue also could work to increase evaluations on specific dimensions, particularly on the issues and images.

In Figure 1, I chart the average scores for vote choice (on the seven-point scale) and the scores for the four issues and images. In the graph, I focus specifically on whether receiving a cue for one of the candidates significantly affects the attitude relative to the control group of not receiving a cue. I used two-tailed t-tests, reporting any results significant at the .05 or .10 levels. It is important to note that I merge across frame conditions for these since the pure cue prediction is orthogonal to the frame (see Chong and Druckman 2007a).

Figure 1 – Attitude Averages By Cue (Frame)



These results indicate that there is no significant cue effect on vote choice. While the cues push opinions in the expected direction (e.g. the Tierney cue increases the likelihood of voting for Tierney), the differences relative to the control group are not significant. This is important as it indicates that cues do not trump all other factors in decision making. Respondents did not forgo considering other dimensions in their evaluations of the candidates and simply follow the cues.

When examining the issues, there are no statistically significant differences on the issues of Iraq withdrawal or taxes, the two easy issues. However, there are significant differences on the two hard issues, Medicare and Iraq government. On images, there are no significant differences on honesty or empathy, the interpersonal images, but there are significant differences on the performance images, leadership and knowledge.

This is interesting because it suggests that people do rely on the cues for those issues and images which are more difficult to evaluate. As explained, Medicare and the Iraq government are harder issues. Also, the two performance images tend to be harder to evaluate insofar as people rely less on visuals in coming to those evaluations. This makes sense since respondents knew less about the candidates' leadership and knowledge than they could have inferred about trust and empathy from the debate. In short, the results suggest that cues become important on issues and images that are more complex. This is consistent with Cobb and Kuklinski's (1997), observation that "there can be no doubt that people commonly employ heuristics to make sense of a complex and tumultuous political environment" (94). In this case, the emphasis is on relatively more complex issues and images rather than on complex political environments.

Finally, the last set of bars looks at the average vote totals by frames, rather than cues. The results reveal significant differences. That is, using the issue frame, all else constant, leads to significant advantages for Tierney while using the image frame reveals statistically significant advantages for Ogonowski. Importantly, this suggests that frames rather than cues are more powerful in terms of relative

advantages of the candidates. It is also crucial to note that there are no other significant differences, relative to the control condition, on the average attitude scores by frame condition. Frames only exhibit this direct effect on overall vote choice. I will explore the mediational processes of this below.

The Impact of Frames

The framing effect prediction is that the image frame should enhance the salience of image evaluations while the issue frames should enhance the salience of the image evaluations. This in turn, given the above explained advantages, implies that the issue frame should help Tierney and the image frame should help Ogonowski. To explore this I regress the overall vote choice on the key issues and images, across frame conditions, to evaluate the significance. In doing so please note a few presentational issues.

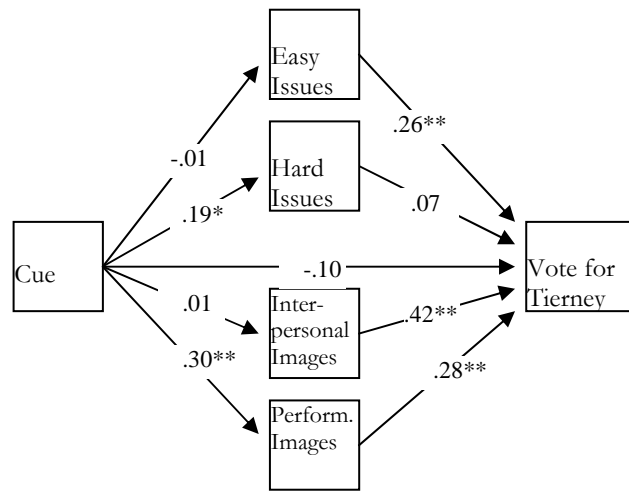
First, I combined the two hard issues into one variable, the two easy issues into one variable, the two interpersonal images into one variable, and the two performance variables into one variable. This was done by taking the averages in each case. It makes the presentation much more straightforward and is consistent with breaking out the variables. Unless otherwise noted, assume that (in)significance for one of the combined variables indicates (in)significance for both of the individual variables (e.g., (in)significance for hard issues means that if I broke it out, both Medicare and Iraq government would be (in)significant).

The results are presented with path diagrams (see Figures 2-4) as this is a straightforward way to present the overall mediational process. It reveals the frame effects (by looking at the significance of the issue and image variables on vote choice) as well as the indirect effect of the cue variable. The paths present standardized beta coefficients with the significance noted in the figures. The cue variable is coded such that -1 = Ogonowski cue, 0 = no cue, and 1 = Tierney cue. The other variables are, as before, coded with higher values indicating increased likelihood of supporting Tierney. Also, the results do not change when age, gender, ethnicity, party identification and political ideology are controlled for.

All three figures show, as was shown before, that the cue has a significant impact on the hard issues and the performance images, but does not have a significant impact on the easy issues or interpersonal images. This is true across frame conditions. In addition, the cue never has a direct effect, which was also revealed in Figure 1.

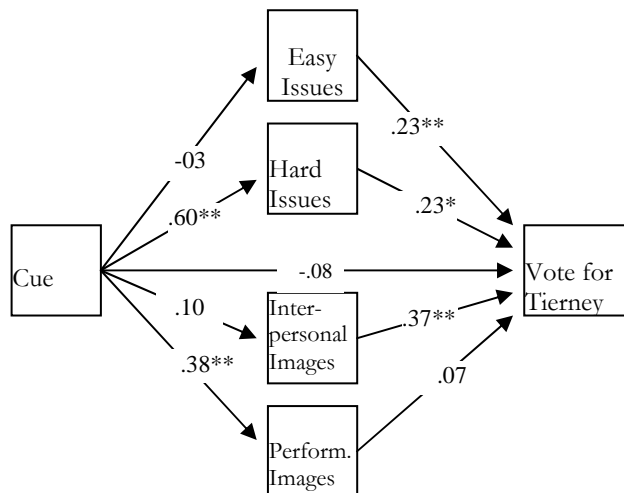
In the no frame condition (see Figure 2) easy issues, interpersonal images, and the performance images all significantly influence vote choice. Only on performance issues did the cue have an indirect effect on vote choice insofar as by increasing (decreasing) evaluations on performance issues they work to affect vote choice. However, the cue effect on hard issues has no ultimate impact on the vote choice.

Figure 2 – No Frame Conditions



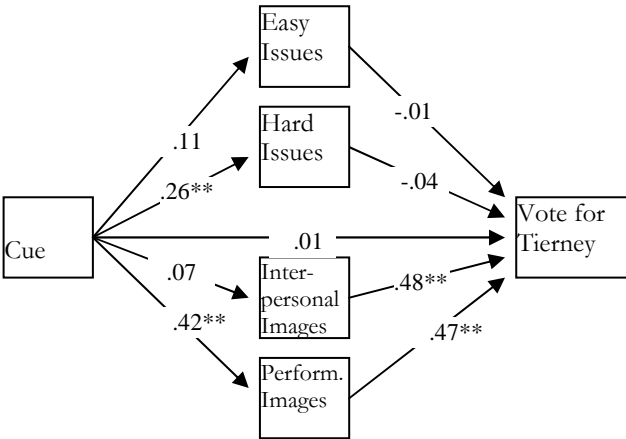
The issue frame diagram (see Figure 3) shows that the frame leads hard issues to become significant and performance issues to become insignificant. When the hard issues are broken out, only Medicare is significant, not Iraq government, and when interpersonal images are broken out only honesty, not empathy, is significant. This is a key finding as it shows a significant framing effect insofar as the issue frame enhances the salience of hard issues, and easy issues remain insignificant. Thus in the issue frame, the cue had an indirect effect only through the hard issues and not the performance images.

Figure 3 – Issue Frame Conditions



The image frame diagram (see Figure 4) reveals an analogous result with all issues becoming insignificant and both images becoming significant. Thus, the results also show an image framing effect enhancing the salience of images and decreasing the salience of issues. Also, in this case the cue has an indirect effect only through performance images and not hard issues.

Figure 4 – Image Frame Conditions¹



Summary

The results from the experiment suggest the following. First, cues do not have a direct effect on vote choice, however they do impact hard issue and performance image evaluations. Second, the ultimate impact of the cues depends on the establishment of the frame. The cue effect on issues is only meaningful if the issue frame is established while the cue effect on image is only meaningful if the image frame (or no frame) is established. Importantly, cues can help candidates only if they are able to establish the appropriate frame, or prevent the establishment of the inappropriate frame. Overall, the results show that frames have more direct effects on vote choice than cues.

The candidates are best off having cues in their favor and the frame in their favor (issue frames for Tierney and image frames for Ogonowski), but frames are still more important. For example, each candidate gains more by establishing the frame that favors them, rather than getting cues. This is evident in the direct impact of the frames in the above figure. It is also evident in computing probabilities. The probability of voting for Tierney (i.e., a score of 5, 6, or 7) is as follows: .41 with no frame/cue, .35 for Ogonowski cue only, .47 for Tierney cue only, .32 for image frame only, .50 for issue frame only. The lowest probability of voting for Tierney occurred when the participants were presented with the image frame, while the highest probability occurred when the participant were presented the issue frame. This difference in probabilities was much higher for frames than cues. Therefore, frames had a much more significant effect on candidate evaluations and vote choice than cues.

¹ Note: Coefficients are standardized ordinary least-squares (beta) coefficients (see Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997; Nelson and Oxley 1999; Druckman and Nelson 2003). ** $p \leq .05$; * $p \leq .1$ for two-tailed test. Cue is coded so that -1 = Ogonowski cue 0 = No cue and 1 = Tierney cue. The issue, image, and vote items are coded so that higher values indicate increased support for Tierney.

Discussion of the Effects of Cues and Frames on Vote Choice

The results from the study suggest that the media does have an effect on vote choice, meaning that even debates, a form of so-called direct communication, are mediated. This has important implications due to the amount of emphasis which are placed on debates. If candidates are not directly affecting voters through debates, but instead their evaluations are impacted by the type of media coverage they receive prior to the debate, the media has an immense amount of power to influence the outcome of the election.

The media's impact was not what most people would expect; frames rather than cues had the greater influence. Logically, many individuals would assume that cues or expectations of candidate performances would influence the decision making process more since cues are explicit. However, it appears that debate viewers are not as politically unsophisticated as to simply take cues at face value and not consider anything else. Individuals instead relied on the more subtle form of media effects, framing. The media frames everything in some way or another, from politics to human interest stories. In this regard, people are constantly presented with frames even if they do not realize it. These frames do help individuals make decisions, particularly when it comes to those issues where they have less concrete positions.

Frames were found to only exhibit a direct effect on overall vote choice. Since issue and image frames are the two primary frames used in the media to cover frames, a fact reiterated in the case study, which frames the media uses in its coverage of the candidates could impact vote choice and ultimately make a difference in who wins the election. In this case, one candidate was advantaged on image and another on the issues, so that highlighting the importance of images (issues) prior to the debate made images (issues) most salient in the minds of voters and influenced their vote choice in that direction. It is unknown what affect the frames would have had on vote choice if both candidates had utilized the same frame.

The finding that cues do not trump all and are not simply used as shortcuts is encouraging insofar as it indicates that the media's influence in this regard is limited. Media coverage prior to debates tends to set expectations of candidates' performances, with certain candidates receiving endorsements. If an endorsement of a candidate led to automatic support for that candidate, the media's power would be extreme. However, because cues were not shown to directly affect vote choice, a cue in favor of a particular candidate becomes less crucial.

Importantly, however, cues are not insignificant. The results indicate that cues were taken into account for those issues and images which are more difficult to evaluate. Irregardless of the presence of a frame or not, cues were always significant in helping individuals make evaluations of candidates on harder issues and interpersonal images. Without a frame, however, hard issues did not influence vote choice. This implies that absent frames, if individuals take both easy and hard issues as well as performance and interpersonal images into account when making a vote choice a cue in favor of one candidate or another really only influences the part of their vote choice which is based on performance images.

Due to the fact that almost all newspaper coverage is framed in some fashion (only three of the 80 articles published during the campaign on Ogonowski and/or Tierney were unframed), and that media coverage prior to debates tends to set up some sort of expectation or cue, the impact of both frames and cues together is most interesting. The results suggest that frames put people in consideration of very different aspects when making a vote choice, with cues influencing those harder to make evaluations. While cues are more explicit and individuals are readily aware of which candidate is endorsed, most frames are more subtle and individuals do not realize that the information they are presented is framed in one way or another. Framing is therefore a subtle, yet powerful tool which the media employs that has far reaching implications. When asked, most individuals were unable to answer correctly what frame their article had utilized.

In this case, individuals only read one article prior to the debate which established a cue and/or frame and their vote choices were still impacted. In actual campaigns, voters are bombarded with media coverage endorsing a particular candidate and/or highlighting issues and images. This could add to the relative power of the media. If the media chooses to focus most of their coverage on images, the candidate who establishes the most resonant image frame would likely win the election.

Overall, the results imply that individuals do in fact take media coverage of candidates into account when evaluating candidates and deciding who to vote for, which has important implications for the democratic process in general. If individuals' evaluations of debates are indeed influenced by the media, the power lies more in the hand of elite institutions than individuals. Decisions made by television and newspaper companies in effect would control how people evaluate candidates, which lessens the power of the candidates in what is heralded as one of the only forms of so-called direct communication available in a campaign. Without any opportunities for candidates to communicate their platforms in an unmediated fashion, voters inevitably make their decisions based on what the media has chosen to highlight rather than making decisions on their own accord. So while debates surely are beneficial to voters in some ways, they are indeed mediated and candidate evaluations are impacted by the media coverage of debates to the extent that cues and frames could even affect the outcome of an election.

Conclusion

The general power of the media has long been established by scholars in both political science and sociology, with an extensive amount of emphasis placed on the effects of cues and framing. This research adds to the already existing literature by shedding light on how cues and frames interact prior to debates. The results from the study were not as I, or most individuals would have logically expected. I had anticipated seeing patterns emerge of cues affecting candidate evaluations for those with less political knowledge, and frames having an impact on those higher in political knowledge. Instead, the results show that all individuals, regardless of political knowledge, were more influenced by frames than cues. Candidate evaluations were not primarily based on the cues or endorsements, with the cues having no effect on overall vote choice. However, the cues were not

unimportant because they were utilized to assist participants with harder issue or image choices. This effect could be significantly diminished in a non-experimental setting due to the fact that many individuals may not have even considered hard issues or images in their evaluations.

Frames did impact candidate evaluations enough that they exhibited a significant effect on vote choice. When presented with an issue or image frame, frames put people into consideration of either issues or images, respectively. Absent a frame, individuals considered all but hard issues in their vote choice. Issue frames, therefore, could be seen as having some values as only when an issue frame was provided did individuals take into account the candidates' positions on tougher issues. However, as the case study demonstrated, issues tend to receive substantially less coverage. This means that the likelihood of individuals actually considering hard issues in their vote choice is slim.

As I have shown, coverage of both campaigns and debates is primarily focused on issues and images. Which frames candidates choose to use has an important impact on how their frames resonate in the media, and ultimately with constituents. A close examination of the press releases and newspaper coverage of the two candidates featured in the debate proved helpful to understanding just how much power the media has. Two-thirds of the media coverage focused on image, and only one third on the issues – a significant disparity even though both candidates focused primarily on the issues in their press releases and used the images to add validity to their positions. Both Tierney and Ogonowski worked hard in their press releases to frame themselves in a certain light. In Tierney's case, his *knowledgeable candidate* frame did not come across in the newspaper coverage of the campaign, while Ogonowski's *people's candidate* frame did resonate with the local newspapers. Due to the fact that Tierney's image frame was more issue-centric, and the media coverage was not, his frame was essentially ignored and replaced with the *unqualified candidate* frame.

The resonance of the image frames appears to hinge on the presence of a human interest aspect that makes for a good news story. Ogonowski's focus on the people of the district and average working-class families, combined with his family background, simply made for a more interesting story than Tierney's fact based image. This suggests that politicians should pander to their audience in their press releases, the audience being the media as well as the constituents, if they want their message to resonate. Ogonowski was able to frame himself in a way that appealed to a politically critical media using his *Washington outsider* frame. This message also resonates with the people of the district who may be ready for a change after Meehan's sixteen year stint as representative.

Issue resonance relied more on a well-connected diagnostic and prognostic frame. The greater consistency and development of the frames, the greater degree to which the issue frames appeared in print. Three general trends for issue resonance also emerged: 1) frames receive less coverage if a non-problem frame is utilized (unless this is a unique position) 2) prognostic frames can stand alone while diagnostic frames cannot and 3) having multiple frames for the same issue can lead to greater resonance. Thus, having multiple frames where the link between the diagnostic and prognostic frames was clear leads to a greater amount of resonance.

Frame resonance theory, typically used to explain social movement mobilization, also is useful in explaining why frames resonated. Campaigns, in a way, are simply a type of social movement mobilization with the end outcome a vote rather than a protest or rally. The credibility of the frame articulator is key in campaigns. Ogonowski was seen as a more credible authority on energy, and as a result received significantly more coverage on the issue than Tierney. Frame amplification, frame articulation, and appeal and potency are also central aspects for frame resonance in campaigns. The greater extent each of these is carried out, the greater resonance a frame had with the media.

Without the media, candidates cannot easily reach out to hundreds, thousands, or even millions of individuals. They therefore must pander to the outlet which is central to their message being heard and create strong, consistent frames that are easily translated to broadcast or print media. If they do not utilize frames that the media finds interesting, they risk having their frame replaced by one of the media's choosing. This does not imply that their overall message needs to change, only the way it is presented if they wish to have control over their own image and message.

Most importantly, debates, events which are touted as a chance for politicians to speak directly to the public, are also framed. While Ogonowski's and Tierney's frames came across to viewers of the debate, the media frames and cues which participants read before the debate ultimately had a greater impact on vote choice. Focusing solely on pre-debate coverage, cues and frames were found to have a mediational effect on vote choice. Although this is important, future research on framing and debates should examine the effects of both pre and post-debate newspaper coverage on candidate evaluations. Coverage following a debate could eliminate the effect of pre-debate coverage, or could work in tandem with pre-debate coverage to have an even greater effect on vote choice.

Regardless, debates are not unmediated and the media has the subtle ability to influence how individuals process the information candidates provide in debates. When combined with the capability of the media to both create frames and choose what frames to focus on, voters' candidate evaluations are ultimately affected by choices which the media makes. Voting is the basis of this democratic government, and it appears that the media has a greater effect than some would like on what vote is cast in an election based on what the media chooses to cover. This means that individuals must be more conscious of the media's power and carefully consider what information is not provided in the media if they want to be responsible for who holds elected office.

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